

# Green Cities Newsletter

February 2022

This is the new Green Cities newsletter, a magazine-style newsletter that is released quarterly curated by DG Environment and the EU Green Capital and EU Green Leaf Secretariat.

This edition features an Op-Ed from the Mayor of last year's European Green Capital and updates from current and previous Green Capitals and Green Leaves.

## Applications for the European Green Capital 2024 & European Green Leaf 2024 Awards are open

A new cycle for the EU Green Capital 2024 and EU Green Leaf 2024 titles was launched last month. Your city can apply until 25 March 2022 at 23:59 CET (GMT+1).

Last September, the EU Green Capital 2023 Award went to Tallinn (Estonia) while the EU Green Leaf 2022 Award went jointly to Valongo (Portugal) and Winterswijk (the Netherlands).

To give more time to winning cities to prepare their Green Leaf year, the applications for the EU Green Leaf Awards will be for the 2024 title.

Is your city striving to improve the quality of life for the inhabitants and reduce the impact on the local and global environment?

Learn more about the [Awards](#) and [apply now!](#)



## Grenoble's Handover Ceremony on 15 January

It is official: Grenoble's EU Green Capital year has started.

On 15 January, the European Green Capital 2021 Lahti (Finland) handed over the "Greenbook" to the 2022 winner: Grenoble (France).

The Handover Ceremony saw on stage the EU Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries Virginijus Sinkevičius, Grenoble's Mayor Eric Piolle, the French Minister of the Ecological Transition Barbara Pompili and Lahti's Mayor Pekka Timonen.

The event was streamed live from Grenoble's Museum of Natural Science. The recording of the event is accessible [here](#).

Discover [Grenoble's agenda](#) of activities and events during 2022.

## Grenoble challenges us in 2022

France had a great start to the year. As the country took over the presidency of the Council of the European Union, Grenoble officially started its EU Green Capital year and has set up an outstanding agenda of activities and events.

To boost local actions and to set a good example to other European cities and citizens, Grenoble aims **to go faster, higher and stronger** when it comes to protecting the environment and achieving the green transition.

To reach this resolution, the French city decided to launch a series of challenges that cover 12 themes throughout 2022: air, climate, energy, food and agriculture, health, inequalities, living in the city of the future, mobility, nature and biodiversity, producing and consuming differently, waste, water. According to Grenoble's local authorities, **"a challenge is an invitation to all local stakeholders. Individuals, companies, public institutions and NGOs each may have their own challenge to take concrete action on one or more of the 12 themes"**.

The challenges range from unplugging unnecessary devices at home or at work, to taking shorter showers to save water, using solidarity fridges, composting or simply buying less food in order to avoid food waste, transforming your house or office into passive buildings to save energy, giving a second chance to second-hand products and much more.

Curious about Grenoble's challenges? Discover them [here](#).

For the first Op-Ed Green Cities newsletter we asked Pekka Timonen, the Mayor of the 2021 EU Green Capital Lathi, his views on what being a European Green Capital means.

The change in sustainability starts in our cities. In cities that are constantly evolving. Cities that are leading the transition to a more sustainable Europe and a more sustainable world. Cities that build a greener and healthier living environment for their residents and act as role models. The European Green Capitals lead the way as such role models and inspiration to others.

Lahti, with its 120 000 inhabitants, may be the smallest and most northern city to have ever won the European Green Capital Award, but it is by no means the least impactful. The majority of Europeans live in medium-sized cities such as Lahti, which makes Lahti perfectly placed to set an example for other

European cities that wish to go green. Any city can be a green city.

**We want to show that smart cities are also better cities.**

Lahti has undergone a major transformation from an industrial city to a modern green city. It is an achievement of decades of environmental work done in cooperation with residents, businesses, associations, universities

and other partners. More than 30 years ago, the Lahti community decided to restore Lake Vesijärvi. It was, due to industrial sewage, one of the most polluted lakes in Finland. Lahti and the Lahti citizens decided to seize the opportunity to change and head for a sustainable path. And that's the path we're still on.

Today, the citizens of Lahti notice every day how environmental actions have made our city a better city. We are now Finland's leading environmental city and one of the world's leading green cities. Our ambitious climate programme was approved by the city council as early



**“Once a Green Capital, always a Green Capital – cities lead the way to a sustainable future”**

**Pekka Timonen**  
Mayor of Lahti (Finland),  
2021 European Green Capital

as 2009, and now we have cut our greenhouse gas emissions by 70%.

We said goodbye to coal in 2019 and have been the first city of the world to test the personal carbon trading

for mobility. We reuse 99% of our household waste and will soon be able to give up our landfill sites completely. There will continue to be more investments in sustainable companies in the Lahti region.

In 2021, Lahti was honoured to be an ambassador for sustainable urban development as the European Green Capital. However, this is only the beginning and will further accelerate our ambitious work on environmental issues and sustainable development.

Our next goal is already in sight. Lahti will be a carbon-neutral city by 2025, the first major Finnish city to do so. We are currently strengthening carbon-neutral construction at a record pace. In Lahti, we promote the well-being of nature and people hand in hand, because planetary health is the future. We are also developing electric transport with several partners. Lahti is a wonderful sustainable tourist destination, which will be further strengthened by the upcoming UNESCO Global Geopark in Salpausselkä.

**Cities play a crucial role in the search for solutions to global climate and environmental challenges,** which is why

cooperation between cities is significant. European Green Capitals are already making the change that all cities need to make. Now we can show young Europeans that we are not just leaving the climate crisis in their hands. A sustainable future with better cities is possible if we choose so.



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## A word with astronaut Luca Parmitano

European astronaut Luca Parmitano sent us a message in the framework of the EU Green Capital Handover Ceremony 2022. Parmitano's unique view of our home planet from his time at the International Space Station gave him a new perspective on protecting it.

Commissioner Sinkevičius thought highly of the astronaut's video and his sentiment.

"It is very reassuring to see that the environmental and climate challenges that we face every day in our cities are fought not only on regional, national and EU level, but even from space. It shows that these challenges are global, and we all have to be part of the solution."

[Watch the video now](#)

## The Green Garden campaign Winterswijk was a great success

The municipality of Winterswijk has helped its residents to make their gardens greener. The inhabitants replaced tiles with plants. The municipality helped by taking care of the removal of the tiles and the supply of soil.

The residents also received gardening advice and plants. More than 60 inhabitants participated to make 1000 square metres become green.

Why is this important?

We must adapt to a changing climate. It gets very hot in the summer in the built-up area of Winterswijk, and during extreme rainfall, the roads are flooded. Greening the environment is one way to counteract this.

## European Green Capital 2021 Lahti celebrated the culmination of the year with sports, art and music

The European Green Capital 2021 Lahti (Finland) invited everyone to celebrate the end of their special year on 4 and 5 December 2021.

On the first weekend of December, the Green Capital brought free music performances to Lahti Square and offered a free hockey match as a 'thank you' to local citizens for their joint work for a sustainable future. Future Green Capitals Grenoble (France) and Tallinn (Estonia) also participated in the closing weekend.

During the year, stakeholders in the Lahti region have carried out a large number of environmental projects and events, both hybrid and virtual, with funding from the Green Capital, and the city has gained tremendous international visibility.

Find out [more](#) about Lahti.



## A New European Bauhaus for a beautiful, sustainable and inclusive future together

The New European Bauhaus initiative calls on all of us to imagine and build together a sustainable and inclusive future that is beautiful for our eyes, minds, and souls. Beautiful are the places, practices, and experiences that are: **enriching**, inspired by art and culture, responding to needs beyond functionality.

**Sustainable**, in harmony with nature, the environment, and our planet. **Inclusive**, encouraging a dialogue across cultures, disciplines, genders and ages.

The NEB initiative was inspired by the influential art and design movement that began in 1919 in Germany called “Bauhaus” and **has the objective to support the European Green Deal through a “cultural, human-centered and positive, tangible experience.”**

It is believed that to reach climate neutrality by 2050, Europe needs a multidisciplinary perspective in order to accelerate the transformation of the economic sector into a circular, less carbon-intensive one. Therefore, the NEB wants to build a sustainable future through creativity, innovation and imagination which concerns the construction and culture sectors for one simple reason: to develop green, inclusive, sustainable and affordable ways of living.

Discover the New European Bauhaus Prizes 2022. These prizes recognise achievements and support the younger generation to further develop emerging concepts and ideas in the following different categories:

- Reconnecting with nature
- Regaining a sense of belonging
- Prioritising the places and people that need it the most
- Shaping a circular industrial ecosystem and supporting life-cycle thinking

Applications are open until 28 February. [Find out more](#)

Interested to participate in the initiative or to find out more? Click [here](#).

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## Discover your city's Köppen Geigen class

The Köppen climate classification divides climates into five main climate groups, with each group being divided based on seasonal precipitation and temperature patterns. The five main groups are A (tropical), B (dry), C (temperate), D (continental), and E (polar).

The European Commission's Joint Research Centre in Ispra developed an easy-to-use methodology for cities to determine their Köppen Geigen class. Thanks to a tutorial, cities have a step-by-step guide to assess it through 2 methods:

- based on EU Global Drought Observatory
- based on Google Earth.

Download the tutorial [here](#)

## DiscoverEU has joined the Erasmus+ Programme family

What is your next DiscoverEU route in 2022? Do you plan to go from Hamburg to Lahti this spring or do you prefer the Braşov -Thessaloniki route?

This initiative was launched by the European Union with the aim to discover Europe through learning experiences. **Travelling is mainly done by rail (one of the least polluting public transport means) and connects cities that were awarded the European Green Capital or the European Green Leaf Awards.**

According to the European Youth Portal, “the first application round under Erasmus+ rules will open in spring 2022 (the specific dates will be announced later and the text updated accordingly).”

Take a look at how you can [travel](#) without harming the environment to European cities that pioneer the environmental protection solutions and initiatives.

