



Jury Report EGLA 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the interest from cities and building on the success of the European Green Capital Award the need to create a competition for cities of a smaller size was identified by the European Commission in 2014. This competition now exists as the European Green Leaf Award (EGLA).

Following a Europe-wide competition, the title of European Green Leaf is awarded every year to recognise and promote the efforts of smaller cities and towns (20,000 up to 100,000 population) towards better environmental management and outcomes. The first cities were awarded the title in 2015.

Urban areas are the source of many of today's environmental challenges – not surprisingly, since two out of three Europeans live in towns and cities. Cities that apply for the European Green Leaf Award do not have to be perfect in all criteria. It is important to reward cities which are making efforts to improve the urban environment and move towards healthier and sustainable living areas. Local governments and authorities can provide the commitment and innovation needed to tackle and resolve many of these problems. The European Green Leaf Award promotes and rewards these efforts, recognising cities that demonstrate a good environmental record and commitment to generating 'green' growth and new jobs to improve our urban living environment.

The Award is based on a two-tier evaluation process: firstly, applicant cities are technically assessed across six¹ environmental topic areas by a panel of experts. The finalist cities from this stage are then invited to present to the Jury.

2. THE ROLE OF THE JURY

The Jury's role is to select the winner(s) of the European Green Leaf Award (EGLA). The European Green Leaf Award finalist cities are invited to present their achievements and future visions to the Jury. Following these hearings, the Jury deliberates on the winner(s) of the European Green Leaf Award.

2.1. Jury Members

The Jury for the EGL Award comprises representatives from key European and International organisations in the environmental field and is chaired by the European Commission. Jury members cover a wide range of expertise and have in-depth knowledge of the issues involved. The Jury for the European Green Leaf Award 2022 includes the following organisations and their representatives:

- Joanna Drake, Deputy Director General for Environment, European Commission (Chair)
- Anna Lisa Boni, Secretary General of EUROCITIES (online)
- Frédéric Boyer, Head of Office, EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy
- Hans Bruyninckx, Executive Director European Environment Agency
- Markku Markkula, Vice President European Committee of the Regions
- Ruud Schuthof, Deputy Regional Director at ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability (online)
- Bernhard Zlanabitnig, Vice President at European Environment Bureau

¹ Nature, Biodiversity, Sustainable Land Use and Soil; Air Quality and Noise; Waste and Circular Economy; Water; Climate Change and Energy Performance; Sustainable Urban Mobility

2.2. European Green Leaf Award 2022 - Jury Assessment

The Jury was provided with a suite of supporting background documents on the six finalist cities² including: the Technical Assessment Report, prepared by the Expert Panel, the Application Forms and the EGL Background Research Report.

On 8 September 2021, the six finalist cities presented their vision, action plans and communication strategies to the Jury. The Jury assessed the finalist cities based on the following criteria:

1. The city's overall commitment, strategy and enthusiasm, as conveyed by the presentation;
2. The city's efforts to communicate to citizens and the citizens' engagement in environmental activities;
3. The city's potential to act as a 'green ambassador', promoting good practice and spreading the EGL concept further.

The European Green Leaf Award shortlisted cities were invited to present to the Jury (1) setting out their achievements and future vision and (2) which projects / actions the city intends to set in place to enhance the city's environmental sustainability.

Each EGL finalist was allocated 30 minutes in total with the Jury, which consisted of a 20-minute presentation followed by a 10-minute Question and Answers session. Members of the media were permitted to attend the presentation of their finalist city to the jury, but not the Q&A session.

3. JURY FINDINGS

The Jury considered that all six cities presented their environmental ambitions and communications strategy through high quality and well-prepared presentations. Each finalist demonstrated qualities with potential to be a European Green Leaf Award winner and ambassador for the competition. The Jury also noted that all shortlisted cities had signed both the declaration of honour on exclusion and selection criteria, as well as the mayoral declaration honouring the Rules of Contest and attesting that the information provided was true and accurate.

The Jury emphasised the importance of bringing citizens and all stakeholders on the green just transition journey to create more sustainable cities as well as adopting a systemic approach to their transition in order to deliver the ambitions of the European Green Deal.

The Jury's comments in relation to each of the finalist cities are summarised below.

3.1. Bistrița

Bistrița has shown that the city is truly committed to a sustainable transition. They are progressing but still have a way to go, given the unfavourable industrial heritage. Both the high political commitment as well as the way citizens are being engaged in this journey will help them to make progress. The Jury appreciated Bistrița's participation in European initiatives and projects and would recommend the city to develop a long-term vision and integrated strategy for the future as a basis for further improvement.

3.2. Elsinore

Elsinore has proven its long-time commitment and consistency in the green transition. The Jury was impressed by the city's passion and dedication to accelerate on this path, as well as by the concept of "sharing is caring". The city presented concrete, fact-based and ambitious plans and approaches, like the climate committees, in which they work together with stakeholders to mitigate climate change. Their

² Bistrița (Romania), Elsinore (Denmark), Gavà (Spain), Treviso (Italy), Valongo (Portugal) and Winterswijk (Netherlands)

cooperation with businesses, citizens as well as neighbouring cities is very much appreciated by the Jury.

The Jury has no doubts that Elsinore will move ahead successfully but is not yet fully convinced of their potential as a Europe-wide ambassador.

3.3. Gavà

Gavà has shown a strong drive and commitment. They show achievements in an area where there is a big demand for space for different developments, which puts pressure on the environmental conditions. The Jury particularly appreciated Gavà's connection with other European cities in various networks and its activities in their local communication. A recommendation to the city is to improve its vision on how to fill in the ambassadorship role as a Green Leaf City. The city could make better use of its potential role model position in a challenging area in the near vicinity of a large airport.

3.4. Treviso

Treviso presented a convincing and coherent approach in their journey towards sustainability. Their communication is strong, making use of the power of symbols, like the ancient centre of the city or the planting of trees. Furthermore, they presented a well-thought-out plan for their year as a Green Leaf City, including a "re-investing the prize" to support some transition activities of their community.

There is also room for improvement: the Jury would advise the city to be clearer about the results of their efforts in a green transition, based on specific goals and targets.

3.5. Valongo

Although being a first-time applicant, Valongo presented itself as a credible green ambassador, addressing and convincingly tackling a wide range of relevant environmental issues they have. Their engagement of citizens is at a high level and the city shows strong political commitment. According to Valongo every citizen is a green ambassador. The city has a strong focus on natural areas, as almost 60% of the municipality is covered by forest. Almost all of these areas are privately owned, which makes it challenging to implement public policy. Given that fact, the achievements they have shown on this topic are all the more impressive and inspiring for other cities across Europe.

The jury also appreciated 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. This was seen as a very good example of intermunicipal collaboration and governance.

There is room for increased communication efforts to inform about all the initiatives and work on the ground to a wider audience as well as showing a more proactive way in dealing with air quality issues.

3.6. Winterswijk

The jury was impressed to see the city of Winterswijk being presented to the jury by its inhabitants in person, who are at the core of the city's sustainability strategy. Their presentation convinced the jury that Winterswijk is genuinely committed to making green transition happen on the ground. This small city in the Netherlands, with 30 000 inhabitants, punched above its weight presenting advanced initiatives to drive the ecological transition. Among them, the "energy tables", joint meetings with local stakeholders from business to private that help steer the local energy transition, or a revolving fund for citizens to increase the energy efficiency of their homes. The city does not shy away from big neighbours abroad in order to achieve greener energy supplies and gives impetus to recycled materials in the building sector.

The city is a relative novice in European projects but has high potential to become a champion of green solutions that can inspire others.

There is room for improvement by showing a more holistic view behind all the different measures, to make the story even stronger. Furthermore, the city is aware of the potential for a greener approach of the intensive agriculture around them.

4. JURY CONCLUSION

The Jury would like to commend all of the European Green Leaf Award 2022 finalist cities for their demonstrated achievements and commitment.

Concluding its deliberations, the Jury decided to award the titles of European Green Leaf for 2022 to Valongo and Winterswijk.

As in previous years, the Jury encouraged the finalists to continue their efforts in aiming to become a Green Leaf and to re-apply again in the future.

Note: The cities are listed in alphabetical order.