



European
Commission



ACCESS CITY Award **2020**

Examples of best practice in
making EU cities more accessible

#EUACCESSCITY



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Foreword



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 *Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality*

It is a great pleasure to write the foreword to this brochure that not only celebrates the winners of the 10th Access City Award, but also features the nine previous winners of this prestigious and successful competition.

Like my predecessors, I endeavour to ensure that accessibility is high on the agenda both for the Commission and for all Member States. We must all continue to work towards our goal of a truly barrier-free Europe for persons with disabilities and older persons.

I have followed the Access City Award scheme over the years and have learned about the extraordinary achievements and commitments to accessibility from cities all over Europe.

This year's winners and Special Mention cities provide inspiration and examples to other cities that are not yet tackling the challenges of accessibility we all face.

The first prize winner, Warsaw, has made huge progress in a short time and illustrates what can be done with a combination of political commitment and engagement with persons with disabilities and older persons.

With awards for cities from Poland, Sweden and Estonia to Spain, France and Greece, we see that the movement towards accessibility is truly Europe-wide and that accessibility is firmly embedded in the agenda.

I wish every success to all the cities competing for the Award in the future.

Access City Award 2020



Easy-to-read version

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Who are we?

We are the European Commission and the European Disability Forum.

The **European Commission** suggests laws that could make Europe better.



The **European Disability Forum** works to protect the rights of people with disabilities in Europe.

Often, we work together to make things better for people with disabilities in Europe. For example, every year we work together to make the **Access City Award** happen.



What is the Access City Award?

The **Access City Award** is a prize we give every year to cities that work hard to be accessible.

A city is accessible when all people can live in it and use all things and services without problems.



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For example, a city is accessible when all people can easily:

- Get the bus or the metro to go to work.
- Use ticket machines to buy a ticket.
- Go around the streets or get in public buildings like hospitals and town halls.
- Get information that they can understand.

This is important for all people and mostly for people with disabilities and older people. Often things are not accessible for them.

If things are not accessible, they will not be able to take part in the community like all other people.

They will be left out.

For example, if buses do not have ramps, people in wheelchairs will not be able to take them to go to work.

Or if information is not easy to read, people with intellectual disabilities and other people may not be able to read and understand it.

So, the Access City Award is a chance for cities in Europe to show the work they do to become accessible for all people.

The 2020 Access City Award is a special one because it celebrates its 10th anniversary.



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That means that the Access City Award started happening 10 years ago and it continues today.

It is great that the Access City Award keeps happening each year to remind cities of how important it is to be accessible to all people.

Which city won the 2020 Access City Award?

The city that won the Access City Award of 2020 is Warsaw.

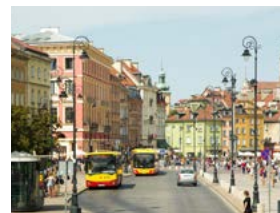
Warsaw is a city in Poland.

Warsaw won the Access City Award because it is working hard to make things accessible for people with disabilities and all people.

Warsaw has done a good job making many things and services accessible for people. For example:

- Roads, public spaces and buildings.
- Transport like metros, buses and trains.
- Public websites and information like the website of its town hall.

To do this good work, Warsaw often meets groups and committees of people with disabilities and hears what is important for them.



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For winning the Access City Award of 2020, Warsaw received 150 000 euro.

Two other cities won the second and the third place in the competition:

- The city of **Castelló de la Plana** in Spain won second place and 120 000 euro.
- The city of **Skellefteå** in Sweden won third place and 80 000 euro.

The next Access City Award will be for 2021.

Which cities can take part?

Not all cities can take part in the Access City Award.

The cities that can take part in the Access City Award should:

- Be in countries that are part of the European Union.
The **European Union** is a group of many countries in Europe that came together to make things better for people.
- Have more than 50 000 people living in them.
If a country has less than 2 cities with so many people, 2 or more smaller cities can join together.
If together they have more than 50 000 people, they can take part in the Access City Award too.

The city that won the Access City Award this year cannot take part again next year.



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How can cities take part?

Cities that want to take part in the next Access City Award can apply online when the application period starts. People who run these cities and make important decisions for them should fill in a form on the internet.



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In this form, they should:

- Say why they think their city should win the Access City Award.
- Give examples and show how their city works to make things accessible for all people.
- Talk about how they plan to continue this good work in the future.

You can find more information on our website here:
www.ec.europa.eu/social/accesscityaward

There, we will soon say when the application period will start.

When the application period starts, cities can fill in the form and take part in the next Access City Award. So, keep an eye on our website to find this information.



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How do we choose the winner?

After the cities apply for the Access City Award, some groups of people check their applications and choose the winner.



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In every country there is a group of people that checks the applications of the cities of this country. They choose up to 3 cities as the best examples of this country.

Then another group of people in Europe checks all these cities and chooses which of them is the best example of all. This city wins the Access City Award of this year.

People with disabilities and older people are part of these groups. They check what cities do to make things accessible for the good of their people.

For example, they check if cities have accessible:

- Buildings and streets.
- Buses and metros.
- Ticket machines and cash machines.
- Websites and other technology that people use to communicate.
- Information that is easy to read and understand for everyone.



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They see which of the cities does a better job to make these things accessible for all people. This city wins the Access City Award.



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When will we present the winner?

In December 2020, the Commission will announce the winners of the Access City Award for 2021.

More information

If you want to know more you can send us an email at: **secretariat@accesscityaward.eu**

You can also check our website here:
www.ec.europa.eu/social/accesscityaward



Introduction

Disability affects around 120 million citizens across European Union (EU) Member States and as our populations age, that number will continue to grow. Addressing the needs of persons with disabilities is – and will remain – a key priority for Europe.

The EU promotes equality of opportunity and accessibility for persons with disabilities. A fundamental part of its strategy involves working towards a barrier-free Europe.

The Access City Award was launched in 2010 to raise awareness of the challenges faced by persons with disabilities, and to promote accessibility initiatives in European cities with more than 50 000 inhabitants.

The goal of this annual event is to ensure equal access to city life for persons with disabilities across the EU. The Award is given to cities that have demonstrably improved accessibility in fundamental aspects of city living, and that have concrete plans in place for further improvements.

Other cities are awarded for specific initiatives in the field of accessibility. The categories that are chosen can vary from year to year.

With the Access City Award 2019, for example, we marked the European Year of Cultural Heritage (2018). In 2020, Special Mentions have been given for work to recognise the needs of persons with hidden disabilities, for grass roots work to tackle accessibility and for the use of information technology (IT) to provide parking for persons with disabilities.

This is also a special year for the Award itself, as we are celebrating its 10th anniversary. In addition to the profiles of this year's winners, this brochure includes an additional section summarising the achievements of each of the 10 previous prize winners as we reflect on a decade of the Access City Award. It also provides an update on their progress since winning the Award, as these cities continue to strive for ever greater accessibility.

Warsaw

Poland

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Warsaw is the capital city of Poland and has a population of over 2 million. The city, built on either side of the Vistula River, was largely destroyed during the Second World War. The old town was rebuilt based on the original model, but the modern city includes wider roads and avenues.

For more than 10 years, Warsaw has worked tirelessly to improve the level of accessibility in the city.

‘Principles of universal design are firmly embedded in the city’s strategy’

An efficient and effective 10-year action plan

Warsaw’s Plan of Action in Favour of Persons with Disabilities 2010–2020 focuses on information, education, jobs, society and infrastructure.

The implementation of the plan is continually monitored and measured against set indicators. A review in 2015 and again in 2019 showed positive results.

Overseeing the infrastructure programme is an Accessibility Plenipotentiary, supported by a team of coordinators and an advisory body comprising of representatives of persons with disabilities. Accessibility for all is mainstreamed in the city’s activities and will be a continuing priority.



Four areas of expertise have been established: built environment and public space; internet, websites and mobile applications; documents; and public events.

Since 2017 there has also been an Accessibility Division, which was set up to support the Plenipotentiary. This division includes an architect (who is also an access consultant), a road engineer and a public events specialist. Expertise in digital development is also being developed.

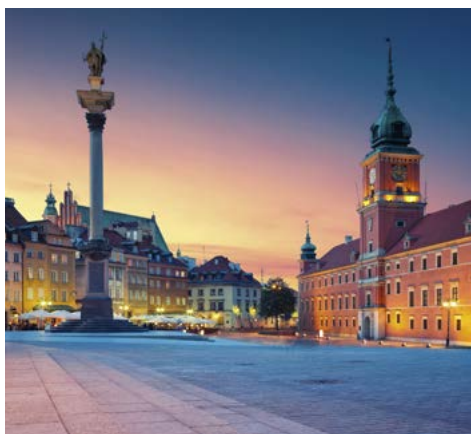
Investment in eliminating barriers

There has been significant investment in eliminating architectural and other barriers.

Since 2017, all roads, public spaces and new or refurbished buildings must comply with the city's accessibility standards. Many cultural facilities are also accessible and access audits are recommended for all projects.

The city has undergone major changes to improve access. These include repairs to pavements, installation of raised pedestrian crossings, upgrading of bus stops, new lighting and audible signals at crossings. The city has also upgraded its public transport with new accessible vehicles and rolling stock.

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 Accessible public space

© Shutterstock



 New accessible public transport

'For me, accessibility means independence, as it is one of the most important values for me.'

Kamila Wróblewska, City of Warsaw Centre for Public Communications



There are also support programmes for persons with mental health conditions and intellectual disabilities, as well as those with physical or sensory impairments.

Educational workshops are organised for children to raise awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities. Since 2016, some 1 300 children have taken part.

Work is also in progress on an accessible city website. This will combine 90 separate websites into one, making it much easier for everyone to find the information they need.

Measuring satisfaction levels among persons with disabilities

Warsaw estimates that persons with disabilities make up around 12 % of the city's population, and one in five households in the city are lived in by at least one person with a disability. Almost half of respondents to a survey on the 'Scale and structure of disability in the capital city' confirmed that they found Warsaw to be a friendly city for persons with disabilities. The main factors mentioned included accessible public infrastructure, systematic support services, improved service quality, access to institutions, and accessible public transport.

'I would like all information announcements at railway stations to be in both visual and audible formats. The same applies to any alarm systems; although I wear hearing aids, I cannot hear everything. My deaf friends, who can hear nothing, would like to feel safe in any situation in any public space, which means visual as well as audible announcements.'

Paulina Gul, Culture without Barriers Foundation

Universal design: The goal for the future

For the future, the principles of universal design are firmly embedded in the new Warsaw Strategy 2030, which will have a long-term impact on spatial and social development within the city.



Castelló de la Plana

Spain

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**SECOND
PRIZE**

Castelló is a Mediterranean city with a population of around 170 888. It has a university that contributes to a vibrant social and cultural life.

The city has been recognised by the World Health Organisation as an Age-Friendly City, due to its engagement with its older population.

‘Accessibility at the heart of all local policies and strategies’

Accessibility Plan

Castelló’s 2016 Accessibility Plan defines a strategic approach to accessibility backed by a strong social and political commitment.

The plan, which has an accompanying budget to cover all the measures it identifies, covers the urban environment, public facilities and buildings, transport, and communications and information.

Transport and the pedestrian environment

The plan includes 25 barrier-free paths that connect major public facilities and residential areas. Work already underway includes the installation of nine accessible toilet facilities at strategic points along the route.

An Urban Mobility Squad is in place to identify and repair small accessibility problems in public areas and buildings. Its team has made over 100 improvements since January 2018.

All public transport in the city is accessible and improvements have been made to enable persons with sensory and mobility impairments to cross the streets safely. Improvements include raised crossing surfaces and traffic light priority systems.

In 2018, under the 'Transforma Castelló' strategy, 17 bus stops were adapted (see picture) to add to the five that had already been modified in 2017.

The city has also acquired two adapted electric bikes to help those with limited mobility to get around the city.



© Shutterstock

 Accessible bus and bus stop

'When they ask us about the meaning of accessibility, we think of visual aids that allow us to locate and move independently, to understand how we can participate in the activities that take place there, to relate to other people. In short, accessibility allows us to be CAPABLE.'

Members of the Asperger Castelló Association



Upgrading public facilities

The plan also includes access improvements to 118 public facilities. A number of schools and sports centres have already been adapted. The city has adapted its Town Hall Council Chamber and 13 other municipal facilities for persons with hearing impairments.

The city has also set up a dedicated Office for Disability to identify areas of particular need and to improve access to public services for persons with disabilities.

The Office for Disability is also responsible for coordinating all activities relating to accessibility across the city.

Access to information

Access to information is also a priority. The city website has been upgraded to meet international accessibility standards and inclusive support technologies have been introduced to support persons with special needs.

The Smart City Plan includes initiatives to reduce the IT gap that currently exists among some groups of persons with disabilities.

One current initiative involves providing sign language streaming of city meetings.

Castelló is also prioritising accessibility in its policies on employment, children and youth, access to sports and leisure, and public participation.

‘For me, accessibility is being able to go everywhere without depending on anyone and without fear of disorientation. Castelló de la Plana has many measures that make it possible for us to function, whatever our needs.’

Conchi Hernandez, user of ATENBU (the Acquired Brain Injury Foundation of the Province of Castellón)

An accessible and inclusive city

Above all, the city does not see accessibility as an isolated issue, but as a key part of all local policies and strategies.

This holistic approach was further emphasised in 2019, as the city launched a campaign to increase awareness of accessibility issues under the slogan ‘Castelló – accessible and inclusive city’.



© City of Castelló



Access facilities on the beach

Skellefteå

Sweden

© Shutterstock



Skellefteå is a coastal city in northern Sweden with a population of 73 000. It is a vibrant and fast-growing city. Through its slogan 'Make room for ideas', the city seeks to welcome people with different skills and backgrounds. Skellefteå's severe winters make accessibility in the city particularly difficult, but with its passion for innovation, the city rises to the challenge.

'Accessibility is good for everyone'

Tackling cognitive challenges

Skellefteå pays particular attention to supporting persons with cognitive challenges. One of its initiatives was a workshop where various participants, including representatives of technology companies, collaborated to develop a smartphone tool to support independent living.

The so-called 'digital coach' provides visual support with tasks such as laundry, cleaning and time management.

Public space policy

The city has a public space policy that ensures all facilities, such as bus stops and pedestrian crossings, are accessible. This includes the use of ground heat to combat snow and ice. Another policy focuses on making playgrounds accessible.

‘Skellefteå for all’

These initiatives are underpinned by the municipal strategy Skellefteå för alla (Skellefteå for all) 2015-2025.

Following the principles of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the strategy is mainstreamed across all city policies and is reviewed annually to measure progress.

The municipality uses a combination of systematic monitoring and regular dialogue with citizens to obtain information that then feeds back into the future priorities.

There is also a Council on the Prevention of Inaccessibility, which brings together both politicians and representatives of persons with disabilities. Dedicated staff oversee the city's day-to-day work on accessibility.



© City of Skellefteå

 A tactile map of the central park of Skellefteå

‘Accessibility for me means being able to perceive all visual information through hearing and being able to navigate with the help of contrasts and touch with my white cane.’

Ethel Hedström, Association of the Visually Impaired



Accessible sports

Skellefteå is known for its passion for ice hockey and winter sports in general and is focused on making sports accessible and inclusive.

Successful inclusion of persons with disabilities in the Swedish Winter Championships in 2018 increased awareness of the benefits of accessibility and inclusion.

Access to work

Working with other authorities, Skellefteå runs schemes to assist those who are not able to access the labour market. Initiatives include summer internships, full-time municipal jobs for special school graduates and a rehabilitation scheme that creates work for around 700 people a year.

Raising awareness

Skellefteå is also determined to raise awareness of accessibility issues. To do so, the city maintains a high profile on local news channels and on social media, where it gives visibility to accessibility issues and actively participates in dialogue with citizens.

The municipality also runs events and activities, such as lectures. Politicians and staff have been given opportunities to try out wheelchairs and optical devices that simulate vision loss, in order to better understand the conditions experienced by persons with disabilities.



© City of Skellefteå



Accessibility guides provide assistance during the Swedish Winter Championships

‘To me, accessibility means that all children are able not only to attend school, but to actually learn and grow through education.’

Birgitta Grönlund, Attention (organisation representing persons with neuropsychiatric disabilities)



Mainstreaming disability

Disability issues are no longer regarded as purely a social or welfare matter. One example that illustrates this is Nöjesfabriken, a theatre group that provides supported employment for persons with disabilities, which has recently been transferred from the municipality's Social Department to its Cultural Department, where it is now managed alongside other cultural activities.

The city also notes that facilities such as audible and visual information on buses, which are essential for persons with vision or hearing loss, are also useful to all bus passengers.

Above all, Skellefteå wants to make the point that accessibility is not a marginalised issue of limited interest, but something that is good for everyone.



Évreux

France

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**SPECIAL
MENTION**

for work with hidden
disabilities

The French city of Évreux, located in Normandy, has a population of 51 560 and a rich history and cultural heritage.

The city regards itself as a supportive and people-friendly city and has made unprecedented changes to its centre, business, transport and culture to accommodate persons with disabilities. This year's special mention complements the second prize that Évreux received last year.

'Keep your eyes open – 80 % of disabilities are invisible'

Inclusive accessibility

The priority for Évreux is to support persons with disabilities in line with the concepts of universal accessibility and an inclusive society.

There is a continuing programme of investment in removing physical barriers to accessibility throughout the pedestrian and built environment of the city.


The focus is on initiatives that address the specific needs of persons with disabilities whilst also ensuring that they benefit the population as a whole.

The city believes that as a result of these policies, Évreux is a more comfortable place for everyone.

One good example of this inclusive approach is an adapted swing set up in a new play area for children.

Everyone can enjoy the swing and disability is not stigmatised.



 An adapted swing set up in a new play area for children

Focus on hidden disabilities

Within the overall policy of inclusive development, the city has given particular focus to the needs of persons with hidden or invisible disabilities.

In 2019, the city launched the campaign 'Keep your eyes open – 80 % of disabilities are invisible'.

This builds on earlier initiatives, including workshops for children to help them understand what it feels like to have an intellectual or learning disability. 600 children participated in these workshops in 2019.

Accessible information

The city has also made significant investment in easy-to-read and easy-to-understand information, including labelling of museum exhibits, which has drawn on the expertise of persons with learning disabilities.

There is also a commitment to extend this concept further by introducing better guidance and signage in the town hall and other key facilities to make them more accessible to persons with learning disabilities.

In the coming months, 90 signs will be installed next to reserved parking spaces to raise awareness of invisible disabilities.

The city has also committed to making all its telephone services accessible. As of 2020, a service called ACCEO will enable users who are deaf, hearing impaired, blind or aphasic to communicate in real time, either face to face or remotely in French sign language or speech to text transcription. The service will be available through a simple application to use on smartphones, tablets and computers.

'Since retiring, I have joined the Grenelle du Handicap groups. In these groups, I have learned a lot and found new friends. Step by step, we create actions in support of all disabilities, invisible as well as visible. For the first time, I have been able to ride a tandem bike or go to the cinema with my family.'

Françoise Coignard, member of the Grenelle du Handicap groups since 2015





- 90 signs will be installed next to reserved parking spaces to raise awareness of invisible disabilities



- A tactile guide strip and barrier-free pavement surface

Adapting cultural activities to different needs

Another recent initiative has been the Cinéma Différence project, which enables persons with behavioural problems to move around, sing and dance during a film screening.

Further developments in this project will include adaptations aimed at creating a calming environment for those with autism, for example.

There has also been a month dedicated to accessibility each year since 2016. During this month, partners develop various initiatives such as conferences, exhibitions, film shows, workshops and meals in the dark.

Dialogue at the heart of accessibility

Évreux's continuing focus on accessibility is guided by and assessed through a wide-ranging disability forum, Grenelle du Handicap, which was set up by the city in 2014. Its purpose is to provide an open channel for consultation with all stakeholders in the non-profit sector and, in particular, with persons with disabilities.

The forum comprises around 10 working groups that bring together professionals, volunteers, elected officials and citizens. The agendas for discussion are set by the participants and will often be used to follow and comment on particular projects, such as training for professionals working in the city, inclusive accommodation and access to information.

All types of disability and all stages of life are represented by individuals with personal experiences of living with a disability.

More than 100 meetings have taken place over five years of consultation.



Tartu

Estonia

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SPECIAL MENTION

for grass roots approach to accessibility

Tartu is an historic city in the valley of the Emajõgi River. It has a population of 95 000.

Tartu's accessibility is limited by cobblestones and other features from its heritage, but it also sees itself as a smart and caring city.

'Listening to citizens in need'

Inviting views on spending public money

Since 2014, Tartu has operated a budgeting system in which citizens have a say over spending priorities.

In response to its citizens' views, Tartu has made many improvements to accessibility. These have included rebuilding pedestrian crossings with kerb ramps, making riverside walks safer and

more accessible, introducing electronic audible and visual information at bus stops and providing free bus travel and free parking for older persons and those with disabilities.

A social transport service with a personal assistant is also available to enable persons with disabilities to participate fully in city life if they are not able to use public transport.

Many services can now be applied for online, meaning those with access to the internet do not need to leave home.

Tartu Smart Bike Share also helps those with less physical capacity to get around the city thanks to the availability of electric bikes.

These are considered as part of the city's public transport provision.

Accessible housing and support services

There is a strong focus on accessible housing and support services for persons with disabilities to enable them to live in their own homes, with appropriate support, for as long as possible.

The support available includes free rental of stair lift equipment, home food delivery and a free library bus service.



© City of Tartu

Improvements included introducing electronic audible and visual information at bus stops

'Personal assistant, home adjustment and social transport services are provided for me by the Tartu City Government. This makes it possible to live independently at home and access social life – enjoying culture, socialising with friends and family, making new friends, practising hobbies (pets, gardening), etc. Those services are crucial to me and I am really happy that Tartu has found the way to provide me with those services.'

Meelika Siilsalu, Member of the Southern Estonian Blind Union



Active ageing

The city is currently adopting an active ageing strategy that aims to improve physical and mental wellbeing, so that older persons can remain independent and contribute to the labour market for longer, as well as enjoy life in general. The strategy includes guidance and training that focuses on fall prevention among older persons.

'Keeping up with Time' is a project launched in 2013 that offers workshops for older persons, covering a wide range of topics including self-sufficiency and healthy lifestyles.

A 2017 project called the Smart Devices Club for Older People brought in 5th grade school students to teach older persons how to use smartphones and other IT devices.

Tartu 2030 Development Strategy

The Tartu 2030 Development Strategy includes long-term goals for sustainable, high-quality accessibility. Decisions are based on what citizens of Tartu decide should be the priorities, together with analysis of best practices from other cities both in Estonia and abroad.

As well as physical improvements to transport, parking, cycle and pedestrian paths and other facilities, the strategy focuses on information and communication technology.

Above all, for Tartu, it is about listening to citizens in need.



© City of Tartu

 Tartu Smart Bike Share helps those with less physical capacity to get around the city



Chania

Greece

© Shutterstock



SPECIAL MENTION

for using IT to provide accessible parking

Chania, located on the island of Crete, has a population of 108 642. The local economy is based on agriculture, tourism and services and the city has a long historic and cultural tradition, dating back over 5 000 years.

Accessibility is a priority for residents and tourists alike.

‘The issue of equitable access to services and products, workplaces and public spaces for citizens and visitors alike is critical for Chania’

Removing barriers to access

Chania has completed a major accessibility project that includes the reconstruction of pavements throughout the city centre to ensure that all pavements are more than 1.5 metres wide and barrier free and include route indicators for blind persons.

Every new regeneration plan or reconstruction project of public places in the city must now be carried out in strict accordance with accessibility rules.

Innovation in accessible parking

The city has also introduced a Smart Parking Management System for persons with disabilities.

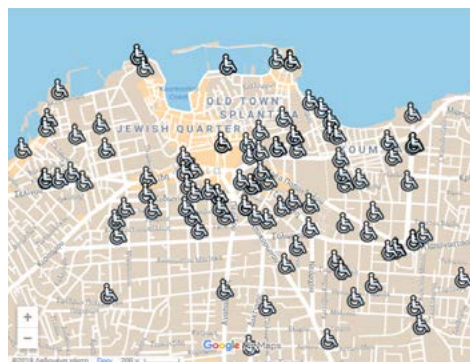
This innovative scheme, which is initially being run as a pilot project, is designed to manage the more than 160 reserved parking spaces in the city.

The integrated system consists of special spaces and cards for persons with disabilities, with ground sensors for each parking space and a dedicated platform to manage the spaces. Traffic police have real-time access to the platform to alert them to any illegal use of the spaces.

Accessible transport for residents and visitors

The city has also set up an accessible taxi service together with the local association of persons with disabilities. The taxis are available both to residents and visitors and can be booked by phone.

An accessible electric minibus is also set to begin operating a route around the city centre.



© City of Chania

 A map showing reserved parking spaces



© City of Chania

 SEATRAC platforms provide full and easy access for persons with disabilities

Accessible tourism

Chania operates five SEATRAC platforms, which provide full and easy access for persons with disabilities to access the sea from the city's beaches.

In addition, Chania operates an interactive virtual tour of the city.

Working with the disability community

The municipality of Chania has developed a close and effective level of cooperation with the city's association of persons with disabilities, which is the main representative of the disability community at local level.

This relationship has led to a number of initiatives, including setting up an Office for Persons with Disabilities with responsibility for planning policies and actions to promote integration.

It has also led to the involvement of persons with disabilities in all consultative bodies and in the development of new local policies.



Mobility Plan

Chania's strategic goal is to achieve continuous improvement in accessibility for persons with disabilities and older persons throughout the city. Key to achieving this goal is a strong focus on raising awareness of mobility issues.


The city's website and mobile applications have been designed by persons with disabilities and the city offers a range of accessible transaction and online services.

All the initiatives have been included in the strategic Mobility Plan (SVAK). The Mobility Plan is monitored and evaluated every six months using recent data and results. This evaluation then feeds into decision making on next steps to make further accessibility improvements.

Surveys of both residents and visitors with disabilities show very high levels of satisfaction with the accessibility of public areas of the city and tourist attractions.



© City of Chania

 Accessible sea front promenade

Take part in the Access City Award 2021!

The 11th edition of the Award will be launched in spring 2020 (date to be confirmed). Applications can be made by completing and submitting the online application form by the deadline.

Detailed information will be available at: ec.europa.eu/social/accesscityaward

Participating in the Access City Award is an opportunity for your city's work on accessibility to be recognised. It is also a unique chance to benchmark your progress in this area and to share experiences and learn from other cities.

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

Winners will also receive a financial prize.



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10 years

of the

Access City Award

Examples of best practice in making
EU cities more accessible

#EUACCESSCITY

10 years of the Access City Award

Ávila, Spain

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With the Access City Award 2020, we are also celebrating 10 years of the Access City Award. This milestone offers a timely opportunity to reflect on what has made the winning cities stand out over the years.

These cities vary in size and come from different countries and cultures. Some face the additional challenges of history and topography, while others are more modern.

However, there are two clear features that characterise each of the winners. The first is a strong and sustained commitment at political level to deliver on accessibility. The second is the continued engagement of the city, and of organisations of persons with disabilities and older persons, to establish priorities and monitor implementation.

These previous winners demonstrate how, through their dedication to applying these two fundamental principles, cities can achieve sustainable accessibility and inclusion for all their citizens.

Access City Award Network Meeting

Since 2018, and as the number of winning cities keeps on improving, the Access City Award Network meeting was created and launched in Lyon (Access City Award 2018 winner). This one-day event is organised in the winning city to bring together the past winners. In October 2019, the city of Breda hosted an all-day event to share best practices in inclusive tourism, hospitality and accessibility of cultural and leisure activities. At the event, representatives from 20 cities and local organisations exchanged information on their award-winning accessibility initiatives. Participants then took part in four visits to historical sites in Breda, highlighting their accessible public transport and sports and leisure activities.

Lyon, France

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Access City Award: 10 winning cities

2011 – Ávila, Spain

2012 – Salzburg, Austria

2013 – Berlin, Germany

2014 – Gothenburg, Sweden

2015 – Borås, Sweden

2016 – Milan, Italy

2017 – Chester, United Kingdom

2018 – Lyon, France

2019 – Breda, Netherlands

2020 – Warsaw, Poland



Map of award winning cities:

A map of the EU
in 2020

2011

Ávila, Spain



Tactile model of the walls of Ávila

© City of Ávila

The first winner of the Access City Award was the medieval city of Ávila, which impressed judges with its comprehensive approach to accessibility.

Back in 2002, the city drew up the Special Action Plan for Accessibility in Ávila, which was the starting point for the transformation of the old city to make it accessible to persons with disabilities.

For the City Council, accessibility is a core issue running through all areas of activity, including town planning, building, communication and transport. Local persons with disabilities have been involved throughout in designing a city for all and mainstreaming access to employment, culture and leisure.

In 2007, the city also set up a dedicated accessibility department with a remit to assess and analyse levels of accessibility across the city, with a particular focus on the needs of business owners.

Since winning the Award, Ávila has continued to focus on eliminating barriers to the liveability of the city.

Initiatives have included developing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, reducing dependency and promoting independent living.

Improvements to the built environment, communications and transport have also been a priority, including further upgrades to public transport accessibility and financial support to maintain a fleet of accessible taxis.

The city has also analysed its offer to tourists with disabilities by gathering information on accessible itineraries, guided tours and other features, including information in alternative formats.



Access to the Carmelite Convent of St Teresa

© City of Ávila

'The prize for Ávila was the confirmation that we had started the right path to be the city of all people.'

The Mayor of Avila

2012

Salzburg, Austria

Evaluating the success of Etappenplan

© City of Salzburg

The Austrian city of Salzburg was the 2012 winner. It was chosen for its long-standing commitment, coherent approach and excellent results in achieving accessibility with the direct participation of persons with disabilities.

Initiatives to improve accessibility in Salzburg at that time included tactile orientation and guidance systems for blind pedestrians, accessible public transport with subsidised travel, free access to parking for drivers with disabilities, and schemes to encourage older persons to have the confidence to go out in the city.

Since 2012, the city has continued to work to improve accessibility through numerous projects, including a children's colouring book that features positive and inclusive illustrations of children with disabilities.

One major new development has been the so-called 'Etappenplan' (staged plan), which was introduced in 2016. The plan aims to take measures to meet the goals and guidelines set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The project involves persons with disabilities, as well as external experts, for example from the Institute of Human Rights of the University of Salzburg.

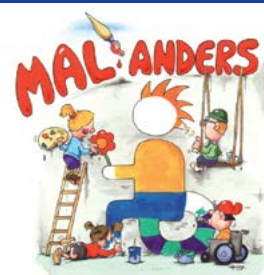
The Etappenplan is divided into six action areas for which the city of Salzburg is responsible:

- Education
- Employment
- Health and social affairs
- Planning and housing
- Mobility and public transport
- Leisure and culture.

After a year, the city carried out an evaluation of the plan, in which it gathered inputs from persons with disabilities to identify the next steps to build on the progress made by the plan so far.

'The Access City Award has created even more awareness in the city of Salzburg for accessibility and helps us to implement many other measures.'

*Sabine Neusüß, Disability Representative,
City of Salzburg*



The colouring book with positive images of disability

© City of Salzburg

2013

Berlin, Germany



Berlin, Germany

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The city of Berlin was chosen as the 2013 winner for its strategic and inclusive access policies, which cover all aspects of city life and are firmly embedded in both the political and budgetary frameworks of the city.

The city was also commended for its innovative approaches to accessibility, such as www.mobidat.net, a website aimed at persons with sensory, mobility and cognitive impairments. It comprises a database with 31 000 entries that provide information on the accessibility of a wide range of facilities across the city.

The city's continuing aim is to make Berlin more mobile, safer and more environmentally friendly.

The Berlin Mobility Act, which came into force in summer 2018, is the first of its kind in Germany. Mobility associations, districts, the responsible Senate Departments and representatives of the House of Representatives were all involved in its creation.

The Berlin Mobility Act ensures that everyone – young and old, with and without disabilities – can be mobile in a safe and independent way. The suburbs and metropolitan region of Berlin-Brandenburg will be better connected by bus, rail and cycle routes. Several areas that are currently difficult to access without a car are also expected to become accessible.

Berlin has set an objective of accessibility without barriers. One key tool helping to achieve this is the 'Barrier-free City' round table. This is led by the Secretary for Transport and brings together stakeholders from government, businesses and disability organisations. The aim is to agree on priorities and initiatives to increase the accessibility of Berlin across a range of areas, including tourism, hotels and restaurants, industry, commerce and transport.



The Berlin Mobility Act came into force in summer 2018

© City of Berlin

'With the Access City Award, Berlin has attracted a great deal of international attention and continues to engage in intensive exchanges with other European cities to improve accessibility.'

Ingmar Streese, Permanent Secretary for Transport, City of Berlin

2014

Gothenburg, Sweden

Gothenburg, Sweden

© Shutterstock

In 2014, the judges noted that Gothenburg had a clear political goal to make the city accessible for everyone.

As part of this commitment, all public administration bodies and companies were required to produce inventories of the public buildings and spaces they occupied to measure accessibility.

Every public building and space in the city of Gothenburg had to be part of the inventory. This included schools, housing for older persons, museums, libraries, sports facilities and playgrounds.

Through this, the City Council committed to a 'holistic and comprehensive follow-up regarding accessibility in the city'.

Since 2014, Gothenburg has introduced a wide range of new developments. These have included initiatives to improve access to museums and a pop-up studio to enable employees in the city to experience disability challenges at first hand. The city has also run a filming project to encourage persons with disabilities to record their views on areas that need improvement.

The Global Destinations Sustainability Index has identified Gothenburg as the world's most sustainable destination. Accessibility is a key part of that index.

In addition, an app has been developed to open up opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in cultural events at the city's arenas.

The app, which was introduced in 2017, provides live visual and sign language interpretation during events. A hearing loop built into the app also offers sound amplification.

The app also includes information such as how to get to the arena, receive assistance on site and access toilets, restaurants and other facilities.

'For Gothenburg, winning the Award was a confirmation that we were on the right path.'

Maria Bernström Printz, Development Manager for Accessibility, City of Gothenburg



An app has been developed to open up opportunities for persons with disabilities

© City of Gothenburg

2015

Borås, Sweden



Borås, Sweden

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Borås impressed the judges in 2015 with its clear, long-standing political commitment to the concept of 'a Borås accessible to all'. The city applied accessibility standards that went beyond the legal norms and provided subsidy to make private housing accessible, so that persons with disabilities had equal opportunities to live independently.

The city is committed to making the urban environment accessible to all, regardless of disability or age. It has compiled an accessibility database that is available in easy read and voice synthesis versions. The city's website and newsletter are also connected to a telephone service for those who require support.

Since winning the Award, Borås has continued its good work across various aspects of city life. This has included widening pavements and improving accessibility to parks, as well as increasing the number of accessible natural environments.

The city is working to make its website more accessible with alternative formats.

The city's libraries have also increased the number of books available in easy language and introduced calm areas.

Awareness-raising training has been introduced for professionals working for the city. This covers the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as alternative forms of communication and guidance on how to interact with persons with disabilities.

Another key initiative has involved delivering training to persons with intellectual impairments to teach them about their rights.



Extension of tactile paving in Borås city centre

© City of Borås

'This recognition has definitely increased visibility of the hard work that the city has done. Most importantly it has motivated us to keep moving in the right direction and encouraged others to strive to improve accessibility in other areas.'

Herawati Nowak & Lena Mellblad, Disability Consultants, City of Borås

2016

Milan, Italy



Inauguration of the inclusive accessible park Villa Finzi

© City of Milan

Milan was recognised in 2016 for its clear commitment and wide-ranging approach to delivering accessibility.

In 2011, Milan adopted the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. At the same time, it made a commitment to develop a new culture of accessibility and a strategic, integrated approach to delivering a 'city for all'.

From then on, the city prioritised and budgeted for specific access improvements in its rolling three-year programme of public works.

The city has taken many initiatives since winning the prize in 2016. One such initiative involved setting up a group of experts in universal design to focus on making the city's sports facilities accessible to all. This has led to significant refurbishment and upgrading; for example, all the city's swimming pools now have poolside hoists.

The city's strategic plan (PEBA) makes a commitment to full accessibility on a long-term basis.

It also promotes the principles of universal design for everyone involved in the design and construction of urban spaces.

The city has also streamlined its planning process on requirements for accessibility to make them more efficient.

Other recent developments include accessible parks and play equipment; job opportunities for persons with disabilities; a pilot project to improve the accessibility of businesses; more accessible public transport and the promotion of accessible hotel rooms.

'The prize has certainly been a recognition for the city for the work carried out according to a mainstream approach, but it was above all a push to continue on the path undertaken and to do more and better.'

City of Milan



Accessible playground equipment, Indro Montanelli Park

© City of Milan

2017

Chester, United Kingdom



The new bus interchange

© City of Chester

Chester was the 2017 winner. Judges were impressed by the city's determination to bring history within reach of everyone. Chester had focused on ensuring that visitors with disabilities could access as much as possible of its challenging medieval infrastructure.

Chester also provides 'Changing Places' toilets for persons with severe and complex disability needs who might otherwise be unable to enjoy a day out in the city centre.

In addition to its fully accessible bus fleet, all the city's taxis are required to be wheelchair accessible and to include features such as induction loops.

Since winning the Award, Chester has continued to make accessibility improvements. Highlights include a new bus interchange. This was developed in consultation with the Corporate Disability Access Forum, which included contributions from 15 local and regional organisations for persons with disabilities.

The bus interchange has also produced an accessibility guide to enable persons with disabilities, carers and family members to make informed decisions and plan their visit.

Opened in May 2017, Storyhouse is a library, theatre, cinema and community hub. It offers over 2 000 activities each year for local marginalised groups, including autism-friendly sessions, and classes for isolated and older communities.

All Storyhouse performances are accessible. Many staff have undertaken Dementia Friends training and mentoring.

Public realm improvements have also benefitted wheelchair users, as well as guide dog owners and long cane users.



Improved pedestrian walkways

© City of Chester

'Winning the Award in 2017 inspired us to do even more to improve the lives of persons with disabilities and older persons. We are proud to say that accessibility and inclusivity remain at the heart of the Council's priorities.'

Cllr Val Armstrong, Cheshire West & Chester Council

2018

Lyon, France

Lyon, France

© Shutterstock

The 2018 winner, the French city of Lyon, has chosen to address accessibility as a cross-cutting issue and to invest substantially in creating a barrier-free and inclusive environment.

With the two themes of physical accessibility and access to city life, Lyon is implementing a programme that started in 2016 and will run until 2024.

The drive to improve accessibility has been coordinated by a mission head in the city council. The head reports to the city's General Secretariat, bringing together initiatives across 14 city departments including culture, education, sports, childhood support and public areas.

Priorities were agreed by a consultative body made up of elected representatives and officials from the city, as well as 62 local associations representing persons with disabilities and older persons.

The Optiguide service provides door-to-door information and individual guidance to enable persons with disabilities to travel independently by public transport.

At the end of 2017, Lyon published an accessibility guide for the city's construction management team.

In 2019, the city also published a 'Guide to accessible culture' for the general public. This guide was drawn up in consultation with associations of persons with disabilities from the city Commission for Accessibility and with the 28 cultural organisations engaged in the city's Cultural Cooperation Charter.

The city plans to make nearly 700 buildings and public places accessible before 2024.

'Winning the Award represents both a great pride and a great responsibility for the city of Lyon to continue to be worthy of this beautiful award that recognised all our work for physical accessibility, as well as accessibility to all the life of the city.'

Thérèse Rabatel, Delegate for Equality between Men and Women and Persons with Disabilities



Guide to accessible culture

2019

Breda, The Netherlands



Students present ideas for better transport of athletes with a disability at a City Challenges meeting

© City of Breda

Judges particularly liked Breda's comprehensive approach to tackling barriers to accessibility. The city has a four-year plan (2018-2021) to create an environment in which accessibility is the norm.

The platform 'Breda for Everyone' has brought together representatives of the city, tourism and education, as well as organisations of persons with disabilities. One of the goals of Breda for Everyone was to make the city the number-one place for accessible tourism.

Breda applies the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and is dedicated to making Breda the best 'UN-proof' city.

Breda has already made great progress since winning the Award. New plans drawn up in consultation with experts and disability organisations were adopted by the local executive board (College van burgemeester en wethouders) in June 2019.

In the next few years, the city will focus in particular on making the leisure domain more accessible. This includes cafes, restaurants, shopping facilities, and sporting and cultural events. Training courses are also being organised for staff in the hospitality and retail sectors.

To date, the city's approach to accessibility has primarily focused on persons with a physical disability, but as of 2019 it has broadened its scope to persons with an intellectual or hidden disability, for example autism. It has also put greater emphasis on information that is accessible to persons with low levels of literacy.

From 2019, Breda has committed to focus on accessibility and inclusiveness in every new municipal plan, supported by expert advisers with the title 'special officer accessible city'.



18 Breda organisations sign the so-called 'Local Accessibility Agreement', a commitment to making Breda truly accessible and inclusive

© City of Breda

'We are proud of the Award. At the same time, we realise that it is up to us to turn the temporary attention of winning into sustainable future developments.'

Miriam Haagh, Deputy Mayor of Breda

2020

Warsaw, Poland

Warsaw, Poland

© Shutterstock

The judges selected Warsaw as the 2020 winner because of the huge amount of progress that has been made over the last 10 years and the strong commitment throughout the city to improving the lives of its citizens with disabilities.

Taking principles of universal design as its starting point, Warsaw has adopted an action plan focusing on information, jobs, education, society and infrastructure.

The role of the Accessibility Plenipotentiary is key in ensuring that sustainable improvements are delivered throughout the city.

Warsaw recognises that there is still much to be done and has developed plans for continued budgetary support for accessibility in the coming years.

The success of actions to improve accessibility in previous years is regularly monitored and evaluated. Next steps are planned based on the outcomes of these evaluations and clear indicators are set against which to measure future initiatives.

Clear and comprehensive access standards are helping to ensure that the high-quality design and workmanship of all construction projects in the city will deliver satisfactory levels of accessibility.

Looking to the future, the new Warsaw Strategy 2030 will have a long-term impact on both spatial and social development in the city. Priorities include access to both basic and preventative healthcare, improved social assistance and public services, including e-care and e-accessibility (IT system) for persons with disabilities.

One specific goal is to eliminate remaining architectural barriers. Initiatives to achieve this will include fitting lifts to historic sites, for example along the Łazienkowska route, and reconstructing public squares.

‘Warsaw has worked for several years for the Access City Award. We have all learned how a modern metropolis should work so that every resident can live and work comfortably. Excluding anyone is not in the nature of our city.’

Rafał Trzaskowski, Mayor of Warsaw

The River Vistula in Warsaw

© Shutterstock



Participating in the Access City Award **2021**

The Access City Award recognises cities that have worked to become more accessible for their citizens.

It is an EU initiative that promotes equal access to urban life for persons with disabilities and enables local authorities to promote and share their best practices.

As of 2020, with the 10th anniversary of the Award, the European Commission has added a financial reward for the winner and second and third-placed cities:

- 1st prize: €150 000
- 2nd prize: €120 000
- 3rd prize: €80 000

Would you like your city to be one of next year's winners? Do you want to share your experiences and actions to promote accessibility with other cities?

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 made up of two or more towns may also participate if their combined population exceeds 50 000 inhabitants.

The Access City Award cannot be won by the same city in two consecutive years, so the winning city in 2020 is not invited to take part again in 2021. All other cities, including 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 will be available in all official EU languages on the Access City Award 2021 website, as of the opening of the application period.

ec.europa.eu/social/accesscityaward2021



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 six criteria:

- Scope of the actions;
- Ownership, level of commitment;
- Impact;
- Quality and sustainability of results;
- Involvement of persons with disabilities and relevant partners;
- Social innovation.

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 2021 will be announced in **late November 2020**. The ceremony is part of the annual European Day of Persons with Disabilities conference in Brussels.

The Access City Award Secretariat

The Access City Award Secretariat can assist with the preparation of your application. If you need any additional information, please contact:

secretariat@accesscityaward.eu

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Open data from the EU

The EU Open Data Portal (data.europa.eu/euodp/en) provides access to datasets from the EU. Data can be downloaded and reused for free, both for commercial and non-commercial purposes.

The annual Access City Award recognises European cities for their efforts to make themselves more accessible for persons with disabilities and the elderly. This brochure celebrates the achievements of the 2020 winners, runners-up, and special mentions – Warsaw (Poland), Castello de la Plana (Spain), Skelleftea (Sweden), Evreux (France), Tartu (Estonia), Chania (Greece). The Award highlights the concrete steps each city has taken to improve the accessibility of their cities. These steps include accessible public spaces and cultural facilities, accessibility improvements to public transport, improved services for those with hidden disabilities and a Smart Parking Management System.

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