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European
Commission



ACCESS CITY Award **2022**



Examples of best practice
in making EU cities
more accessible

#EUACCESSCITY



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Helena Dalli
European Commissioner
for Equality

Foreword

Cities across the European Union are working to become accessible to persons with disabilities. I am pleased to launch this good practice brochure that can encourage more European cities to take action to provide a barrier-free environment.

Accessibility is essential for equality, autonomy and independent living. It is a precondition for the 87 million persons with disabilities in Europe as well as those with reduced mobility to be able to participate fully in all areas of life.

In the past decade, new initiatives and practices in different sectors have been developed to make the EU more accessible for persons with disabilities. However, despite progress, structural discrimination and barriers remain.

That is why accessibility is a cornerstone of the EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, and we must ensure that it remains high on the agenda

for both the European Commission and Member States. This year we will launch the European resource centre 'AccessibleEU'. This cooperation framework will help share good practices and knowledge across sectors, and support the implementation and development of accessibility policies within the EU.

Cities and local communities are essential partners in creating a barrier-free Europe. They implement concrete solutions that improve people's lives and foster common values of inclusion and equality. Accessible cities benefit everyone. Accessibility improves the quality of life and contributes to inclusive and thriving cities.

With the Access City Award, the European Commission recognises the commitment of cities across the EU in ensuring persons with disabilities have equal access to their fundamental rights and all the resources cities have to offer.

I congratulate Luxembourg City, the winner of the 2022 Access City Award, on its achievements in tackling inequalities and removing barriers in its urban environment. The municipality has made accessibility a priority and has implemented a design-for-all approach to make access easier for everyone. City council meetings are being made available in sign language with transcription while also ensuring

that political decisions are accessible for everyone. Since 2012, the city has developed the Awareness Weeks to foster dialogue on structural barriers faced by persons with disabilities. To facilitate mobility, low-floor buses equipped with ramps are present across the city as well as visual and audio announcements on buses and at bus stops.

I look forward to welcoming new applicants into the Access City Award network. Through your city's participation in this Award, you can be an inspiration for others. These efforts in improving accessibility are essential to building a Union of equality.



Access City Award 2022



Easy-to-read version

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Who are we?

We are the European Commission and the European Disability Forum.

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



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



We often 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 that live in it can use all things and services without problems.

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 in ways that they can read and understand.

This is important for all people, and especially for people with disabilities and older people.

Often things like transport and information are not accessible to them.

If things are not accessible, people with disabilities 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.



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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 what they have done to become accessible to all people.

The Access City Award started in 2010. It is important that the Access City Award continues to remind cities how important it is to be accessible to all people.

Which city won the 2022 Access City Award?

The city that won the Access City Award for 2022 is Luxembourg City in Luxembourg.

Luxembourg City won the Access City Award because it keeps working on making things and services accessible to people with disabilities and all people.

Luxembourg City is built on a rock. That makes accessibility harder because the streets are hilly and narrow. But Luxembourg City is working hard to make things accessible to its people. For example:

- Buses have ramps, so that people in wheelchairs can get on without problems. On buses and at bus stops, there are audio announcements,



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so that people who are blind can hear this information.
Also, there are visual announcements,
so that people who are deaf can see this information.

- Trains are accessible and free of charge for everyone.
The train station has accessible toilets and parking.
The signs at the train station have easy symbols,
so that all people can understand them.
Also, many of them have audios,
so that people who are blind can hear them.
- The City of Luxembourg meets and talks
with people with disabilities
to understand their needs and make things better for them.
Also, it tries to make important meetings accessible,
so that all people with disabilities can take part
without problems.

Luxembourg City got 150 000 euro
for winning the Access City Award for 2022.

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

- The city of **Helsinki** in Finland
won the second place and 120 000 euro.
- The city of **Barcelona** in Spain
won the third place and 80 000 euro.



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The next Access City Award will be for 2023.



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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 27 countries in Europe that have come 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.



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

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 out 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 to 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



© Pixabay

There, we will soon say when the application period will start. When the application period starts, cities can fill out 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, 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 for this year.



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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 metro;
- 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 at making these things accessible to all people. This city wins the Access City Award.



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When will the winner get their prize?

At the end of 2022, we plan to have a big meeting in Brussels to talk about the rights of people with disabilities. In this meeting, we will also say which city wins the Access City Award for 2023.



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More information

If you want more information, you can check our website here:
www.ec.europa.eu/social/accesscityaward

If you have any questions, you can send us an email at:
secretariat@accesscityaward.eu



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Introduction

‘These cities are models for all of us. They are a reminder that even the most longstanding barriers and prejudices can be tore down.’

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission

The Access City Award puts the spotlight on EU cities that are taking significant steps to become more accessible. A city is accessible when persons with disabilities can, for instance:

- get information;
- use buses, trams and metro;
- enjoy parks and playgrounds;
- get in and around buildings like the library, sports hall and city hall.

As a society, we have the duty to ensure that persons with disabilities can participate in society in the same way as everyone

else. By doing good work on accessibility, municipalities ultimately improve the safety and quality of life for everyone.

The Access City Award is open to all EU cities with a population over 50 000. All applications are first evaluated by a national jury, after which the shortlisted candidates are assessed by an EU jury of accessibility experts who select the winner and the two runners-up.

Every year, the EU jury also gives a special mention award to cities who have done exceptionally well in a particular area.

This year, the jury handed out special mentions for:

- the physical environment, including natural areas for inclusive tourism;
- mainstreaming accessibility, including in the digital area.

This edition of the Access City Award also features a special mention in honour of the European Year of Rail (2021). Rail is one of

the greenest and safest modes of transport, and we have to make sure it is accessible to all Europeans.

Winning cities also stand out for establishing a dialogue between policymakers, accessibility experts and disability organisations in order to bring about positive change.



Winner

Luxembourg City

Luxembourg

The winner of the 2022 Access City Award is Luxembourg City. Located on terrain with steep cliffs and deep valleys, Luxembourg is not an easy place to make accessible. Despite this, the city municipality has been working continuously and successfully to improve accessibility for its citizens and visitors. The city's philosophy is to plan and carry out measures in direct consultation with the people affected by them.

'This award provides important recognition of all the hard work done so far to make our city more accessible.

All this has only been made possible by the active participation of people living with disabilities, as well as the commitment and dedication of the associations working in the field of disabilities, the various municipal departments who got involved, and our political leaders.

We will continue every day to further this work together, with the aim of making all our infrastructure accessible to everyone and ensuring equal opportunities for all.'

Lydie Polfer, Mayor of Luxembourg City



Design-for-all: Making the city work for everyone

The jury praised Luxembourg City for taking into account all disabilities and for maintaining good accessibility in all areas. Thanks to its design-for-all approach, the city is inclusive not just of persons with disabilities, but also of older people, migrants and tourists. A design-for-all approach means designing products and services to be accessible by those with and without disabilities or other limiting factors. The city is working on multiple levels to make this possible – from employment, education and culture, to tourism, leisure

and transport. To this end, some municipal departments have a dedicated employee responsible for matters related to special needs.

One example that illustrates Luxembourg's design-for-all approach is the Luxembourg City Art Museum, Villa Vauban, which has a recurring exhibition based on the concept of a 'museum for all'. Visitors can discover the exhibits in their own way, according to their motor or cognitive abilities. The exhibition includes hands-on sculptures and tactile models of some paintings, multilingual and plain language information, and more.



© Guy Thewes

 In the Villa Vauban, visitors are free to explore the exhibits depending on their abilities

Integration and Special Needs Department

The city's Integration and Special Needs Department acts as a point of contact for persons with disabilities and for all organisations in the disability sector. It works in close cooperation with disability organisations and other city departments to continuously improve its accessibility services. Thanks to the city's participative committee, persons with disabilities can be involved in all city projects. The department also organises sign language interpreters for sessions of the municipal council, and the translation of relevant texts into German to help these interpreters prepare for sessions.

Raising awareness to break down stereotypes

Luxembourg City puts effort into creating a dialogue between persons with and without disabilities. The aim is to familiarise people with the different types of disabilities and help to break down stereotypes and prejudices.

The city organises many different awareness-raising campaigns, activities, lectures, film screenings and exhibitions where people can learn more about the daily lives and varied needs of persons with disabilities. For example, every year, the Dinner in the Dark event is held to raise awareness about the experiences and needs of people with visual impairments.

Employment and education

Luxembourg City places particular emphasis on hiring persons with disabilities. As a result, nearly 6 % of all positions in public bodies in the city are filled by persons with disabilities.

In addition, as part of its efforts to support people with hearing impairments, the municipality organises sign language courses, and has awarded more than 900 diplomas.

Numerous training courses are organised to ensure that service staff (e.g. bus drivers and receptionists) can use the necessary equipment and can assist persons with disabilities.

Making public transport accessible

Public transport in Luxembourg is free of charge and Luxembourg City's bus stops are systematically made accessible and equipped with an iBeacon, providing valuable information to users of the municipality app, a service that is highly appreciated by people with visual impairments. When a person approaches a bus stop fitted with an iBeacon, they receive a notification informing them of the name of the stop, the number and destination of the next bus, and its expected time of arrival. The public transport vehicles have visual and voice announcements, and passengers can receive visual announcements at bus stops, online or via text messages.

In addition, persons with disabilities can request to be picked up from home by special minibuses, which also serve as shuttle buses for older people and parents with prams during events.

Signs at rail stations and on platforms in Luxembourg include pictograms that provide guidance toward handrails, elevators and reserved parking spaces. Displays often have a text-to-speech function, and important information is communicated through automated audio announcement systems. Luxembourg



© Françoise Frieden, LUXTRAM

○ A fully accessible tram and tram station

Railway Station has reserved parking spaces and accessible toilet facilities for persons with reduced mobility.

Further plans for improvement

Luxembourg City is working to create an action plan based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, taking into account residents' specific needs and suggestions.

The municipality is also planning to open a communication centre for people with hearing impairments in cooperation with the Ministry of Family and Integration.

And finally, the municipality is collaborating with the Commercial Union of the City of Luxembourg, the trade association HORESCA, and the participatory committee to improve the accessibility of shops and restaurants in the city.



Second prize

Helsinki

Finland

The city of Helsinki in Finland wins second place in the 2022 Access City Award. About 1.4 million people live in or around Helsinki, about a fourth of Finland's total population. The city has a longstanding commitment to promoting accessibility, integrating it in strategies, policies, and planning procedures.

‘The city’s overall goal is to be accessible to everyone: citizens with disabilities, older people, those suffering from long-term sicknesses, as well as people using walking frames or pushing child strollers.’

Anni Sinnemäki, Deputy Mayor for Urban Environment, Helsinki City Council



Accessibility Plan

In 2005, Helsinki adopted an Accessibility Plan, which lays the foundations for its accessibility measures. It commits the city's offices and institutions to ensure their buildings and services are accessible to everyone and requires that all public areas are constructed and remodelled to become accessible.

The plan sets out two levels of accessibility – special and basic. The special level of accessibility is required in the city centre, pedestrian streets, public transport terminals, the immediate surroundings

of health centres and service buildings, public recreational areas and playgrounds, and areas with a large population of older people and persons with disabilities. Meanwhile, the basic level generally refers to an accessible environment which does not use special measures (such as streets heated by underground hot water pipes to prevent ice, or tactile paving).

The jury was particularly impressed with how Helsinki leads by example, as its Accessibility Plan has been used as a basis for producing accessibility plans in many other Finnish cities, including Espoo, Oulu, Tampere, Turku and Vaasa.



© Laura Oja

 A recreational island near Helsinki with accessible duckboards

Accessibility guidelines

Helsinki developed practical guidelines to plan, construct and maintain accessible outdoor locations. They form an overall

framework for accessibility and for interaction among various branches of the administration. The guidelines are now being used on a national scale, which illustrates their effectiveness.

‘When done right, accessible solutions often blend into the environment and become invisible. On the other hand, obstacles can stick out very easily if accessibility has been forgotten entirely.’

Kristiina Karhos, Deputy Chair of the Council on Disability

Permanent accessibility representative

Since 2012, Helsinki has a permanent accessibility representative. Their task is to coordinate and promote the city’s work on accessibility in cooperation with the Accessibility Advisory Board. The goal is to make the city’s public spaces, buildings, and public transport solutions safe and accessible for all.

Accessible travel around the city

Overall, 99,7 % of buses, and 100 % of trams, metro trains, and commuter trains are accessible within the Helsinki Region. All metro stations are accessible and equipped with lifts and tactile markings. Furthermore, 51 % of the city’s traffic lights have audible beaconing so that pedestrians with visual impairments can cross safely.

In addition, citizens with a disabled parking permit are entitled to use all car parks in the city for free.



© Iiro Auterinen, City of Helsinki Disability Council

○ *Almost all of Helsinki’s public buses are accessible*

Accessible digital services and communications

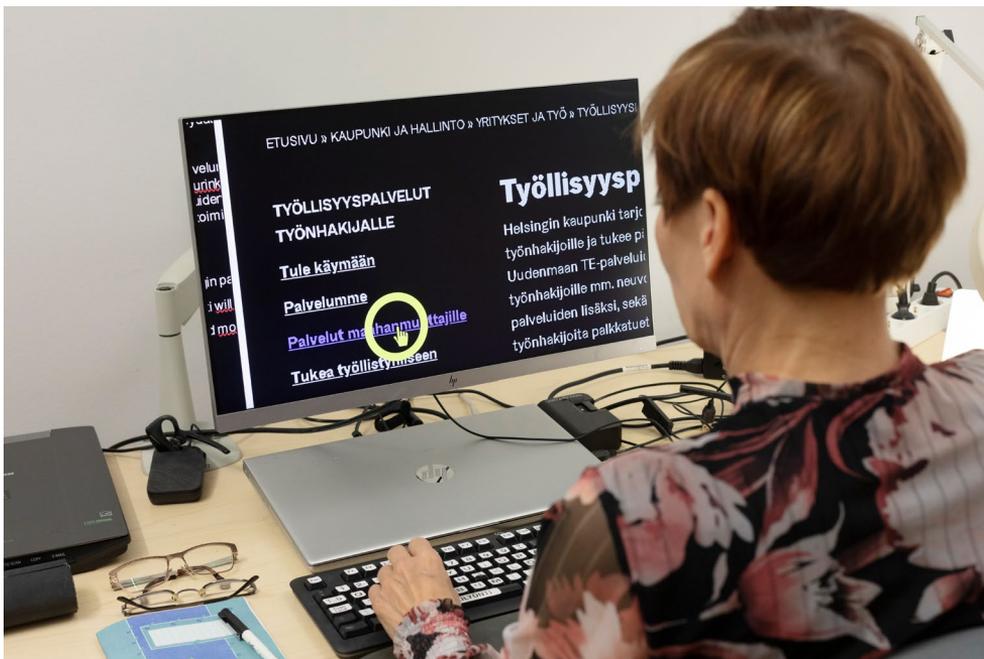
Helsinki has been working hard on improving the accessibility of digital services and communication for persons with disabilities.

The **Helsinki for all** website contains a wealth of information on accessibility. It is a nationally renowned and recognised data bank, intended to inform citizens about Helsinki's efforts towards improved accessibility and provide inspiration for other cities.

Additionally, for more than 10 years, the Helsinki metropolitan area has been developing the **Service Map** – an open-source online service that allows

residents and visitors to the Helsinki metropolitan area to find services and related information, such as opening hours, contact details and accessibility information. A revised, more accessible Service Map was published in January 2020. Currently, it includes information on more than 15 000 services, ranging from libraries and schools to gyms and sports activities.

As Helsinki's international population is growing, the city aims to make public information available to migrants with disabilities who do not speak Finnish or Swedish. During the COVID-19 pandemic, non-governmental organisations worked together with city officials to communicate health information to all citizens of Helsinki, especially those at risk.



© Laura Oja

 Helsinki's objective is to meet or exceed level AA of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

How the disability guidance service helps citizens

In February 2021, the city launched a disability guidance service, where persons with disabilities can get guidance on how to use the different services available to them. People can contact representatives via phone or email, or book a face-to-face appointment. Since July 2021, the disability guidance service has also been responsible for answering feedback from persons with disabilities on the transport service.

Listening to the voices of persons with disabilities

The city believes it is crucial to include persons with disabilities in the planning of public buildings to make sure they are

accessible. In the case of the new central library Oodi, the Helsinki Council on Disability was consulted, and persons with disabilities were able to talk directly with the building's architects.

As members of the Council on Disability, representatives of different disability groups, Helsinki's public professionals, and elected officials discuss matters concerning the disability community and work together to find working solutions for an accessible and more equal society.



© Jussi Hellsten

 Visually impaired persons have been taken into consideration when designing Oodi library



Third prize

Barcelona

Spain

Barcelona won third prize in the 2022 Access City Award. Over the last 40 years, Barcelona has been working continuously to remove physical and social barriers for persons with disabilities and older people (21 % of residents).

‘Accessibility is not just for persons with disabilities but also represents quality of life for the vast majority of the population, and this is a value that we need to preserve. Our challenge is to make communications more accessible. We need to make our services and public spaces easier to access, understand and use for everyone.’

Joan Ramon Riera, Councillor for Childhood, Youth and the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities

Municipal Institute for Persons with Disabilities

The jury praised Barcelona for its work with the Municipal Institute for Persons with Disabilities. This autonomous body of the Barcelona City Council works together with the city administration to ensure equal access to the city's services, activities and public spaces.

The governing board of the municipal institute is composed of 50 % elected politicians and 50 % persons with disabilities, elected by citizens with disabilities every four years. With a budget of €12 million, the body is responsible for accessibility planning and uses a cross-cutting approach to mainstreaming accessibility. It also offers direct care services for persons with disabilities, including early childhood development, labour inclusion and independent living.

Accessibility Plan 2018–2026

The Municipal Institute for Persons with Disabilities is currently leading on Barcelona's 2018–2026 Accessibility Plan, which analyses accessibility in the city. So far, they have analysed 889 playgrounds, 33 parks and beaches, 249 municipal services (markets, libraries, sports and leisure), 75 social services, 53 health centres, 38 university buildings, 22 cinemas, 60 websites, 106 hotels and restaurants, and 61 neighbourhoods (over 1 000 km of streets). The data has been integrated in a geographic information system, so that all work units involved in public works and maintenance can check and update it. A basic accessibility analysis has also been carried out in over 3 668 blocks of flats, 52 161 shops and 404 schools.



© Edu Bayer



These streets in Barcelona have been made more accessible and equipped with better street lighting and more green areas

Accessible bus and metro networks

All public buses in Barcelona are accessible. They have low floors and ramps, audio information on buses and at bus stops, and vehicle identification in Braille, among other features.

A total of 92 % of the city's metro stations are accessible, and the city plans to reach 100 % for the metro's 100th anniversary in 2024.

Barcelona uses a digital solution, NaviLens, to make signage and information on the metro and bus service accessible to people with visual impairments. The city has deployed 9 000 NaviLens labels, helping users to navigate the bus and metro network.

The public transport network is supplemented by a dedicated transport system for people with reduced mobility, which services 348 000 door-to-door journeys per year.



© Vicente Zambrano González

 Barcelona's bus network is 100 % accessible



© Vicente Zambrano

 Barcelona is dedicated to making its metro stations fully accessible by 2024

Fostering social dialogue

Barcelona has 19 participatory bodies focused on disability issues. These are regular forums held between the City Council, non-governmental organisations and the general public, whose mission is to gather proposals and suggestions for municipal policies. On average, 150 disability organisations take part each year.

Another initiative that involves persons with disabilities is the Citizen Agreement for an Inclusive Barcelona. So far, under the Citizen Agreement, four working groups have been set up on relevant disability issues – housing, family support, inclusive leisure, and accessibility.

Other accessibility projects

Barcelona has a wide variety of projects and initiatives in the area of accessibility.

One interesting project is CASBA (Friendly Shops Without Barriers), which involves nearly 100 university architecture students every year in designing projects to improve accessibility in shops and other commercial establishments. Apart from improving the city's overall accessibility, CASBA also raises awareness among architects, shopkeepers, retailers' associations, and City Council staff about the needs of persons with disabilities. The various improvements, such as accessibility, labelling and layout

of interiors, improved lighting, and removal of barriers, benefit not just persons with disabilities but also people with temporarily reduced mobility, parents with prams, and older people.

Barcelona's public transport company has an Operating Code through which all public transport accessibility projects are coordinated. The Operating Code is made up of 15 working groups, which are currently working on 50 accessibility improvement projects. The projects are monitored quarterly, and their quality and suitability are guaranteed by persons with disabilities through the participatory bodies mentioned above.





Special mention for the
European Year of Rail

Porto

Portugal

Porto, a city in northwest Portugal with a population of nearly 232 000, has a rich history and cultural heritage dating back to the medieval period. Extending along the Douro River and the Atlantic coastline, the city is characterised by its irregular terrain. In recent years, Porto has made extensive changes to make it easier to walk or travel around the city, particularly for older citizens, children, and people with reduced mobility.

‘This recognition is extremely important to Porto as it highlights all the effort that has been made and the progress we have achieved in this area, which means we’re succeeding in making the city more accessible. We certainly want to do more and reach a greater level of accessibility in every dimension of the concept. This is very stimulating and urges us to continue the work as we believe that Porto’s economic development, social and cultural dynamism and sustainability relies on its level of accessibility.’

Ricardo Valente, Porto City Councillor for Finance and Economy, and Employment, Tourism and Commerce

Accessible rail travel

The jury praised Porto for its ambitious work with the metro system and its focus on transport. Impressively, all metro vehicles and stations in Porto are accessible. Furthermore, all buses have a low floor, while 66 % have a ramp and wheelchair space.

The city has two stations which are suitable for disabled persons: São Bento and Campanhã. Both have parking facilities, meaning citizens with reduced mobility are not required to walk long distances. A surveillance service at both stations allows specialist assistants to identify and assist when persons with disabilities may require support, and there is an integrated mobility service to help customers with mobility difficulties (whether permanent or temporary) move around the stations. Important information is communicated

through a system of both visual and audible media, and the stations also have tactile floors, which benefits people with visual and hearing impairments. Both São Bento and Campanhã have accessible entrances, which don't require the use of stairs, providing easy access to the halls, ticket offices and platforms for those with limited mobility. Campanhã has a pedestrian underpass that runs across several platforms, all with elevator access. Both stations have adapted public sanitary facilities and offer travel discounts for persons with disabilities.

The 'kiss & ride' zones and pavements adjacent to the São Bento and Campanhã station have lowered curbs near the accessible entrances. This enables easier connection to other railway lines, the metro, taxis, buses, and private transport for persons with disabilities.

© Miguel Nogueira / CM Porto



 Porto metro line

© Filipa Brito / CM Porto



 Campanhã station

A vision for the future: Inclusive accessibility

Porto's commitment to inclusive accessibility is reflected in the objectives of revised land-use plans (in force since July 2021), which establish the city's vision for the future. The focus is on initiatives that address the needs of persons with disabilities, while also ensuring that they benefit the population as a whole. The plans set out a broad approach to facilitate mobility and

improve accessibility for all citizens in a sustainable way (for example, through the extension of public transport, modernisation of public transport vehicles, reduced fares and/or free public transport, traffic decongestion, and new parking policies). Meanwhile, the city's Social Development Plan (2019–2021) focuses more specifically on making the city and its services accessible for older people and persons with disabilities.



© Filipa Brito / CM Porto

 *Cyclists using a bike lane in Porto*





Special mention for the physical environment, including natural areas for inclusive tourism

Palma

Spain

Palma, the capital of the Balearic Islands, is a major destination for European tourism. Set on the south coast of Majorca, the city is famed for its shops, beaches, food, and year-round good weather. Palma has implemented various actions which aim to make public spaces, including beaches and parks, more accessible.

‘Something as simple as everything being within everyone’s reach; that and nothing else is what universal accessibility is all about.’

Jose Hila, Mayor of the City of Palma



Inclusive design of public spaces

The jury were impressed with Palma's ongoing investments in inclusive design of public spaces (beaches, parks, playgrounds and squares). Universal Accessibility and Sustainable Urban Mobility plans set the basis and criteria for actions that aim to transform the city into one that is open and committed to all of its residents and visitors.

In 2021, the Palma City Hall introduced the Park, Garden and Square Improvement Plan, investing €4 million in 57 parks to replace pavements and fountains, and build accessible and inclusive playgrounds and furniture. The first inclusive recreation space in Palma was officially opened in Sa Riera Park in 2021.

Persons with disabilities can enjoy assisted bathing in six spots at the city's five accessible beaches. These beaches are accessed through gangways, and provide adapted amphibian chairs, shaded resting platforms, lifeguards, crutches for mobility aid, and adapted bathrooms and showers. All of them are Safe Tourism Certified. Surveys on the assisted bathing services between May and October 2020 gathered more than 100 comments from users, which will serve as a guide for the City Hall to continue improving them.

Palma has nine Citizens' Assistance Offices equipped with magnetic loops for visitors with hearing impairments and visual accessibility kits for visitors with visual impairments. Office staff are also trained in general procedural guidelines for serving users with disabilities.

© Ajuntament de Palma



○ A Citizens' Assistance Office in Palma with devices adapted for people with hearing disabilities

© Ajuntament de Palma



○ Can Pere Antoni beach assisted bathing spot



 Sa Riera Park inclusive recreation space

Connectivity to information and services

Palma City Hall's website hosts all city-related information and is designed to be accessible for users with disabilities. Six accessible mobile apps have been developed to help persons with disabilities make the most of the services available. MobiPalma, an app that provides information on how to navigate the city, is accessible to people with visual impairments and available in four languages (English, German, Spanish and Catalan). The City Hall is also working to offer free and efficient Wi-Fi access in public spaces to enable better connectivity for persons with disabilities to relevant information and services.

Accessible travel around the city

In 2021, Palma invested €32.5 million in renovating its 100-bus fleet. All of the

renovated buses comply with current accessibility regulations and have a speaker and route number visible on the outside, three doors, a single level inside, and a telescopic ramp built into the vehicle's body. There are also 1 758 parking spaces throughout the city reserved for people with disabilities or mobility limitations, and 14 adapted taxis, which are active 24 hours a day.

Fundación Turismo Palma de Mallorca 365 developed the Palma for All project to establish five accessible tourism routes around the city, which take in cultural, leisure and commercial attractions. The **project brochure** is available online and specifies the ways in which the routes, buildings, buses and taxis are physically, audibly and visually accessible. Each route starts in one of the city's six Tourist Information Offices.

Representation in decision-making

Palma's Accessibility Board is an advisory and participatory mechanism which incorporates different organisations and representatives of persons with disabilities in discussions and decision-making processes for issues that affect them. Since 2013, 76 sessions have been held.

In 2016, the Accessible Palma Office was created to inform and advise other regions, citizens and entities about accessibility.

The office is also in charge of ensuring compliance with accessibility regulations in businesses, public buildings, sports facilities, parks, green areas, streets, events and fairs.

Networking with other tourism destinations

In 2021, Palma introduced the Plan Impulsa (€974 535) and dedicated one of its four strategic branches to fostering accessible and sustainable tourism.





Special mention for mainstreaming accessibility, including in the digital area

Leuven

Belgium

Leuven is a city in the centre of Belgium, close to the capital Brussels. The city's rich history is reflected in its 15th-century square and town hall and numerous old buildings and cobbled streets. Leuven aims to preserve its historical character while also meeting the needs of a modern, accessible city by involving citizens, knowledge institutions, organisations and companies in its policies and decision-making processes.

‘For us, creating an accessible public space means literally and figuratively removing barriers for people with disabilities as much as possible. This does not only involve adjustments to the infrastructure, but also accessible events and services. The special mention is an acknowledgement of the crucial steps we have taken in the field of accessibility in recent years. But it is also a motivation to continue working hard in the coming years, as we are well aware that there is still work to be done in various areas.’

Lies Corneillie, Councillor for Equal Opportunities

The jury praised Leuven's comprehensive approach to accessibility, which involves gathering and using the needs and experiences of residents with disabilities to inform actions in all areas. The city aims to provide a professional service for citizens and tourists with visual, hearing, and cognitive impairments. Leuven's aim is to evolve from using a problem-solving approach to accessibility to implementing more integrated policies – for example, by appointing key persons for accessibility within each department and by working together with mobility actors and the university KU Leuven. Accessibility also plays an important role in Leuven City Council's 2019–2025 board memorandum, establishing it as a key policy focus for this period.

Leuven's accessibility policy is driven by three priorities:

- applying an accessibility standard in new projects or major adaptation works;
- proactively informing citizens about accessibility standards and initiatives; and
- providing specific support where needed.

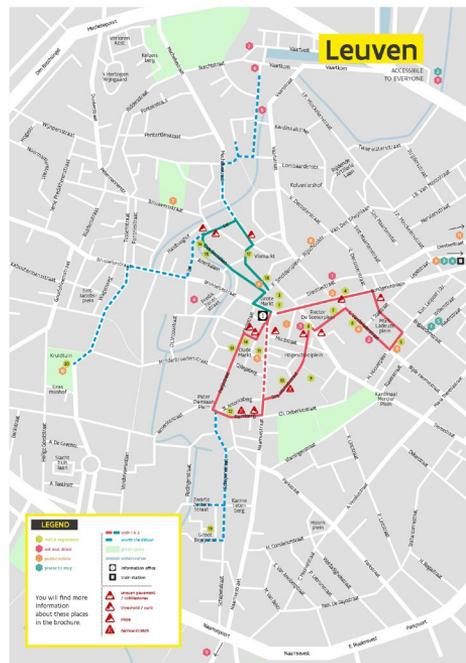
By the end of the current legislature (2024), the city aims to ensure that each service in the city has a designated contact point for accessibility.

Accessibility standards in new projects

As well as enforcing Flemish legislation on accessible layout at the planning stage (for example, door widths, gradients and turning circles), Leuven imposes additional accessibility standards on itself by considering the finish of sites

(such as the use of contrasting colours and acoustics). The city also aims to find mutually beneficial solutions to seemingly conflicting needs (for example, wheelchair-friendly thresholds acting as guidelines for the blind). New projects must integrate a low-stimulus zone and have accessibility guidance and warning lines visible. Conference rooms must be equipped with loops for visitors with hearing impairments.

In addition to providing visible information (including information boards and signposting) on accessibility in the city, Leuven aims to proactively inform citizens and visitors about it. It is in consultation with the university KU Leuven to make relevant information more readily available online.



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 Map of Leuven with additional accessibility signs

Leuven's monthly city magazine and magazine on urban renewal are available in audio format for people with visual impairments, while the waste collection calendar is available in Braille. In cooperation with Tourism Flanders, the city has compiled an accessible tourist walking route, while Museum M has developed a visual step-by-step plan for visitors with autism who want to prepare for their visit.

Providing specific support

While Leuven aims to make public facilities and services accessible to all, it is aware that more work remains to be done. Therefore, under the 'providing specific support' pillar of the city's accessibility policy, it has created an online notification centre alerting users to accessibility

problems. It also provides specific support in the city office, where a receptionist helps citizens with visual, hearing or mobility impairments.

Initiating dialogue

The Accessibility Advisory Board, an official advisory body of the city since 2008, plays a key role in implementing Leuven's accessibility policy. The Advisory Board initiates dialogue between people with disabilities and city services, architects, designers, hospitality operators, event organisers, etc.

The Board includes 16 experience experts (i.e. people with autism, cognitive disabilities, mental health issues and/or a motor, visual or hearing impairment) and a representative of the



© Rob Stevens

 Sam Michiels, Chairman of the Accessibility Advisory Board, on the streets of Leuven

Senior Citizens' Council. It meets every month to formulate recommendations on plans based on consultations with developers and city services.

Leuven appointed an Accessibility Policy Advisor in 2015 to work alongside the City Councillor for Equal Opportunities and Accessibility to ensure that all city services include accessibility considerations within their operations. The Policy Advisor acts as a bridge between the city services and city Accessibility Advisory Board, facilitating the flow of accessibility expertise to all services.

Accessible transport

Twenty 'Hoppin' points (links between different modes of transport) have been installed in Leuven. The railway station has been made more accessible with the construction of a bicycle spiral bridge.



© Jan Pollers



The bicycle spiral bridge at Leuven railway station

Furthermore, the city supports a service that transports people with limited mobility from door to door by appointment and at a low fee.

The main bus stops in Leuven are fully accessible, and the city has signed the Flemish charter on accessible bus stops and committed to make half of all bus stops accessible by 2030. The city has also pledged to survey all footpaths (including in parks and forest areas) in its built environment and public spaces and to improve at least half of those that are currently difficult to access by 2030.

Accessible leisure activities

Leuven wants to take extra steps to make leisure activities more accessible, for example, through adapted play equipment and guided tours for visitors with limited mobility, and hearing and visual impairments.



Participating in the Access City Award 2023

You can help to make life easier for persons with disabilities. Join in and apply for the 2023 Access City Award.

The Access City Award is organised by the European Commission in partnership with the European Disability Forum. The Award recognises cities for their work to become more accessible, in particular for persons with disabilities.

Participating in the Award is an opportunity to gain European recognition and a unique chance to review the current situation in your city. It also allows you to share experiences with other European cities, helping you to become an even better city to live and visit.

Winning cities receive a financial prize:

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

Cities with more than 50 000 inhabitants can apply

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. Pre-selected candidates then move on to the second phase of the competition and are assessed by the **European Jury**.

To apply, you must be a government authority of a city of over 50 000 inhabitants in an EU Member State. 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.

As the same city cannot win the Access City Award in two consecutive years, the winning city in 2022 cannot take part again in 2023. The Award encourages all other cities, including the second and third prize winners and special mention cities, to participate again.

To apply, you must complete and submit an online application form by the deadline. When the application period opens, a guidance note and participation rules will be published to help you apply.

They will be available in all official EU languages on the 2023 Access City Award website.

ec.europa.eu/social/accesscityaward2023

Selection process and criteria

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

- 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.

Please keep a close eye on our website for news on the final criteria.

The winner of the 2023 Access City Award will be announced on **25 November 2022**. The award ceremony is part of the annual conference to celebrate the European Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Contact us

The Access City Award Secretariat can assist you with the preparation of your application. For any additional information, please contact: secretariat@accesscityaward.eu

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EU law and related documents

For access to legal information from the EU, including all EU law since 1951 in all the official language versions, go to EUR-Lex at: **<https://eur-lex.europa.eu>**

Open data from the EU

The EU Open Data Portal (**<https://data.europa.eu/en>**) provides access to datasets from the EU. Data can be downloaded and reused for free, for both 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 older citizens. This brochure celebrates the achievements of the 2022 winners, runners-up and special mentions: Luxembourg City (Luxembourg), Helsinki (Finland), Barcelona (Spain), Leuven (Belgium), Palma (Spain) and Porto (Portugal). This year's cities have taken concrete steps to make public spaces, services, transport, buildings, culture, and tourism more accessible.

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