



Access•City

Award 2015

Examples of best practice for making
EU cities more accessible



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Foreword



As Commissioner responsible for the rights of persons with disabilities, I am delighted with the leadership on accessibility shown by the cities participating in the 5th edition of the now well established Access City Award.

The Commission is committed to equality of opportunities for persons with disabilities. Accessibility policy plays a key role in removing the barriers people with disabilities still face in their daily lives. I would like to congratulate all EU cities which participated in the Access City Award 2015 for leading the way in making life more accessible for all.

This year's winning cities stand out for their clear determination to make accessibility a permanent and non-negotiable part of the city's planning and development.

I have been very impressed with the range and quality of initiatives put forward by all the EU cities which entered the 2015 award and by the evident commitment to delivering accessibility.

This brochure gives a snapshot of how each of the cities has taken accessibility to heart and worked with people with disabilities and older people to find ways of meeting needs and opening opportunities for equal and independent living.

I warmly congratulate all the cities featured in this brochure and I encourage cities all over Europe to take ideas and inspiration from their achievements to help build together a barrier-free Europe.

Marianne Thyssen

Commissioner for Employment,
Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility

Access•City Award 2015

Introduction

The Access City Award scheme was launched in 2010 to promote accessibility in the urban environment for Europe's growing population of older people and people with disabilities.

Every year since then, the award has seen entries from cities all over Europe, each with a passion and commitment to improve accessibility for its citizens and visitors.

Accessibility is a priority area for the European Commission, as it is for all Member States. The award scheme helps to highlight examples of innovative thinking and best practice which can inspire other cities, perhaps facing similar challenges.

This year's winning and Special Mention cities – from right across Europe – present a wide range of cultural, topographical and climatic conditions which have an impact on delivering accessibility.

Each has risen to the challenge and come up with innovative and sustainable ways of achieving equality and independence for their disabled and older citizens.



Borås, Sweden

Winner

Borås, the 2015 Access City Award winner, is an historic city with a population of 107,000. It is the second largest city in Western Sweden with a long history of commerce in general and the textile and fashion industries in particular.

“Accessible for All”

One of the key factors that has made Borås a winner is the clear and long standing political commitment which the city has made to the concept “a Borås accessible for all”.

The underlying goal is to ensure that the environment of the city does not discriminate against any of its inhabitants. Both financial and human resources have been put in place to deliver this goal and the city works closely with the Borås disability advisory board in all matters.

Delivering and improving accessibility standards

Borås has established an accessibility database which lists all the public buildings that meet accessibility standards. In addition, shops, restaurants, dentists and other private amenities have been inspected and classified. They have also been given feedback where necessary to improve their accessibility

An accessibility award has been set up to encourage private businesses in the city to improve their accessibility.

Borås also applies accessibility standards in the built environment which go beyond the legal norms. It provides a subsidy to make private housing accessible, to ensure that people with disabilities have equal opportunities for independent living.

“

The municipality and private companies think about accessibility across the city. Public buildings are introducing route markers both indoors and outdoors as well as Braille information. There has been a big change over the last 10 years.

Ulf Willberg

”



Barrier-free public transport

Public transport in Borås is free for disabled and older people in addition to the specialist mobility service which offers an unlimited number of trips.

All of the city's buses and bus stops are accessible to people with mobility difficulties as well as to those with vision impairment. Pedestrian crossings are in the process of being equipped with level access, acoustic signals and tactile guidance.

Using technology

Borås has made an ITS Commitment to make the urban environment accessible for all citizens irrespective of ability or age.

The accessibility database is available in easy read and voice synthesis versions, and the city's website and newsletter also have accessibility features and are connected to a telephone service for those who need support.

A scheme to install digital "locks without keys" in 3,500 apartments and 1,500-2,000 entrance doors has given greater personal security to many older people. Easier access for care services is also provided as part of the scheme, such as responsive alarm calls.

Maintaining standards

Accessibility of public facilities and services is guided by an accessibility strategist and an accessibility advisory officer employed by the city. They work closely with the municipality's disability advisory board and with organisations representing older people to ensure that accessibility standards are achieved and maintained and to coordinate activity on accessibility across all aspects of the city's life.

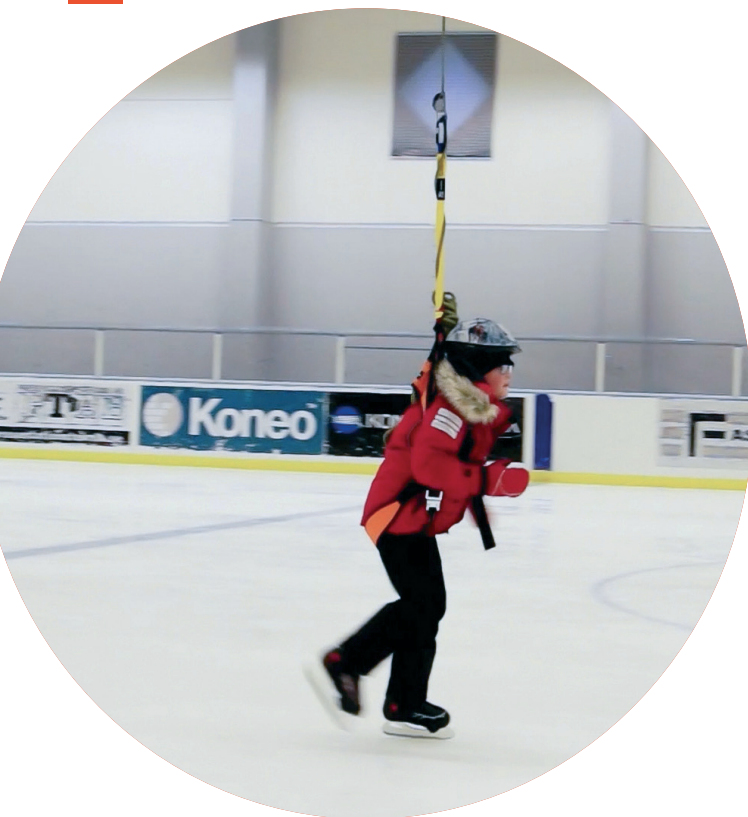
This includes availability of information on accessibility to disability organisations, architects, construction companies, private businesses and anyone else who needs it.

“

I think Borås provides opportunities for people to move. Pavements are easy to use, free bus travel for us over 65's is fantastic. The buses are easy to get in and out of.

Alf Svanberg

”



Collaboration: the key to accessibility

Sustainability and continuity of results are assured through the close working relationship between the city and the advisory boards of older and disabled people.

This collaborative approach is key to shaping the city's agenda for accessibility and determining priorities. Every department in the municipality has a contact person with a responsibility for accessibility issues.

Wellbeing of all citizens

Wellbeing of people with disabilities is also important to the city with accessible gyms for older people, accessible ice rinks, playgrounds and many other facilities.

Several nature reserves have also been made accessible so everyone can enjoy the countryside on equal terms.



“

I have been a wheelchair user for more than 14 years. Over that time I have seen a big change in Borås in terms of accessibility in the streets (removing raised kerbs). Facilities for swimming and natural areas have also been made accessible, which to me means a freer and more independent life.

Christian Hedin

”

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Helsinki, Finland

Second
prize

The historic city of Helsinki, the capital of Finland, dates back to 1530. It is now the centre of an urban region of some 1.4 million inhabitants.

Its achievement of second place in the 2015 Access City Award is the result of many years of hard work and commitment to accessibility. Helsinki's systematic approach to the planning and delivery of accessibility is particularly impressive.



When physical barriers are reduced, mental barriers can also be overcome. That helps people cope with everyday life.

Timo Lehtonen



The very harsh winter conditions in Helsinki have added an extra challenge to finding accessibility solutions that can withstand the cold and snow.

Accessibility planning

The city of Helsinki's accessibility plan dates back to 2005 and forms the cornerstone of today's accessibility strategies and policies. The aim is to incorporate accessibility in all future planning and developing as an integral and non-negotiable part of the development process.

The plan commits all of the city's departments and institutions to including accessibility in all their activities.

Two levels of accessibility, special and basic, are included in the plan. The special level applies to the city centre, pedestrian facilities and public transport. The basic level, which follows good practice but does not include features such as street heating and tactile paving, applies everywhere else.

Helsinki employs a permanent accessibility representative who works closely with the accessibility advisory board which is led by the city's deputy mayor.



In Helsinki, an electric wheelchair user like myself can use the metro with ease. Lifts and platforms are easy to use, and you can also use buses very well.

It is great that many libraries and museums, and the new music centre, have facilities for persons with disabilities. They included the Helsinki disability council in the planning process, and disabled visitors had a voice already in the planning stage. We are able to discuss with the architects and others who were designing the house; this is crucial, in my view.



Pirkko Mahlamäki

Getting around the city

Public transport in Helsinki is very largely accessible with 100% of the Metro and 99% of buses already meeting access standards. Work is in progress on trains and trams to bring them up to standard.

Access information

The city's website, Helsinki for All, meets all accessibility standards and includes information on a wide range of topics.

The service map available on the internet enables residents to discover the accessibility of city offices and services. In 2012, the service map had over 300,000 monthly users. Feedback is invited from users on further improvements to the city's accessibility.

Targeting accessibility

In 2010 the Helsinki for All project defined routes and areas of the city (including streets and open spaces) to be equipped with either the basic or special level of accessibility. This careful and systematic targeting of

accessibility improvements across the city has meant that the defined accessibility goals are an integral part the planning, building and maintenance carried out by the city's different administrative branches.

Practical guidelines (SuRaKu) were developed in 2004 between Helsinki and a number of other Finnish cities, and now form the basis of the city of Helsinki Accessibility Plan. The guidelines include criteria for evaluating the accessibility of outdoor locations and instruction cards explaining how to apply them.

As part of this comprehensive process of improving accessibility there has been a special focus on making playgrounds accessible with play equipment and furniture selected to be accessible to everyone. Other current projects include upgrading accessibility at a library and a hospital.



An example from the accessible symbols bank, available free on the city's website.

Developing mapping tools

The city has developed tools for assessing levels of accessibility which include guidance on steps to be taken. These tools, combined with training of relevant staff, have helped the districts within Helsinki to carry out their own surveys and assessments of accessibility needs and priorities for improvement.



“

Accessibility has been brought to every administration branch as a part of normal work. For example as an accessible route, electronic information or an accessible service.

New possibilities have opened up for visually impaired people by making audible maps. With audible maps we can move independently in the buildings and their surroundings.

”

Timo Lehtonen

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Ljubljana, Slovenia

Third
prize

Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, with a population of over 280,000 has managed to preserve its rich historical legacy. It is a city with large expanses of green space that span across almost three quarters of the city's land.

Ljubljana's achievement in winning third prize in the awards reflects its strong commitment over many years at both political and operational levels to remove obstacles and improve accessibility across all aspects of its life.

“

I love Ljubljana. Judging by how accessible it is, it loves me back! To get to the city centre, I take the city bus. Then I take the Cavalier electric vehicle which takes me to the funicular leading to the castle. I like to roam the streets of Ljubljana and I am happy that as a wheelchair user I am able to do so.

Nino Batagelj

”

A barrier-free city centre

The city centre has been closed to motorised traffic since 2007. To make it more accessible, dropped crossings and tactile paths have been introduced. Gaps between granite cobblestones have been filled in.

A free service using electric vehicles is available for everyone, especially people with disabilities and older people.



Photo: Nik Rovar



Photo: Nik Rovar

Access to the castle, one of the most visited tourist sites in both Ljubljana and Slovenia, is provided via a funicular railway and a tourist train equipped with a ramp.

A tactile model of the castle is also available for visually impaired people.

Boats on the river are accessible to wheelchair users through the Butcher's Bridge in the city centre.

Ljubljana's tourist website provides information on accessible tourist facilities, while tourist information offices are also accessible and provide tours for people with mobility difficulties.



Photo: Dunja Wedam



In recent years, Ljubljana has developed into a modern city which caters for the mobility needs of people with disabilities. As a blind person, I can say that the audible warnings and audible announcements on the bus have become almost indispensable.

Luj Šprohar



Improving access to transport

Ljubljana received a Special Mention for its work on making transport vehicles and infrastructure accessible in the 2012 Access City Awards. Since then, there has been systematic progress towards an even more accessible public transport network.

There are regular seminars for bus drivers on meeting the needs of disabled and older passengers. Training in disability awareness is mandatory for all bus drivers.

There is an on-demand transport service for people with disabilities. In 2014, Ljubljana introduced special identification cards for people to use in case they need assistance. Travel in the city is free for disabled residents and those travelling with them.

Listening to disabled and older people

Ljubljana ensures that all meetings take place in accessible venues. The Mayor is available every month at open days to listen to people's suggestions for improvement.

Older and disabled people are directly involved in city policy-making through mayoral advisory bodies which offer advice on priorities for access improvements both to the city authorities and to private sector providers (including restaurants, bars and hotels).

Action plans for improving accessibility with clear deadlines and concrete objectives both for disabled and older people are made and implemented on a regular basis.

On-line accessibility

Ljubljana's city website, which is updated daily, is in line with access requirements. There are also specialised websites for older people and for people with disabilities. The latter include a database of accessibility to 240 public buildings in the city.

E-points providing free access to computers with internet access are available throughout Ljubljana, as well as in the premises of all 17 municipal districts, of which eight are accessible to wheelchair users.

Since 2010 the city of Ljubljana has been providing free IT courses for older people and by 2014 nearly 11,000 older people had taken part.

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Arona, Spain

Special Mention

for Public Facilities and Services

Arona is a city in the southern part of Tenerife in the Canary Islands. It has a resident population of just over 86,000.

It has been a major destination for tourists with disabilities since the 1960s and the Special Mention awarded for Public Facilities and Services is particularly in recognition of its exceptional work on accessible tourism.

Accessibility goals for tourism

At the heart of Arona's commitment to accessible tourism are three key points. The first is to create awareness and understanding amongst all those involved in the delivery of tourism and other services on the island. The second is to develop appropriate technical solutions to accessibility problems, and the third is to ensure that there is a strategic approach – at both social and political levels – to plan future developments and ensure that errors are not made.

The main priorities set by Arona are to create an accessible tourist experience for everyone, to promote integration and personal independence and to make everyone involved in the delivery of tourism sensitive to and aware of how best to meet the needs of older and disabled tourists.



“

Playa de Las Vistas is one of the best accessible beaches in the world, you can swim in the sea every day of the year and for free. A team of lifeguards accompany you into the sea with the help of an aquatic chair. I can also sunbathe with my family since there are very large sun umbrellas and hammocks.

Emily Smith (British tourist)

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The accessibility plan

In addition to many hotels with facilities for guests with disabilities, the accessibility plan, developed in 2003, aims to improve the accessibility of Las Vistas beach, one of the most accessible beaches in Spain.

Initiatives include creating a seven kilometre accessible promenade. Access facilities in the tourist sector include excursions for whale watching and other activities which are adapted for people with physical, hearing and vision impairments.

Arona attributes its success in accessible tourism to comprehensive planning and to the systematic engagement of disabled people in identifying priorities and advising on solutions.

Accessible information

Arona's tourist offices are, of course, accessible. Facilities available to tourists include Braille and tactile maps, adapted digital information points and sign language interpretation.

An "Arona without Barriers" guide is widely available in three languages and provides information and promotional material on accessibility around the area.

Arona also provides disability awareness information and training to staff of the municipality and also to businesses and tourism professionals covering legal requirements and best practice in meeting the needs of older and disabled people.

Getting around

Transport available to disabled tourists includes 13 accessible taxis which provide a preferential service for disabled people.



Its entertainment and shopping areas are designed for everyone. The Avenue of the Americas, also known as Golden Mile, is an avenue that offers six malls adapted for people with mobility limitations: cafes, restaurants, shops, are a favourite for all tourists.

Emily Smith (British tourist)



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Luxembourg City, Luxembourg

Special Mention

for Public Facilities and Services

The city of Luxembourg dates from the year 963. It is built on difficult rocky terrain which, combined with its narrow streets, make accessibility very challenging. Its population is just over 105,000.

Luxembourg has been awarded a Special Mention for Public Facilities and Services. The jury were particularly impressed with the efforts to make the electoral process accessible to all citizens.

Luxembourg's goal is to have a city where everyone can live comfortably.

Integration and specific needs

Involving disabled and older people in decision-making processes is both a political and a strategic priority for Luxembourg.

An integration and special needs department was set up in 2012 to provide a clear focus on improving access to public facilities and services. People with disabilities are engaged in all of the city's access initiatives through a participatory committee.

There is also a range of activities every year to highlight the need for integration and to promote understanding of people's needs. These include awareness raising weeks which highlight accessibility issues through debates, exhibitions, and sports and arts events.

There is a strong policy of employing disabled people, including people with learning disabilities within the city. Currently just under 5% of municipal employees have what the city terms "specific needs".





“

The municipality of Luxembourg puts a lot of effort into making the city accessible to all. Political decisions and the cooperation of its departments make this possible. As a member of a working group of the participatory committee, I can share my knowledge and experience to actively participate in this process.

Tessy Wies

”

Removing barriers

All new construction in Luxembourg is built to meet accessibility standards, and older buildings and facilities are progressively upgraded.

Work is done to clear specifications drawn up by ADAPTH, an advisory body on accessibility of the built environment which focusses on the promotion of universal design. The advice of ADAPTH is required during construction to ensure that the best access solutions are found.

Access to polling stations

One key development in the city of Luxembourg has been to ensure that all polling stations are accessible.

Initiatives include a free “election bus” to bring disabled and older people to the polling stations, the option to vote from a seated position, additional parking places at polling stations for disabled people, ramps installed at non accessible polling stations and a detailed map indicating the location and accessibility of all polling stations.

“

The city of Luxembourg pushed “barrier-free living” to a new level when they organised easily accessible voting booths for all citizens during the last legislative elections. Thanks to their efforts, I could exercise my right to vote and express myself as a free citizen.

Motiani Kumar

”



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Logroño, Spain

Special Mention

for Built Environment and Public Spaces

“

The city of Logroño is always improving accessibility somewhere in the city. For years, we have noticed that the city is continuously improving its accessibility.

”

Juan José Rodríguez

Logroño is in the heart of Spain's Rioja wine growing region. It has a population of 153,000. Its historic city centre, with an ancient fortified area, defines the character of the city.

Logroño has been awarded a Special Mention for its access initiatives in the Built Environment and Public Spaces category.

Integral plan for accessibility

Logroño has been working on accessibility issues since 1995, starting with a thorough analysis of the barriers to access. That led to the development of its first integral plan for accessibility which is now regularly updated.

Priorities for the current plan include; ramps at crossing points, tactile paving, relocation of street furniture that creates obstacles on the footway and acoustic warnings at all of the city's pedestrian crossings.

An interactive street map has been developed to identify accessible parking places, public transport stops and accessible routes around the city.

Other ambitious goals include total adaptation of all Logroño's public transport and redevelopment of streets, squares and parks to make them more accessible.

Universal accessibility bylaw

A universal accessibility municipal bylaw comes into force in 2015. This will establish minimum regulations for accessibility as well as some essential and compulsory criteria.

From October 2015 a permanent post will be created for a municipal accessibility inspector to oversee and promote all the accessibility initiatives across the city.



Participation by disabled and older people

Underpinning all of the accessibility work in Logroño is a strong commitment to active participation by disabled and older people in all stages of policy development and implementation.

In addition to a technical committee for the development of the integral city accessibility plan there are many other committees and commissions helping to identify priorities and agree strategies.

Since 2012 there has also been a municipal disabled persons committee which ensures that disabled and older people are well represented on all the relevant consultative and other bodies.

Spreading the word

Logroño is one of the founder members of the Cities for Accessibility Network and currently vice-president of the Spanish Smart Cities Network.

It uses these and other connections (for example with its twinned cities in France, Germany, Italy and the UK) to promote accessibility widely across Europe.



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Budapest, Hungary

Special Mention

for Transport and Infrastructure

Budapest is the capital of Hungary with a population of 1.7 million inhabitants. The city spans the banks of the Danube and the two halves are linked by eight bridges and two metro tunnels.

Budapest has been awarded a Special Mention in the Transport and Infrastructure category.

Urban Development Concept

The Budapest 2030 Urban Development Concept defines the future vision for the city. Several large scale re-development projects have been carried out since 2006 including significant improvements to the quality of roads and public space.

This strategy includes an important focus on social equality for the city.

All new or redeveloped public buildings have to be accessible based on clear regulations and standards. Numbers of accessible public toilets in the city are also increasing and information about their location in the city is available on the web.

Integrated approach to transport accessibility

Budapest established a new integrated transport organising authority the BKK centre in 2010. BKK controls transport-related investment in the city. The first sustainable urban mobility plan includes ambitious plans for future transport accessibility.

Achievements to date include full accessibility of the new metro line, both rolling stock and stations, and accessible buses running on 97% of routes, with



As someone with very little sight who travels alone every day around Budapest – to get to work, to go shopping, for sports, to meet my friends – there are a number of improvements which make my life simpler. These include audible announcements to tell you which is the next bus or tram to arrive which we visually impaired people can activate ourselves using a remote control. The authority think more and more about people with disabilities and they ask our opinions at the planning stage of new initiatives.





investment in more than 500 low floor buses in the last four years. Audible real time information is available at nearly 300 bus stops.

All trolley buses are also accessible together with the two busiest tram lines. New accessible trams will come into service in 2015.

Accessible ferry and river boat services are available, as well as an on-demand minibus service for those who need it.

Accessible customer service points are available at two of Budapest's key transport interchange points.

All of these developments involve people with disabilities from the earliest stages of planning and throughout the implementation

process. Older and disabled people are also engaged in providing feedback on new developments and projects. This data is used to make further improvements and to influence future developments.

“

It is very easy for me, as a wheelchair user, to take the metro. I don't need any help. Access is much easier than ever before. I can get to places that used to be unreachable for me. And now I can earn a living just like everyone else.

Judit Szekeres

”

“

The barrier-free design of Metro Line 4 is the result of many years of discussions, which I had the opportunity to take part in. As a user, I am pleased that the subways and platforms are equipped with tactile guide strips, which are easy to detect and help both with orientation and safety. The light strip on the edge of the platform helps visually impaired people to locate themselves correctly on the platform, and also shows the train's arrival.

Erszébet Földesi

”

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Participating in the Access•City Award 2016

The Access City Award is organised by the European Commission together with the European Disability Forum. It encourages cities to share their experience and to improve accessibility for the benefit of all.

Would you like to have your city's projects featured in the next booklet of the Access City Award? Do you want to share your experiences and actions with other cities?

Take part in the Access•City Award 2016!

The sixth edition of the Award will be launched in spring 2015 (date to be confirmed).

Applications can be made by completing and submitting the online application form by the deadline set.

Detailed information will be available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1141&langId=en>

Participating in the Access City Award is not only an opportunity to gain recognition, but also a unique chance to review the current situation in your city for your own internal auditing purposes and to measure progress.

Studying the questions in the application form is an excellent way to analyse your accessibility policies and to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

Who can apply?

The applicant must be a government authority of a city of over 50,000 inhabitants in one of the EU Member States. In Member States with fewer than two such cities, urban areas composed of two or more towns may also participate if their combined population exceeds 50,000 inhabitants.

As the Access City Award cannot be won by the same city in two consecutive years, the winning city in 2015 is not invited to take part again in 2016.

All other cities, including the runners up, the second and third prize winners and the special mention cities, are encouraged to participate again.

To help prepare for participation in the competition, the guidance note and the participation rules are available in all official EU languages on the Access City Award website:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=88&eventId=1023&further-Events=yes>

Selection process

The juries will consider measures taken and planned in the following areas:

- the built environment and public spaces;
- transport and related infrastructure;
- information and communication, including new technologies (ICTs);
- public facilities and services.

The juries will evaluate the applications taking into account the following **five criteria**:

- 1.** Scope of the actions
- 2.** Ownership, level of commitment
- 3.** Impact
- 4.** Quality and sustainability of results
- 5.** Involvement of people with disabilities and relevant partners

The selection process is divided into two phases: pre-selection at national level and final selection at European level.

The National Juries in each country

select a maximum of three cities from among the national applicants using the evaluation criteria provided by the European Commission.

These national candidates go forward to the second phase of the competition and are assessed by the **European Jury**.

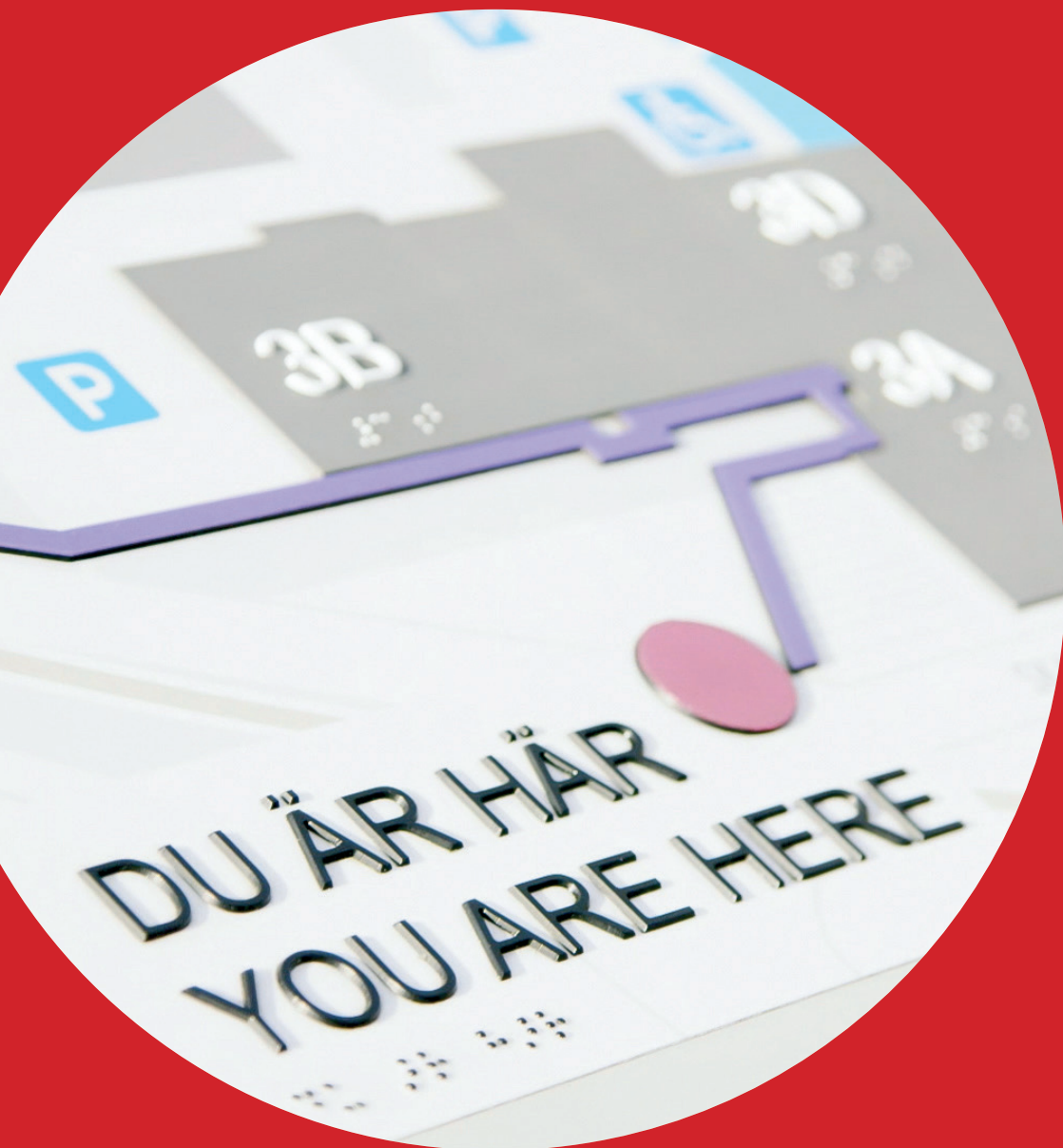
The winner of the Access City Award 2016 will be announced on 3 December 2015. The ceremony is part of the annual European Day of People with Disabilities Conference in Brussels.

The Access City Award Secretariat

The Access City Award Secretariat can assist with the preparation. If you need any additional information, please contact: secretariat@accesscityaward.eu



The three trophies
Access-City Award 2015



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