



# Access City Award 2021

**#EUAccessCity**

## Access Cities Awards 2021- Rules of competition

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## 1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The European Union promotes equality of opportunity and accessibility for people with disabilities, notably via the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, which is the implementing tool of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). A fundamental part of this strategy involves working towards a barrier-free Europe. In this context, the European Commission launched the Access City Award (ACA) in 2010.

Europe is now essentially an urban society, with four out of five EU citizens living in towns and cities. Around 120 million persons with disabilities live in the EU and the European population is becoming older. Accessibility in cities is therefore essential.

The objective of the Access City Award is to raise awareness and voice concerns about disability issues as well as promoting accessibility for everyone across European cities. The Access City Award rewards cities above 50,000 inhabitants that are exemplary in these areas. It also encourages every city in the European Union to ensure equal access to urban life for persons with disabilities and elderly people. This way, European cities can draw inspiration and work together towards concrete innovations. Moreover, the satisfaction involved in winning a prestigious European award spurs cities to invest in further efforts and boosts awareness within the city as well as in other cities. Such an award enables cities to inspire each other and share examples of good practices *in situ*. All winning cities are recognized for their consistent record of achieving high accessibility standards and commitment to ambitious goals.

**The Access City Award recognizes the efforts made by cities to become more accessible; promotes equal access to urban life for people with disabilities and allows local authorities to promote and share their best practices.** The Access City Award recognizes and celebrates a city's willingness, ability and efforts to become more accessible, in order to:

- guarantee equal access to fundamental rights;
- improve the quality of life of its population and ensure that everybody – regardless of age, mobility or ability – has equal access to all the resources and pleasures cities have to offer.

The Access City Award rewards each year three cities: first (sole winner of the title of Accessible City for a given year), second and third place. Applicant cities may also receive a special mention, depending on annual policy priorities or specific highlights of the submissions.

The overarching message that the award scheme aims to communicate to the local level is that **Europeans have a right to live in urban areas where services and leisure activities should be accessible to all. Cities should therefore strive to improve the quality of life for their citizens by enhancing accessibility.**

More information about the Access City Award is available on the European Commission's official website: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/accesscityaward>.

## 2. ACCESS CITY AWARD (ACA)

The European Commission intends to select the winner of the ACA 2021 title following a Europe-wide competition.

The award is open to cities of over 50,000 inhabitants in one of the EU Member States. In Member States with less than two such cities, urban areas composed of two or more towns may also participate if their combined population exceeds 50,000 inhabitants.

The outcome of the selection process of the European Access City Award is to award the title of EU Accessible City 2021 to three winning cities (first, second and third place).

Since the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Award (ACA2020), the European Commission awards a financial incentive of EUR 350.000. This amount shall be shared among the three winning cities.

**To that end, the call for submission of entries for the award of the EU Accessible City title 2021 is also to be seen as the rules of competition for awarding the financial incentive<sup>1</sup>.**

The title of winner of the Access City Award for the year 2021 ('title year') and the financial incentive is to be awarded in year 2020 ('award year') following the procedure and based on the criteria set out in section 3. The payment of the financial incentive occurs in one instalment and is conditioned and ruled by the requirements laid down in section 6 of this document.

The present rules of competition are established and published by the European Commission, which will launch and manage the competition with the support of the external ACA Secretariat. The financial incentive will be managed solely by the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs.

### **3. PROCEDURE AND CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATING A CITY FOR THE ACA 2021**

Cities will be awarded the title of winner of the Access City Award 2021 following a competition between applicant cities. The eligibility criteria for entering the competition are explained below.

#### **3.1 Eligibility criteria**

The title of winner of the Access City Award 2021 will be given to **three** cities (first, second and third place). This call for entries to the competition for the Access City Award 2021 is open to the following applicants:

- The submitting body must be a governmental authority of a city of over 50,000 inhabitants in one of the EU Member States<sup>2</sup>. A 'city' is understood to be an urban area, excluding metropolitan areas, larger urban zones and conurbations, and is understood as an

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<sup>1</sup> The proposed financial incentive will follow the rules on prizes as set out in the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the Union (Title IX, Articles 206 and 207).

<sup>2</sup> On the basis of the Withdrawal Agreement, the United Kingdom is to be treated as if it was a Member State during and after the transition period for actions which implement Union programmes and activities committed under the current Multiannual Financial Framework (2014-2020). Thus UK applicants are eligible to participate in this ACA prize 2021.

administrative unit governed by a city council or another form of democratically elected governmental body.

- In EU Member States with less than two such cities/Administrative entities, urban areas composed of two or more towns/Administrative entities may also participate if their combined population exceeds 50,000 inhabitants.
- Past winners of the first place may not apply for a period of five years after they held the Access City title for a given year<sup>3</sup>.
- The signatory should be the Mayor or highest-ranking city representative authorised, by national law, to legally represent the city.

All candidates shall complete all sections of the common application form for the Access City Award 2021 (see **Annex I**). Candidate cities are invited to comply with the following formal requirements when drafting their application. Applications that do not follow these requirements at preselection stage shall not be examined further:

- **Applicants are encouraged to submit their project proposal in English**, in order to facilitate the treatment of the proposals and speed up the evaluation process. It should be noted, however, that proposals submitted in any of the official languages of the EU will be accepted.
- Applications must be made by completing and submitting the online application form by the **deadline of 9 September 2020, 24:00 CET**.
- Candidate cities shall answer all the questions, complete all sections of the application form and adhere to the word limits indicated per section of the application form. Any words above the specified limits will not be taken into account and may leave application responses incomplete.
- For the pre-selection stage, applications shall adhere to the word limits indicated per section of the application form. Any words above the specified limit will not be taken into account and may leave application responses incomplete. Cities/entities may be contacted by the Secretariat in case of clerical and/or administrative errors or for missing documents.

Each candidate shall complete all sections of the **on-line tool**. In addition to the information provided in the application form, candidates must upload the Mayoral declaration, the Declaration on honour, the Legal Entity Form (LEF) and the Financial Identification Form (FIF) (see annexes in section 9). Candidates are also invited to upload – or provide a link to – a ten slides PowerPoint presentation<sup>4</sup> in order to illustrate and highlight the strong points of their application.

Up to five files (maximum size of one file is 10 MB) or links can be uploaded. The uploaded files can be in the national language(s) of EU MS countries, taking part to the competition.

Each uploaded document must be appropriately named. The file name should clearly state what the file represents or contains.

The ACA Guidance Note for applicants (**Annex II**) should be read in conjunction with the Application form for the European Access City Award 2021.

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<sup>3</sup> This provision took effect as of November 2019 at the occasion of the ACA 2020 and applies only to cities that won the first place in the ACA competition.

<sup>4</sup> Accepted file formats are: doc, docx, rtf, pps, ppsx, ppt, pptx, xls, xlsx, pdf, zip, gif, jpeg, jpg, png.

## **3.2 Exclusion**

The Commission, in its role as contracting authority, may exclude participants which are in one of the situations referred to from Article 136 and 141 of the Financial Regulation. Please refer to Annex IV (Declaration on honour).

### **3.2.1 Applicability of penalties**

Administrative sanctions may be imposed on applicants, who are guilty of misrepresentation, if any of the declarations or information provided as a condition for participating in this procedure prove to be false, in accordance with the conditions laid down in Article 138 of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Union and in proportion to the value of the financial incentive.

## **3.3 Composition of the National Jury and European Jury**

A National Jury will be set up in the member states where cities apply. The National Juries are composed of a minimum of three and a maximum of five members with different areas of experience. In principle, the composition of the National Jury will have the following structure:

- One representative of the National Disability Council.
- One representative of a national administration responsible for disability policy.
- One accessibility expert.
- One chairperson (if not member of one of the three above-mentioned categories).
- One expert for aging population.

Members of juries have equal status and decisions are taken by consensus. The role of the chairperson is to coordinate the work of the National Jury.

The Jury's members have the task to assess the applications submitted by the cities (see section 4.2 below). The assessment will include qualitative evaluations, and a peer review of each application. The National Juries will establish a shortlist of maximum three cities per Member States based on the rating, per criteria, as set out in section 4.1

The national candidates that are admitted to the second phase of the competition will be assessed by the European Jury. Six persons will compose the European Jury. They will be representing the European Commission and at least two of the following organisations and/or field of expertise:

- European Disability Forum.
- Age Platform Europe.
- Expert on built environment and public spaces.
- Expert on transport and related infrastructure.
- Expert on ICT.
- Expert on public facilities and services.

The European Jury (see section 4.3), will further assess the shortlisted cities' by applying the same criteria and maximum rates used by the National Juries and described in sections 4.1. and 4.2. below.

### 3.4 The National Jury

The European Commission's Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs along with the European Disability Forum set up the Juries. The members of the National Jury carry out their tasks *pro bono* and are supported by the Access City Awards Secretariat. The aim of the National Jury is to select up to three cities (called national candidates), among the national applicants, according to the evaluation criteria described in section 4.1. They also have to communicate the shortlisted cities to the Award Secretariat. The National Jury's tasks are set out in section 4.1. Members of the National Jury are individuals appointed in personal capacity and act independently and in the public interest. Individuals appointed as members of the National Jury in a personal capacity must disclose any circumstances that could give rise to a conflict of interest by submitting a 'declaration of absence of conflict of interests' through the online platform devoted to the ACA selection process. Each member of the National Jury will perform his/her task from remote, via the online platform; exchange of e-mails and/or by phone calls.

### 3.5 The European Jury

The European Commission's Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs will appoint the European Jury members. The European Jury will be composed as set out in section 3.3. The Jury's tasks are set out in section 4.1 above. Members of the European Jury are individuals appointed in personal capacity and act independently, are bound to act with impartiality, confidentiality and objectivity and in the public interest. Moreover the members of the European Jury are required to have proficiency level in English. Individuals appointed as members of the European Jury in a personal capacity must disclose any circumstances that could give rise to a conflict of interest by signing a 'declaration of absence of conflict of interests' (as per Article 61 of the Financial Regulation) at the EU jury meeting. Each member of the European Jury will perform his/her task from remote, via the online platform; exchange of e-mails and/or by phone calls.

### 3.6 Indicative timeline

Tasks	Indicative period
Opening of the applications	Beginning of June 2020
Closing of the applications	9 September 2020 24:00 CET
Evaluation by the national juries	Beginning of October 2020
Evaluation by the European Jury	End of October 2020
Information to Applicants	Mid-November 2020
Access City Award Ceremony	2 December 2020

## 4. EVALUATION PROCESS

### 4.1. Selection and Evaluation process

The selection of the cities to be awarded with the title of EU Accessible City 2021 is assessed on the basis of a standard set of evaluation criteria to ensure consistency, transparency and equity in the process.

The criteria used and their weight are specified in section 4.2. Applicant cities at the national level that do not obtain at least 60 points cannot be admitted to the European level of the competition.

The selection takes place in two phases: a **pre-selection** at the national level and a **final selection at the European level**. The ACA Secretariat shall check the received applications on the formal and legal requirements as set out in section 3.1 and 3.2. Applications, which do not meet these requirements shall not be examined further and will be excluded from the competition

➤ *Pre-selection*

The pre-selection phase will be carried out by National Juries. These Juries will be established in each Member States where cities have applied to the ACA competition. A shortlist of maximum three cities per Member State (defined as national candidates) will be designated by the National Juries and submitted to the European Jury members.

Non-shortlisted cities will receive a communication with the assessment of their application.

➤ *Final Selection*

Out of the pre-selected national candidates, the European Jury selects the winners of the first, second and third place.

In addition, the EU Jury may decide to award one or several further “Special Mention(s)” depending on the current context and projects/policies or specific highlights of the submissions (e.g. access to cultural heritage<sup>5</sup>; access to work; smart cities etc.).

The National Juries’ assessment of the shortlisted cities is presented to the European Jury in the form of an Assessment Report, prior to the jury meeting and serves as a background document for the deliberation of the Jury. Non-shortlisted cities receive a communication detailing how the city could improve its application for future editions of the competition. However, the latter communication is not made publically available and it is for the use of the relevant city only.

➤ *Jury Deliberation*

The members of the European Jury will meet in Brussels at the latest one month prior to the Award’s Ceremony<sup>6</sup>. The Jury will designate, by consensus, the winner, the second and the third place as well as the cities winning a special mention, if any. Their deliberation will be based on the Assessment report received by the National Juries.

For the sake of transparency of the overall process, the findings of the EU Jury concerning the first three winning cities shall be made publically available on the ACA website.

➤ *Award stage*

The winner of the European Access City Award 2021 will officially be announced at the Award Ceremony in Brussels on 2 December 2020.

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<sup>5</sup> As a follow-up of the European year of Cultural Heritage

<sup>6</sup> National juries shall carry out their pre-selection by early October and the EU Jury hearings will take place before the end of October 2020 as set out in section 3.6.

## 4.2 Award criteria

Both National and EU Jury members will assess the candidates cities based on the following evaluation criteria:

### 1) Relevance to the objectives

The applicant shall provide a description of actions, policies and initiatives - whether already implemented or at the planning stage - in all four key areas of accessibility:

- a. the built environment and public spaces;
- b. transportation and related infrastructures;
- c. information and communication, including information and communication technologies (ICT);
- d. public facilities and services.

The successful applicant has to demonstrate a coherent approach to accessibility across all four areas and an ambitious vision in tackling accessibility in the city.

### 2) Ownership, level of commitment

Applicants should outline the structures or framework set up in the city's administration to implement accessibility actions. **The applications has to demonstrate that the actions implemented or planned are part of a coherent strategy or policy framework, rather than just *ad hoc* projects.** The accessibility strategy must be mainstreamed in the city's policies and its regulations. A policy statement/commitment on accessibility at high level of responsibility must be visible. Information about appropriate resources (staff, budget, etc.) allocated to implement these policies should be provided. Considerations of cost of accessibility must be combined with an assessment of the expected benefits.

### 3) Impact

The city's policies/initiatives shall have a demonstrable positive impact on the everyday life of persons with disabilities, and on the overall quality of life in the city. Examples of initiatives initially targeting persons with disabilities shall be provided, explaining how they benefit wider parts of the population, when relevant. The applicants shall include qualitative and quantitative data to support claims of success and provide concrete examples. It is important to mention project(s) – if any - involving people with intellectual disabilities. Planned initiatives and policies will be assessed on the basis of their coherence and potential impact.

### 4) Quality and sustainability of results

Applicants shall explain what structures, mechanisms and processes have been put in place to ensure the quality and sustainability of the results achieved. **The quality of results is defined in terms of improvements made to the level of accessibility and advancing compliance with standards and legislation.** Delivering sustainable results requires continuous efforts, secure resources and the establishment of a sound structure; evaluation and monitoring mechanisms (for regular checking, the notification and repairing of problems, the handling of complaints, etc.) are essential to evaluate success.

#### 5) Involvement of persons with disabilities and relevant partners

Active and clear involvement of persons with disabilities, their representative organizations, and accessibility experts must be demonstrated in the planning, implementation and maintenance of city's policies and initiatives aimed at increased accessibility. The applicants shall also outline how they raise awareness around accessibility; whether and how they disseminate, exchange and share experience and good practices with other cities at local, regional, national and/or European level.

Criterion	Maximum no. of points
1. Relevance to the objectives	20
2. Ownership, level of commitment	20
3. Impact	20
4. Quality and sustainability of results	20
5. Involvement of persons with disabilities and relevant partners	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	100

### 5. ARRANGEMENTS AND FINAL DATES FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

The competition will run from 2 June 2020 to 9 September 2020. In order to submit a complete online application, the following should be provided:

- A Completed on-line application form (Annex I);
- The relevant Mayoral Declaration (Annex III should be signed by the Mayor or the highest ranking City Representative, authorised by national law to legally represent the city/urban area) as well as the other required documents as set out in section 3.1

The application form must be submitted through the **on-line tool only**. Applications must be fully completed and submitted. In addition to the information provided in the application form, candidates are invited to upload – or send links to – up to five documents supporting and illustrating the strong points of the application.

All queries should be directed to the Secretariat: [secretariat@accesscityaward.eu](mailto:secretariat@accesscityaward.eu)

Time limit for submission of applications is on 9 September 2020 at 24:00 CET (GMT +1). Once the application is submitted, a confirmation page appears. Applications will subsequently undergo validation and applicants will be informed no later than two months following the deadline of submission set out above if their application has been accepted into the competition or not.

For formal requirements, please refer to the criteria set out in section 3 above.

## **6. THE FINANCIAL INCENTIVE**

The total amount of the financial incentive is EUR 350.000 (three hundred and fifty thousand euro). It shall be awarded to the three winning cities of the Access City Award.

The funds shall be allocated as follows:

1. 150.000 € to the winner of the title of Accessible City 2021 (first place)
2. 120.000 € to the winner of the second place
3. 80.000 € to the winner of the third place

### **6.1 Payment arrangements**

The winners of the Access City Awards will be announced at the Award's Ceremony (see section 4.1). The financial incentive will be awarded through bank transfer after the announcement and designation of the winning cities at the official Award's Ceremony. The payment of the amount will be settled in one instalment executed within 60 days from the official announcement of the winners. The necessary financial information (see **Annexes IV, V and VI**) shall be submitted together with the application.

### **6.2 Sole liability of contestants**

The European Commission and the ACA Secretariat may not be held responsible for any claim relating to the activities carried out in the framework of the European Access City Awards competition by the contestant. The Commission shall not be held liable for any damage caused or sustained by any of the contestants, including any damage caused to third parties as a consequence of or during the implementation of the activities related to the competition.

### **6.3 Checks and audits**

Once the authorising officer of the European Commission has established the award decision for the financial incentive, the contestants accept that the Commission, OLAF and the Court of Auditors may carry out checks and audits in relation to the competition and the received financial incentive.

### **6.4 Processing of personal data**

The Commission is bound by Regulation 2018/1725 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions and bodies. All Financial information that is needed comprise the dully-signed Legal Entity Form of the City and the Financial Identification Form. Personal data contained as part of the submitted application form shall be processed in accordance with the regulations in place. Contestants may, on written request, gain access to their personal data and correct any information that is inaccurate or incomplete (see section 8 for contact details). The European Commission shall be authorised to publish or to refer to, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, the following information:

- The name of the winning city
- The amount of the financial incentive awarded

- The subject of the award

## **6.5 Applicable law and competent jurisdiction**

Regarding the award and payment of the financial incentive, the Law of the Union applies. The competent court or arbitration tribunal to hear disputes in the General Court of the Court of Justice of the European Union: General Court Rue du Fort Niedergrünwald L-2925 Luxembourg Tel: (352) 4303-1, Fax: (352) 4303 2100, E-mail: [GeneralCourt.Registry@curia.europa.eu](mailto:GeneralCourt.Registry@curia.europa.eu)

## **7. CONDITIONS FOR CANCELLATION OF THE COMPETITION**

The Commission has the right to terminate the competition before its closing date without any obligation to award and to indemnify the competition ants. The Commission has the right to decide not to award any financial incentive if no applications are received, if no applications meet the eligibility criteria or if the Jury decides not to propose an award of the financial incentive to any of the eligible applications.

## **8. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The application process, the work of the National and European Juries are facilitated by the ACA Secretariat, which is run by Ecorys Europe EEIG. The Secretariat also assists with PR activities related to the award scheme through the ACA website and through various communication channels such as brochures, social media, film clips etc. Contact the Secretariat via E-mail: [secretariat@accesscityaward.eu](mailto:secretariat@accesscityaward.eu) or the European Commission at: [EMPL-EDPD-ACA@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EMPL-EDPD-ACA@ec.europa.eu) .

## **9. ANNEXES**

**I Application form**

**II Guidance Note**

**III Mayoral declaration**

**IV Declaration on honour**

**V Legal Entity Form (LEF)**

**VI Financial Identification Form (FIF)**