Green City Accord

Best practices

Environment

Contents

About the Green City Accord and this publication

The Green City Accord mobilises European mayors committed to safeguarding the natural environment. It aims to improve the quality of life of all Europeans and accelerate the implementation of relevant EU environmental laws at the local level.

By joining the Accord, cities commit to step up their efforts in air, water, nature and biodiversity, circular economy and waste, and noise by 2030.

Signing the Accord's political commitment offers many benefits. The initiative will support cities in determining local targets and implementing actions covering these five areas, which will be monitored over the coming years.

Participating cities will gain access to an online helpdesk and to capacity-building opportunities offered by the initiative, including peer-learning and knowledge-sharing activities.

The Green City Accord is open for mayors to sign. Read more about how to join the initiative on the Green City Accord website:

https://ec.europa.eu/environment/green-city-accord/how-join-green-city-accord_en.

The Green City Accord encourages best practices and the sharing of knowledge between its signatories. This publication showcases signatories' achievements in one or more of the five Green City Accord core areas.

Icons guide

AIR QUALITY

WATER

WASTE AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY

BIODIVERSITY AND NATURE

NOISE

Superblocks takeover

Superblocks are neighbourhoods of several blocks, or urban cells, where traffic is restricted to major roads around the outside of the block and internal roads have a 10-20-30km/h speed limit. The project began in 2006 and in 2009 the first pilot was implemented.

Vitoria-Gasteiz plans to reorganise the city into more than 70 superblocks, allowing the pedestrian space to increase from 31% to 71%. Following the implementation of superblocks in various neighbourhoods, a decrease in noise, CO2 and NOx emissions were registered. According to the project, the space for cars in the city will be reduced by 40%, opening room for public transportation initiatives as well as for pedestrians and for the construction of parks and bike lanes.

Other important measures, such as the restructuring of urban public transport, the promotion of cycling and the development of urban footpaths, are also helping to reduce the use of private cars in favour of more sustainable modes thus reducing noise pollution and hazardous emissions.

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VITORIA-GASTEIZ, ES

253,996 inhabitants

MORE INFO

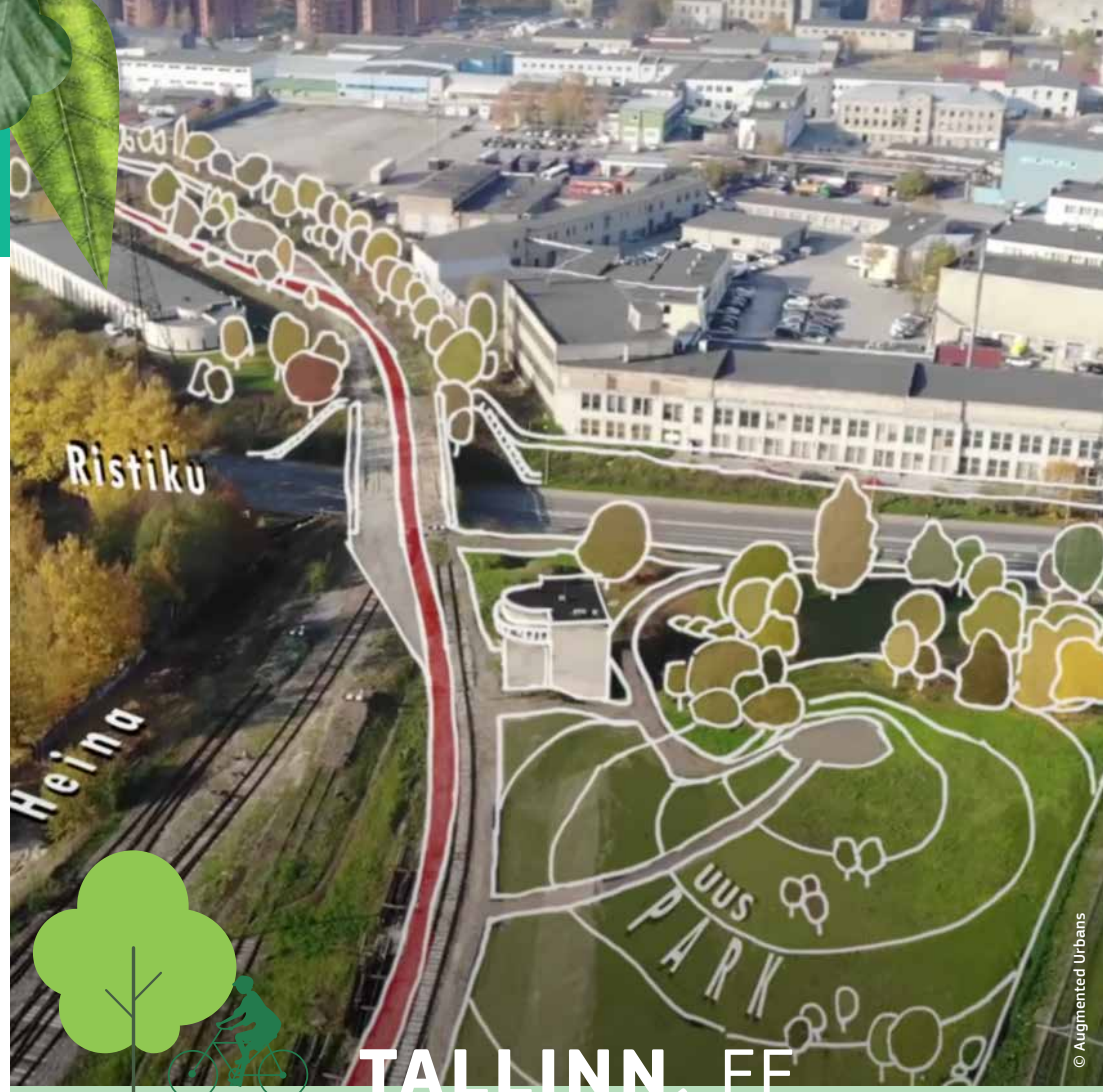
https://www.vitoria-gasteiz.org/humanscalecity

A haven for insects

The Pollinator Highway is the capital's green habitat and enables pollinators such as butterflies, bumblebees and honeybees, as well as other animal groups, use this natural space to move from one green area to the next. The Pollinator Highway passes through nine distinctive panel housing areas and train depots. The total length of the journey is almost 13 kilometres. The Pollinator Highway mainly runs alongside a former roadbed and a high voltage corridor. Tallinn wishes to establish a vibrant and diverse linear park along the Pollinator Highway.

The Pollinator Highway concept is being built with support from the European Union.

Tallinn has also joined the movement of European Pesticide Free Towns. Tallinn's Urban Environment and Public Works Department has reduced the use of pesticides necessary for keeping roadsides free of weeds by 58% (in comparison with data from 2017).



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TALLINN, EE

445,024 inhabitants

MORE INFO

https://www.tallinn.ee/eng/Uudis-Pollinator-corridor-a-part-of-Tallinn-s-vision-as-a-finalist-of-the-European-Green-Capital-2022

A quiet city

As Utrecht is projected to be one of the fastest growing cities in the Netherlands over the next 20 years, the city aims to ensure that urban densification does not lead to an increase in noise pollution. The city adopted a new noise action plan called ‘Healthy Urban Living’ in 2019.

Thanks to the collaboration between the noise and health departments, the city has put in place a 63 dB limit for road traffic noise, which is 5 dB lower than the national limit.

To achieve this, measures focus on building new houses with at least one quiet side (equal to or lower than 53 dB) and, where possible, keeping distance from the main road; using noise-absorbing asphalt to construct pavements; reducing speed limits from 50 to 30 km/h; improving bicycle infrastructure by creating biking highways and bridges; and creating noise barriers near dwellings.

The new action plan also puts a strong focus on preserving and creating quiet areas, such as parks or courtyards (City of Utrecht, 2019).

UTRECHT, NL

358,454 inhabitants

MORE INFO

https://healthyurbanliving.utrecht.nl/

Amazing wetlands

On the shores of Pien-Saimaa Lake, seven stormwater wetlands have been constructed in the urban area of Lappeenranta. The constructed wetlands act as natural filters. They collect solid material as well as nutrients and pollutants transmitted by run-off water before it reaches Pien-Saimaa. In the summer, a well-functioning wetland may also be an important filter for nitrogen emissions. The wetland has three pool areas and a part resembling a stream. The pool areas slow down the flow of water, allowing the materials that burden Lake Saimaa to settle in the wetland pools. The pool areas have been constructed at different heights on the slope.

Gravel structures have been used in the pool areas so that they are able to withstand erosion caused by water. As water flow rates vary considerably, preparations include measures for handling overflows. The water is guided to the wetland via a stormwater network.

The network of wetlands also increases biodiversity and provides a habitat for many birds and insects. The wetlands enhance the scenery and atmosphere of the area as well. Wetlands have traditionally been used for agricultural water pollution control. In Lappeenranta, the purpose of these wetlands is to stop nutrients and solid materials brought by stormwater, instead of nutrients from agriculture.

LAPPEENRANTA, FI

72,679 inhabitants

MORE INFO

https://www.greenreality.fi/en/acts/constructed-wetlands-reduce-load-pien-saimaa

For less plastic

To prevent plastic from entering the environment and reaching the Oslo Fjord, and to remove existing plastic pollution, an action plan with short-term and long-term measures was co-created by many stakeholders in Oslo.

The private sector has a unique role to play in developing and implementing new sustainable solutions. That is why, in 2019, the City of Oslo launched a plastic manifesto for the private sector. The aim is for companies to contribute with solutions and implement measures, methods, and systems to reduce the unnecessary use of plastic.

Moreover, Oslo is using public procurement to change the city's consumption behaviour and reduce the unnecessary use of plastic in municipal bodies. To this end, the city has carried out a mapping of purchases of all plastic products and identified which products were problematic and which agencies needed to be targeted.

OSLO, NO

634,293 inhabitants

MORE INFO

https://reflowproject.eu/best-practices/oslo-shifts-its-public-procurement-to-reduce-single-use-plastics/

https://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/wp-content/uploads/2020/Oslo_European_Green_Capital_2019_final_report.pdf

Students check the air

The observatory responsible for monitoring air quality in Lille Metropole's territory, ATMO, has recently launched a pilot project to raise student awareness of air quality issues. The idea involves: entrusting several sensors to a few pilot high schools, and helping biology professors teach their students how to assemble and install sensors in strategic places - near a green wall, along the highway - and how to monitor their own data, transmitted by wifi on a platform.

Teachers and students are accompanied by ATMO technicians. A local start-up, Kanope (specialised in the Internet of things, IoT), provides sensors in prefabricated kit form, which are easy to assemble.

This will help biology teachers to educate students on how to manufacture and use a sensor, how to measure the quality of the air and how to adopt good behaviour. This has the advantage of being, at the same time, innovative, interactive and interesting for students.

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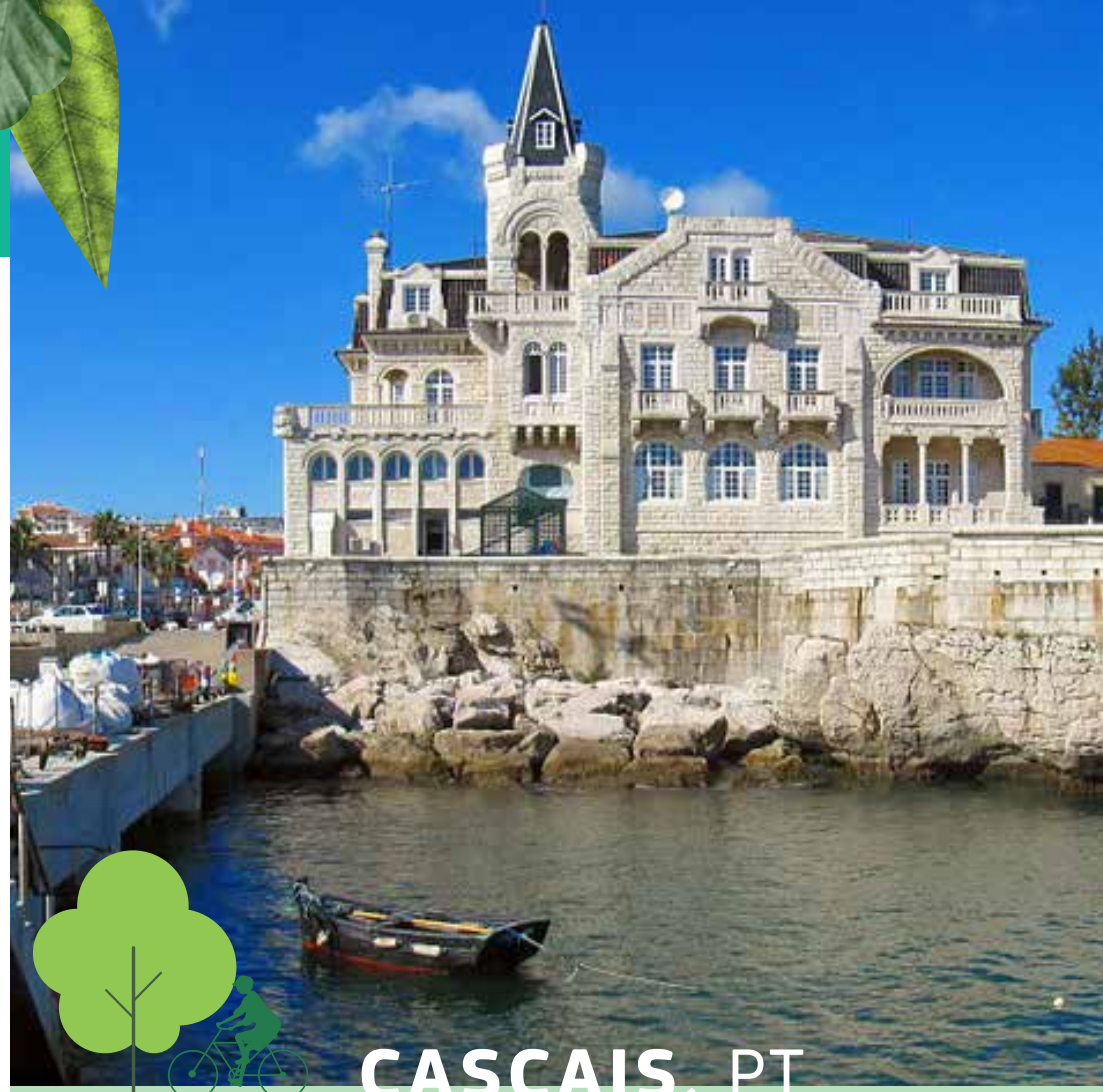
LILLE, FR

1,181,692 inhabitants

Mapping water flows

In 2019, Cascais released the results of its Water Matrix, a year-long mapping process that aimed to identify, characterise and quantify the main water flows in the municipality, as well as identifying the main actors in the water cycle in Cascais. This exercise allowed the city to examine the efficiency of its water use and set plans for the future on how to better use this finite resource.

For example, the City carried out a project in collaboration with the local water company Águas de Cascais called “Zero Pollution”, which was announced in December 2018. It aims to reduce the amount of domestic, industrial and livestock waste introduced into the municipalities many streams and rivers.



CASCAIS, PT

214,134 inhabitants

MORE INFO

https://ambiente.cascais.pt/pt/page/agua-abastecimento-qualidade-ribeiras-praias

https://www.cascais.pt/sub-area/matriz-da-agua-consulta-populacao

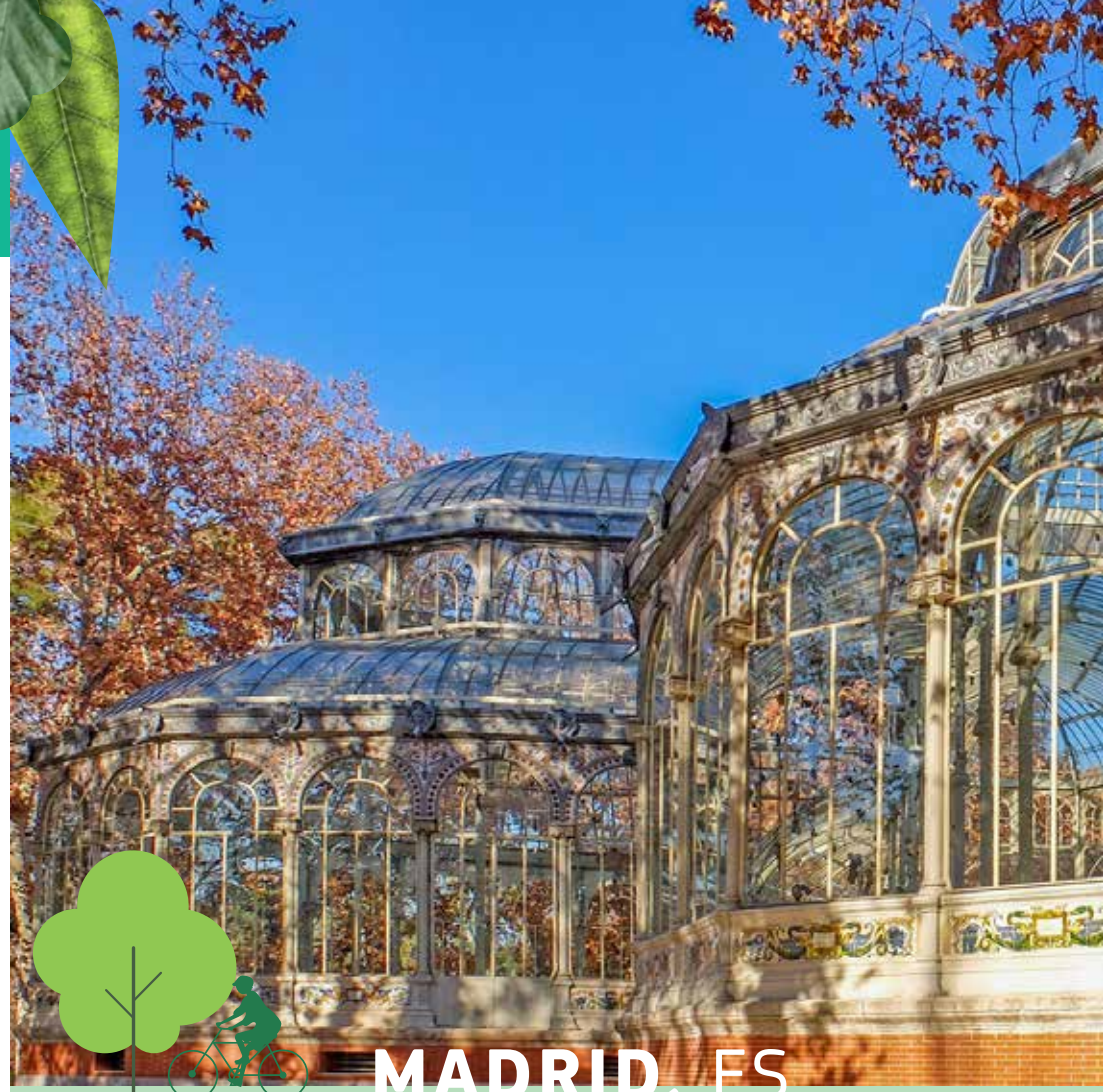
Follow the butterfly

The Urban Butterfly Monitoring Scheme in Madrid (also operating in Barcelona) is a network of volunteers that gather monthly data on (1) the absence/presence and (2) abundance of different butterfly species.

Based on the principles of citizen-science, the scheme involves trained volunteers regularly walking fixed paths during the butterfly flight season to collect data on pollinator abundance.

The scheme is part of a broader network of 'European Butterfly Monitoring Schemes' (eBMS); an initiative organised by Butterfly Conservation Europe (BCE) and its partners.

The outcomes are expected to shed light on: the local state of butterfly diversity, critical urban conservation areas, adequate management techniques and environmental quality enhancement.



MADRID, ES

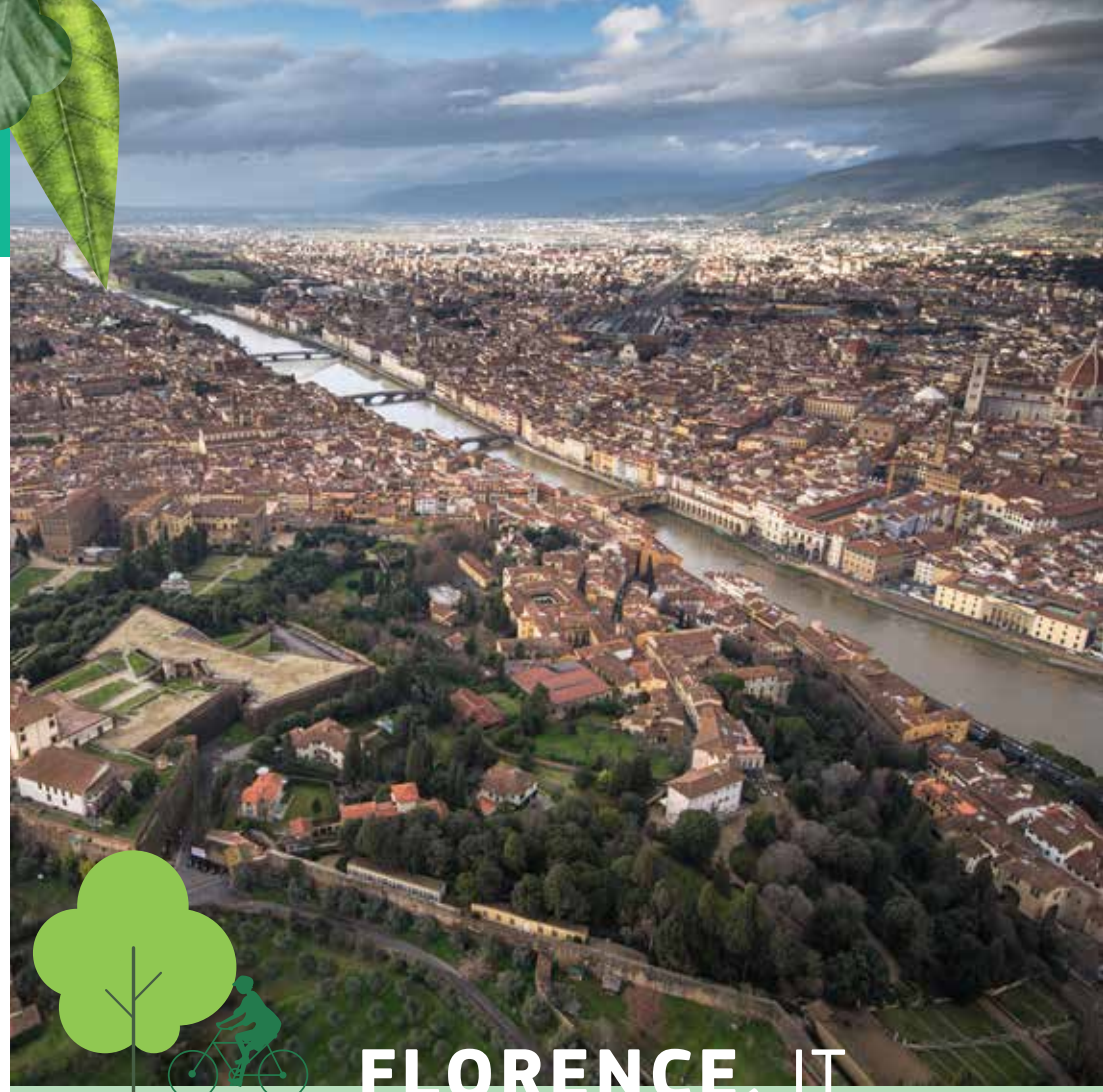
3,255,944 inhabitants

A circular city

Florence aims to become a “circular city” in the next few years and has embarked upon a journey to meet this goal by 2024 with a series of measures, including the Pact for Circular Economy which was first adopted in December 2015.

The pact involves local government, businesses, associations, schools, etc. The aim is to accelerate the transition to the circular economy and includes re-organising the collection of waste and adapting collection methods to the characteristics of the neighbourhood with some collections happening door-to-door and others involving smart road bins.

Florence has also put a comprehensive education and communication plan in place to raise awareness among citizens about their role in the creation of a circular city.



FLORENCE, IT

382,258 inhabitants

MORE INFO

https://ambiente.comune.fi.it/pagina/firenze-citta-circolare

Companies for sustainable mobility

Since 2003, the City of Munich has offered a programme that provides free advice in the field of corporate mobility management. Participating companies then develop company-specific mobility concepts and implement them.

The pollutants and CO2 emissions generated by traffic and mobility costs are reduced as a result. This benefits companies, their employees and the environment.

At the same time, local companies experience improvement in internal sustainable mobility behaviours. More employees are motivated to come to work on foot, by bicycle or by public transport. Business trips, company fleet vehicles, logistics and work concepts (home office) are also considered.

Among the participants so far, there is a certain focus on measures promoting cycling and travel by public transport.

Overall, however, the spectrum of measures is very broad. To date, 97 companies with approximately 100,000 employees from the City and the District of Munich have successfully participated in the programme.

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MUNICH, DE

1,553,373 inhabitants

MORE INFO

https://www.muenchen.de/int/en

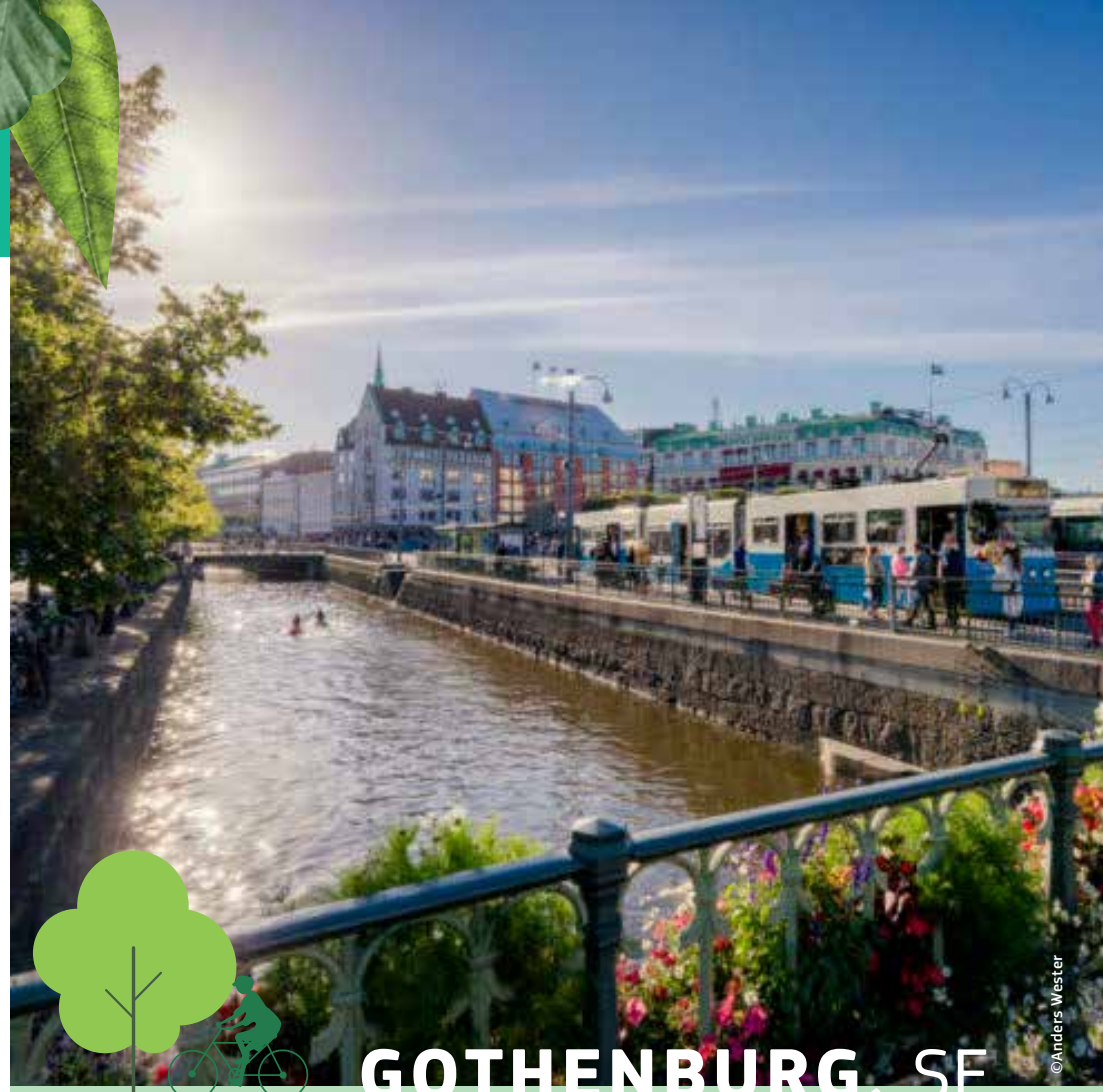
Fossil fuel free transport

Gothenburg became the first city in the world to implement a low emission zone for heavy duty vehicles, in 1996. At the time, this was a big step towards ensuring that the citizens of Gothenburg lived in a thriving city, without sacrificing access to clean and fresh air. Today, green and sustainable innovation is at the core of the city's urban planning.

In addition to using what are now considered traditional instruments, such as congestion taxation, green bonds and a low emission zone, Gothenburg is implementing innovative systems such as the optimisation of traffic routes and the transition of its own fleet to electric vehicles.

The goal is for the city's transportation system to be fossil fuel free by 2030 and thereby to significantly improve air quality in the city.

In 2022 the city intends to make a zone available for electric vehicles or vehicles using renewable fuel alternatives only.



GOTHENBURG, SE

580,000 inhabitants

MORE INFO

https://www.greengothenburg.se/

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