

Launch of the Access•City Award 2012

European Commission calls for entries from across Member States

Brussels, 30/06/2011 – The European Commission has today opened nominations for the second edition of the “Access City Award”, the European Award for Accessible Cities. The annual prize aims to showcase and reward cities which take exemplary steps to improve their accessibility for people with disabilities in fundamental aspects of city living. It will highlight the most successful initiatives allowing disabled people to participate fully in society and have equal access to their rights. The Award is part of the EU's wider effort to create a barrier-free Europe. Improved accessibility brings lasting economic and social benefits to cities, especially in the context of demographic ageing. Cities with at least 50,000 inhabitants have until 20 September to submit a nomination.

"Accessibility is a cornerstone of inclusion. Access to infrastructure, goods, services and information is a precondition for disabled people to fully exercise their rights and participate actively in the community," said European Union Justice Commissioner Viviane Reding. "We want to ensure that the doors of our cities are open to everyone. This award honours those which are demonstrating commitment, ambition and innovation to make accessibility a reality in Europe. By sharing experiences, the successes of some cities can be an inspiration to others across Europe".

Approximately 80 million EU citizens have a disability. With the ageing of our society, the number of people with a disability or those with reduced mobility is growing every day. Moreover, with four out of five Europeans living in towns and cities, Europe is now an essentially urban society. Giving everyone access to transport, public spaces and services, and technology has become a real challenge. Providing accessibility also gives economic and social benefits and contributes to the sustainability and inclusiveness of the urban environment.

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

Eligibility

City authorities in all 27 EU Member States are invited to apply before 20 September 2011. Participating cities should have a population of at least 50,000 inhabitants. To be considered, initiatives must have been implemented within the past five years.

Selection process

The selection will take place in two phases, with a pre-selection at the national level followed by a final selection at the European level. In the European competition phase, a jury composed of accessibility experts including representatives of the European Disability Forum will select out of the national nominees four finalists to

attend the award ceremony in Brussels. The ceremony will coincide with the European Day of People with Disabilities Conference on 1-2 December 2011. The winner of the competition will be recognised as the “Winner of the Access City Award 2012”.

As a novelty of this year's edition, cities will also compete to receive special mentions for notable successes and results in the area of accessibility. Special mentions will be assigned by the European Jury upon recommendation by the national juries.

Award criteria

Accessibility needs to be implemented in a coherent and systematic manner in goods, services and infrastructure. Initiatives will therefore be assessed for their integrated approach across **four key areas**: the built environment and public spaces; transportation and related infrastructure; information and communication, including new technologies (ICT); public facilities and services.

Applicants are expected to present initiatives and activities that are part of a comprehensive **policy framework**, and not just ad-hoc projects.

The jury will particularly look at the **impact** of accessibility measures on the everyday life of people with disabilities and the city as a whole, and it will consider the **quality and sustainability** of the results achieved. Cities will also have to demonstrate **active involvement** of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the planning, implementation and maintenance of the city's accessibility policies.

How to apply

Applications can be submitted until **20 September 2011** in English, French or German using the entry forms at www.accesscityaward.eu.

Background

Inaugural edition in 2010

The Access City Award was launched for the first time in 2010. Applications came from 66 cities from 19 EU countries. The winning city was Ávila in Spain. The three other Access City finalists were Barcelona (Spain), Cologne (Germany) and Turku (Finland).

The winner and the finalists were celebrated at a special ceremony organised during the European Day of People with Disabilities Conference, 2-3 December 2010, in Brussels.

EU policy on accessibility

The EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020 provides the general framework for action in the area of disability and accessibility at EU level to complement and support

Member States' action. Specific provisions on accessibility are contained in EU legislation in areas such as transport and electronic communication services.

The EU makes also use of a variety of instruments beyond legislation and policy, such as research and standardisation, to optimise the accessibility of the built environment, ICT, transport, and other areas, and to foster an EU-wide market for accessible products and services.

The EU also aims to improve the functioning of the assistive technology market for the benefit of people with disabilities and supports a "Design for all" approach that benefits a wider part of the population, such as elderly people and those with reduced mobility.

For more information

Read more about the Access City Award on: www.accesscityaward.eu

European Disability Strategy 2010-2020

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/disabilities/disability-strategy/index_en.htm

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/disabilities/convention/index_en.htm