



European Green Capital Award and European Green Leaf Award 2026

Guidance Note

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1 INTRODUCTION

This **Guidance Note should be read in conjunction with the application form** for the European Green Capital (EGC) Award and European Green Leaf (EGL) Award 2026. The application form can be downloaded in English from the [registration portal](#), after submitting the required information on basic city contacts and data.

Even though the application form for both Awards is the same, EGL applicants are evaluated less strictly than EGC applicants. EGL applicants should try to provide as much information and data as possible, but it is accepted that they do not have all the information and data because of the smaller scale of EGL cities. If EGL applicants lack certain data, they should describe the situation as accurately as possible. When plans/programs are developed at the regional and national levels, it is crucial to provide information on how these are implemented at the city level.

1.1 EXPLANATORY NOTE ON INDICATORS

This note provides information on how to interpret the indicators and types of information cities must provide when applying. Applications must comply with the formal requirements set out in the Rules of Contest governing the EGC Award and EGL Award 2026 competition.

The application form consists of nine sections: the 'City Introduction and Context' section, a section for each of the seven environmental indicators and the 'Good Practices' section. The 'City Introduction and Context' section serves an informative purpose and does not contribute to the overall assessment. However, it helps in gaining insights into the city's highlights and context. All seven environmental indicators hold equal weight in the assessment process. Each environmental indicator consists of the following sections:

1. **Present Situation** - Describe the present situation, e.g. the relevant infrastructure and systems that are in place and the relevant state of play with respect to environmental performance.
2. **Past Performance** - The aim of this section is to make clear how the present situation described in Section A has been achieved. This should describe the strategies, plans and measures that have been implemented over the last 10 years.
3. **Future Plans** - Describe the future medium (2030) and long-term (2050) objectives and the proposed approach to achieve these, including any additional strategies and plans.
4. **References** - List supporting documentation, adding links where possible (for clarification purposes only).

The scores in Sections 1, 2, and 3 are weighted as follows: 50% 1 (present situation) – 25% 2 (past performance) – 25% 3 (future plans) as part of the technical assessment. The scores will be based on the information provided in these sections. Section 4 - References; will be used solely for clarification/verification of data purposes. Experts are not required to read additional information. For further guidance on these four sections, please refer to Section 2.

The provided flagship project and best practices are evaluated by the Panel of Experts, influencing the overall assessment. Experts may assign weight or points to indicators when good practices strongly support them.

Information to be included

Include clear plans and objectives in the context of European legislation and in delivering the European Green Deal. Detail, where possible, the city's compliance/non-compliance with EU Directives and legislation.

It should be clearly noted if figures provided are for the city itself or incorporate a larger area/region.

Applicants should highlight integrated approaches to environmental management. The experts who will evaluate the application are only required to assess their primary and peer-review indicators. It means one expert reviews a maximum of two indicators. Where cross-linkages between indicators/initiatives exist, they should be referred to in the different relevant indicator sections in the application form or by way of footnotes in order to allow the expert to make the link.

Where possible, please identify active community groups/stakeholders within the city in the relevant indicator and also highlight how the city has engaged with these groups in the course of developing a policy.

Further Guidance

In advance of preparing an application, it is recommended that applicants look at the following:

- Technical Assessment Reports from past award cycles allow applicants to see what recurring themes are mentioned by experts in their feedback and allow the applicant to address these particular concerns.
- Past Applicant Workshop materials are available online for review, which should answer most of the questions that applicants may have and provide even further guidance as to what is expected from a winning city application. Past Applicant City Workshops can be found on our EGC website, EGL website, or on our YouTube [channel](#). Please take into account that the application form has changed (from twelve to seven indicators).
- The following data sources:
 - [City air quality viewer](#)
 - [EEA database on environmental indicators](#)
 - [Joint Research Centre's urban data platform](#)
 - [Eurostat data sets](#)
- Latest EEA reports (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/en>), including:
 - 2023: [Air pollution levels still too high across Europe](#)
 - 2023: [Nature-based solutions play crucial role](#)
 - 2023: [Investing in green industry](#)
 - 2023: [EU's greenhouse gas emissions - trends](#)
 - 2023: [Heatwaves, droughts and other extreme weather events](#)
 - 2022 [Zero pollution: 2030 targets within reach but need stronger action — European Environment Agency \(europa.eu\)](#)

- 2022 [How green are European cities? Green space key to well-being – but access varies — European Environment Agency \(europa.eu\)](#)
- 2021 [Cities play pivotal roles in Europe's sustainability transition — European Environment Agency \(europa.eu\)](#)

If there are any queries on the application form, please do not hesitate to contact the European Green Capital and Green Leaf Awards (EGCL) Secretariat who can field procedural questions or refer technical questions to the expert panel on behalf of a city. Please note that cities cannot liaise directly with the expert panel. The EGCL Secretariat can be contacted via email at info@europeangreencapital.eu for the Green Capital Award and at info@europeangreenleaf.eu for the Green Leaf Award or by telephone at +32 (0) 2 548 12 89 for any queries.

1.2 FORMAT OF THE APPLICATION

After registering for the EGC Award or EGL Award, the registrant will receive the application form (Annex 1) in Word format. The applicant is required to fill out this form in Word format. All tables must be completed, and a response is expected for each sub-question. The applicant should provide their answer beneath each sub-question. Original text in the application form should not be deleted. The format of the template of the application form must be adhered to.

All documents must be submitted in PDF format - and if the application is not in English please submit the documents in Word format. Please refer to [section 1.4](#) - and uploaded through the [application portal](#).

The Rules of Contest governing the EGC Award and EGL Award 2026 competition, and in particular Section 2 and 3 therein, stipulate that all candidates shall complete the application form for **each of the seven environmental indicators**. Applications that do not follow the requirements set out in Section 2 and 3 at the pre-selection stage shall be eliminated from the competition and will not be examined further.

Applicants are required to fill out **all the sections of the application form**. Applications which are not fully answered shall not be examined further. In the event that a question cannot be answered, reasons must be given in the corresponding section of the application form. Missing information however will negatively influence the assessment.

1.2.1 Word Count and Limitations

All word limits must be **strictly** adhered to. Any words above the specified limit will not be taken into account and may leave applicants' responses incomplete. The original text of the application form and the original text within tables with benchmarking data of each indicator **will not** be included in the word count. Applicants must complete the 'Word Count Check' provided at the end of each indicator to verify that their word count is within the acceptable limits.

1.2.2 Limits for Number of Graphics/Images/Tables

A picture is worth a thousand words! It is highly recommended to make efficient use of the graphic/image/table allowance in order to optimise the application. The clever use of graphics/images/tables including infographics can reduce the amount of text required to describe a particular aspect of the application. Using before and after pictures to illustrate the implementation or effect of specific projects can be very useful and a good way to visually highlight the change resulting from a project.

There is a limit of **15 graphics/images/tables per indicator (five for each section 1, 2 and 3)**. For the section 'City Introduction and Context' the limit is five graphics/images/tables. All limits for numbers of graphics/ images/tables must be adhered to. Images which consist of multiple jpegs combining to form one image/subject may be accepted if they are addressing a common theme. If the grouped images are not deemed to address a common theme, these will be considered as separate individual images which may result in exceedances of the limit. Please see Figure 1.1 below of an instance in which multiple jpegs are accepted as one image (Lisbon's application 2020).



Figure 1.1 - Grouped Images on a Theme that may be counted as a single image

1.2.3 Graphics/Images/Tables Word Limits

Graphics/images/tables must be uploaded in a PDF format on the online application platform.

Text included in the captions and heading (titles) of graphics/images/tables **will not** be included in the word count. These shall not exceed more than 20 words. Screenshots of websites/leaflets/posters which illustrate an item but are not intended to be read **will not** be counted towards the indicator word count, but **will be included** in the count of permitted graphics/images/tables per indicator area. Information essential to understanding a graphic/image/table (i.e. headings/titles/legends/text in columns/place names/numbers) **will not** be included in the word count, as these are relevant and essential to understand the information within. The text in graphics/images/tables that are primarily consisting of (sizable amounts) of text, similar to a text block, **will** be included in the word count. Please see Annex 1 for sample tables and sample graphics.

1.3 SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

In order to submit a complete application form, the following must be adhered to:

The **Mayoral Declaration** (Annex 3 of the Rules of Contest) must be signed by the Mayor or highest ranking City Representative¹ and stamped with the official city seal, scanned and uploaded to the

¹ Signatory must be authorised by national law to legally represent the city

portal. Please ensure the Mayoral Declaration document is labelled correctly e.g. City Name_Mayoral Declaration_(EGCA or EGLA) 2026.

The **Declaration on Honour** on exclusion criteria and selection criteria (Annex 7 of the Rules of Contest) must also be completed, dated, signed, scanned, submitted in English, and uploaded to the portal. Please ensure the Declaration on Honour document is labelled correctly e.g. City Name_Declaration on Honour_(EGCA or EGLA) 2026.

An application form will be considered invalid if it is not accompanied by a completed, signed and stamped Mayoral Declaration, and completed and signed Declaration on Honour.

In addition to the Mayoral Declaration, and Declaration on Honour as set out above, nine (9) individual files will be uploaded in total: one (1) City Introduction and Context, seven (7) Indicators and one (1) Good Practices. The completed official EGC and EGL Award application form must be submitted on the [Application Portal](#). Each file must be a **PDF document** (please refer to [section 1.4](#) on language submission) and labelled correctly e.g. City Introduction and Context_Lahti, Indicator 1_Lahti, Indicator 2_Lahti, ... etc. and Good Practices_Lahti.

Be aware that there is a **10MB limit for each uploaded file**. If your document exceeds the 10MB limit, please try to compress your PDF.

Only the online application form, submitted via the application portal, will be taken into account.

Online Application Portal: https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/EGCA-EGLA2026_ApplicationPortal

Please follow the instructions as detailed on the website for the EGC Award and EGL Award: https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/urban-environment/european-green-capital-award/applying-eu-green-capital_en

All queries should be directed to the EGCL Secretariat:

- EGC Award: info@europeangreencapital.eu
- EGL Award: info@europeangreenleaf.eu

Please note that no technical support will be available **past 18:00 CEST (GMT +2) on 26 April 2024 and during the weekend 27-28 April 2024**.

The **deadline for receipt of applications is at 23:59 CEST (GMT +2) on 30 April 2024**. Please make sure that the application form is complete by the time of submission.

1.4 TRANSLATION

The technical assessment process is conducted in English. The full application shall be written in one of the official languages of the European Union. However, submitting in English is encouraged for the smooth and timely running of the assessment of the applications. If an application is submitted in a city's native language, the word count will be examined based on the original application, i.e. before it is translated into English. It will also be required to the city to send to the EGCL Secretariat the Application also in Word format in order to proceed to the translation.

It should be noted that the EGC Award and EGL Award is conducted in the English language. This means the jury meetings and the award ceremony are held in English, and the communication with the winning city shall be conducted in English. It is advised that a native English speaker is consulted during the application process and/or before the application is submitted.

2 APPLICATION FORM AND DOCUMENTS

The EGC Award and EGL Award 2026 Application Form needs to be duly completed and it contains nine separate sections:

- City Introduction and Context.
- Indicator 1: Air Quality.
- Indicator 2: Water.
- Indicator 3: Biodiversity, Green Areas & Sustainable Land Use.
- Indicator 4: Waste and Circular Economy.
- Indicator 5: Noise.
- Indicator 6: Climate Change Mitigation.
- Indicator 7: Climate Change Adaptation.
- Good Practices

The Monitoring Framework for the 8th Environment Action Programme (EAP)² was adopted in July 2022. Indicators retained for the EGC Award and EGL Award are consistent with this Monitoring Framework.

Each of the seven indicators must be completed under the following sections as set out in the application form:

- 1. Present situation.** Describe the present situation, e.g. the relevant infrastructure and systems that are in place and the relevant state of play with respect to environmental performance. This section should also cover governance arrangements and responsibilities. Quantitative information/data should be provided to support the description, including at the minimum, the specific data requested for each indicator.
- 2. Past performance.** The aim of this section is to make clear how the present situation described in Section A has been achieved. This should describe the strategies, plans and measures that have been implemented over the last ten years. Comment on which measures have been most effective. Also, include information on any relevant disadvantages or constraints resulting from historical, geoclimatic and/or socio-economic factors which may have influenced this indicator. Where available, quantitative information/data should be provided from previous years in order to show recent trends.
- 3. Future plans.** Describe the future medium (2030) and long-term (2050) objectives and the proposed approach to achieve these, including any additional strategies and plans. Include the measures adopted, but not yet implemented, and details for future measures already adopted. Emphasise to what extent plans are supported by political commitments, budget allocations, and monitoring and performance evaluation schemes.

² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_4667

- 4. References.** List supporting documentation, adding links where possible. Further detail may be requested during the pre-selection phase. Documentation should not be forwarded at this stage.

The 'City Introduction and Context' section serves an informative purpose and does not contribute to the overall assessment. However, it helps in gaining insights into the city's highlights and context. All seven environmental indicators hold equal weight in the assessment process. Additionally, the 'Good Practices' section carries the same level of importance in the assessment as an environmental indicator.

Shortlisted cities will be asked to provide the following additional documents for the jury meeting (to be sent in by 9 September 2024 at the latest):

- Two-page document on environmental governance.
- Two-page document with the draft planning of the title year.

2.1 CITY INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Use this section to provide an overview of the city and context for the seven indicators. It will act as background information for the experts and will set the scene for the application as a whole in the context of historical, geoclimatic, socio-economic and political constraints, contentious infrastructure/environmental projects and initiatives. This provides the Expert Panel with a clear insight into the factors influencing the city's development and environmental quality. Applicants should include any major local constraints, contentious infrastructure/environmental projects and initiatives.

Although it does not form part of the seven indicators and will not contribute towards ranking, this section must be completed to present a full application for assessment. It can help to elucidate any issues in the city which may impact on a particular environmental indicator. This will help the Expert understand the reasons why certain decisions have been made in the city and will support the evaluation of the application. It is beneficial to cross-reference to points made in the City Introduction and Context section where relevant to a particular indicator section as this may help make more effective use of the word limits. Please include a maximum of five graphics, images or tables to support the response to this section, including the two maps requested under point 3 in the application form.

The EGCL Secretariat will carry out a detailed background check on applicants' compliance with European legislation and governance. If the city is involved in a legal procedure under any European Directive or has been cited by the European Court of Justice, information on progress towards compliance should be provided.

2.2 AIR QUALITY

The selected indicators are described in Directive 2008/50/EC of 21 May 2008 on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe³. The air quality standards in this directive are set to protect human health

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32008L0050>

and the environment. Member States and their competent authorities should take action in order to comply with these limit and target values.

Present Situation

Please use official data from sampling points reporting air quality data under the Ambient Air Quality Directives to the European Environment Agency (EEA) as per Commission Decision 2011/850 (hereafter “AAQD sampling points”). Please specify the type of sampling point (e.g. traffic, urban background, regional background).

For the annual mean concentrations of NO₂, PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ please provide a quantitative assessment of the contribution from local sources and from long-range transport for these pollutants as a percentage. For example, *“about 75% of the annual mean concentration of NO₂ at traffic measurement stations originates from local sources and 25% from long-range transport”*. The contribution from long-range transport should ideally be determined as originating from outside the administrative boundaries of the city. The purpose of this assessment is to estimate how much of observed concentrations can be managed by the city government.

For Green Leaf applicants, the following applies: If your city does not have AAQD sampling points but has other sampling points, please provide data for these sampling points and specify their types (e.g. traffic, urban background, regional background). If there are no air quality sampling points in your city, please briefly describe the latest air quality assessment available for the air quality zone to which the city belongs, including relevant information about the methods used for the assessment (type of measurements, modelling etc) and the results available regarding annual mean concentrations of NO₂, PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀.

Past Performance

The aim of this section is to make clear how air quality has evolved in your city over the past ten years. Please present charts depicting trends in air quality over the past decade.

For the following data, please use charts to illustrate where possible (see Figure 2.1 below for example):

1. Trend (ten years at least) of annual mean NO₂ concentrations for each AAQD sampling point.
2. Trend (ten years at least) of annual mean PM₁₀ concentrations for each AAQD sampling point.
3. Trend (ten years at least) of annual mean PM_{2.5} concentrations for each AAQD sampling point.
4. Trend (ten years at least) of number of exceedances of the daily limit value for PM₁₀ per year.
5. Trend (ten years at least) of number of exceedances of the hourly limit value for NO₂ per year.

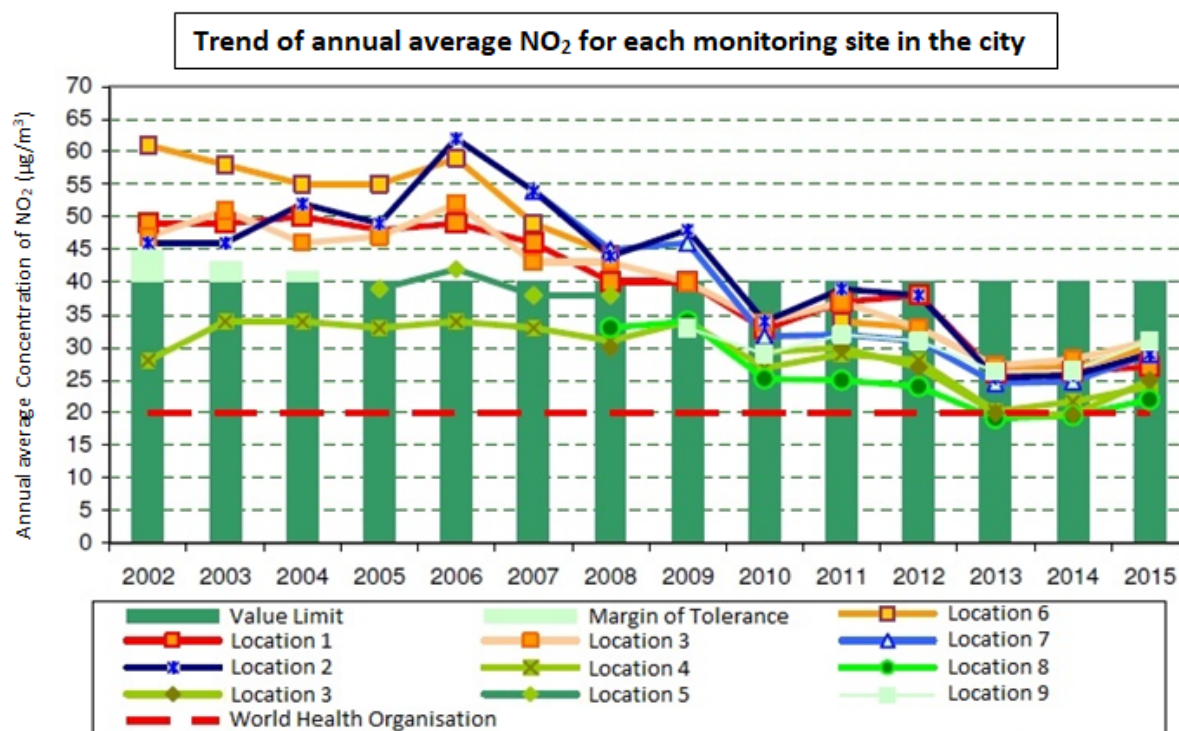


Figure 2.1 - Example Chart Format for Presenting Air Quality Trends

If available, please provide information on the spatial variation in air pollutant concentrations (maps) during the past ten years.

Please provide information on air quality plans and measures implemented over the last ten years to improve the urban air quality and to increase awareness of air pollution. Comment on the effectiveness of implemented measures in improving air quality:

- Explain how the implemented measures have influenced the present level of air quality.
- Describe whether air quality objectives and measures taken go beyond what is required by the Ambient Air Quality Directives, and how this is achieved.

Future Plans

Describe the short and long-term objectives for air quality in your city and the proposed approach for their achievement, including in relation to the air quality-related targets of the Zero Pollution Action Plan for 2030⁴ and the updated WHO Air Quality Guidelines of 2021. Emphasise to what extent plans are consolidated by commitments, budget allocations, monitoring and describe their expected impact on future pollutant concentrations in ambient air.

Describe whether and how air quality planning and measures are integrated with other plans and measures in the city, such as Sustainable Energy and Climate Plans (SECAPs⁵) under the Covenant of Mayors, Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP) or Climate City Contracts under the EU Mission on

⁴ COM(2021)400)

⁵ Local authorities joining the CoM commit to submitting an action plan within two years after formally signing up to the initiative. More information on the SECAPs and the relevant processes can be found in the FAQ of the CoM - <https://eu-mayors.ec.europa.eu/en/FAQs>

Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities, and whether and how synergies have been achieved between objectives and measures on air quality and those in other areas.

2.1 WATER

For this indicator, information is requested on the following topics:

- Drinking Water, for which the EU Drinking Water Directive (DWD) Directive (EU)2020/2184 (recast) is the most relevant legal framework.
- Wastewater, which is regulated in the EU Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (UWWTD, 91/271/EEC) (be aware of the proposal for a revised Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive).
- Surface and groundwater, with both the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD, 2000/60) and the Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC) as main legislations.

In case the city is served by a private, or public/private services company, or the regional/national authorities are responsible for the water services, please provide the information requested and describe the additional city activities.

Present Situation

In section 1, the proportion of water losses from the distribution network can be either expressed as the Infrastructure Leakage Index (ILI) or as a % with the following calculation method: (revenue volume (on invoices)) / supplied volume) * 100%.

Furthermore, a breakdown of the drinking water consumption is requested. For industry, agriculture, small business and tourism, water demand values should be reported for each sector both as total amount of used water (in cubic meter/year) and as share of total water consumption in the city (%). For the industry sector, please include the drinking water demand for cooling purposes. If your city is a tourist destination, detail the variation in water demand during the tourist season.

The recast DWD requests to pay particular attention to vulnerable and marginalised groups by taking the necessary measures to improve access to water intended for human consumption for those groups. It also requests to promote tap water, including in public spaces and restaurants, to reduce (plastic) bottle consumption.

Regarding the requested data for wastewater, population equivalent (PE), collecting systems, primary, secondary and more stringent treatments are defined in the UWWTD. The population not connected to waste water collecting systems might be served by individual and other appropriate systems. In these cases, please estimate the treatment level achieved (i.e. break down the % of water treated under primary, secondary, and more stringent levels).

Cities also have the option of reusing water, to have a reliable supply while reducing pressure on the ecosystems. The Water Reuse Regulation⁶ promotes the safe use of reclaimed water for agricultural irrigation. This also opens possibilities for cities to use reclaimed water for industry, for urban green

⁶ Regulation (EU) 2020/741 on minimum requirements for water reuse, and national legislation in some countries.

spaces (such as parks, gardens and sport fields), as well as for cleaning of streets, or for environmental purposes. If your city uses reclaimed water, please specify.

Past Performance

The aim of this section is to make clear how the situation regarding drinking water, waste water and surface and ground water bodies, described in the previous section has been achieved in the past ten years. Please describe the sector-specific technical measures that have been implemented to improve (drinking) water efficiency (e.g. water saving devices, network rehabilitation, water recycling/reuse) and the chosen incentives driving these measures (e.g. pricing, taxes, subsidies, metering, product eco-labelling, building rating). Address whether measures have been implemented to promote tap water and to grant access to vulnerable or marginalised groups. Furthermore, elucidate the institutional and regulatory changes that accompanied the implementation of the measures (e.g. were they mandatory or voluntary) to reach the current situation.

Future Plans

Describe the short and long-term objectives in terms of drinking water, wastewater and surface and ground water, and the proposed approach for their achievement. Also describe innovative actions and emphasise initiatives that go beyond the legal requirements.

2.2 BIODIVERSITY, GREEN AREAS AND SUSTAINABLE LAND USE

The technical assessment of this indicator has three focal points:

1. The quality and amount of blue-green infrastructure and green urban areas.
2. The way green areas are integrated in spatial planning (as a green urban network and ensuring equitable access).
3. The presence, quality and amount of protected natural areas, habitats and species.

Relevant EU policies and legislation on this indicator are: EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, including the Soil Strategy and the Forest Strategy, Urban Greening Plans, Initiatives on pollinators and sustainable use of pesticides, Nature Restoration Law, EU Birds and Habitat Directives, EU Mission on Soil and EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters

Present Situation

Public green areas are defined as:

- Public parks or gardens/forests, for the exclusive use of pedestrians and cyclists, except green traffic islands or dividers, graveyards (unless the local authority recognises their recreational function or natural, historical or cultural importance).
- Green open-air sports facilities accessible to the public free of charge; private green areas (agricultural areas, private parks, forests) accessible to the public free of charge.

When defining 'Inner City' and 'Overall City' for the application, cities should follow the guidelines laid out by the European Commission (Cities in Europe; The new OECD-EC definition – RF 01/2012)⁷ whereby the inner city is equivalent to 'high density clusters'.

⁷http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index.cfm/en/information/publications/regional-focus/2012/cities-in-

The requested data on urban tree canopy cover is derived from one of the draft obligations in the proposed EU Nature Restoration Law: a minimum of 10% tree canopy cover in every European city in 2050. Please note that in the table with benchmarking data the percentage tree canopy cover should **not** be added up to the percentages land use categories. This is because a tree canopy usually overlaps with another land use, like a road.

The percentage of people living within 300 m of public green urban areas of >5,000 m² is a WHO recommendation⁸: urban residents should be able to access public green spaces of at least 0.5–1 hectare within 300 metres' linear distance (around 5 minutes' walk) of their homes.

Past Performance

The aim of this section is to make clear how the present situation described in the Section Present Situation has been achieved. This should describe the strategies, plans and measures that have been implemented over the last ten years. Comment on which measures have been most effective.

Future Plans

The Soil Strategy for 2030⁹ gives a set of measures that cities can develop, like the application of a land take hierarchy. This hierarchy prioritizes constructing in or rehabilitating already previously built-up areas above land use in natural or agricultural areas. Furthermore, the EU committed to plant 3 billion additional trees by 2030 in the Biodiversity and Forest Strategies¹⁰. In urban and peri-urban areas there is a lot of potential for tree planting with the highest benefits for air quality, biodiversity and climate adaptation. In the section Future Plans your city's ambitions to contribute to this goal is requested.

2.3 WASTE AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC) (WFD) as amended in May 2018¹¹ sets out the regulatory structure to protect the environment and human health by preventing or reducing the generation of waste, by reducing overall impacts of resource use and improving the efficiency of such use. The WFD is a key policy tool in support of the transition to a circular economy. The Directive includes key definitions such as waste, municipal waste, recycling, recovery etc. In responding to the questions on this indicator applicants are required to use the relevant definitions as set out in the Directive when describing their waste system.

[europe-the-new-oecd-ec-definition](#)

⁸ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/who-benefits-from-nature-in>

⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/publications/eu-soil-strategy-2030_en

¹⁰ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030/3-billion-trees_en

¹¹ Available at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/framework/framework_directive.htm



Figure 2.2 - The Waste Hierarchy

The Directive describes basic waste management principles such as the waste hierarchy, separate collection of waste to ensure high quality recycling, extended producer responsibility and the polluter pays principle. It also includes recycling & preparation for reuse targets for municipal waste: the recycling targets for municipal waste will gradually move up to 65% in 2035.

The Zero Pollution Monitoring and Outlook Report that was published in December 2022, showed that Europe is not on track to achieve the targets for waste and plastics in the oceans. New initiatives on Zero Pollution can be expected as well as a growing demand for member states to step up implementation of the existing EU laws.

The information provided should include references to how waste management is considered and managed in the wider context of the circular economy. Waste prevention strategies or plans in place including possible specific measures to reduce food waste, plastic waste and other waste materials including green public procurement should be mentioned too.

Cities and municipalities can promote circular economy. For example, cities can enable and support repair and reuse services and sharing economy activities, such as repair cafes and libraries to expand the range of items that can be borrowed in addition to books. Furthermore, cities and municipalities can enable and boost circular business models, for example by supporting circular business hubs and networks in different sectors (e.g. restaurants, canteens), as well as by planning areas for industrial symbiosis.

In addition, Public Procurement is an important tool to promote sustainable and circular services and products. In particular, cities can have an increasing role in accelerating green transition by using Green Public Procurement (GPP). By embracing GPP criteria, cities can have a transformative impact on environmental sustainability, influencing the market towards the adoption of eco-friendly alternatives, circular business models such as product-as-service, and promoting the responsible use of resources¹².

¹² The EU common GPP criteria encompass guidelines that can be integrated into public procurement processes, spanning the acquisition of goods, services, or construction projects. The GPP criteria provide public sector

Present Situation

In response to this section the applicant should aim to provide comprehensive details on the current waste management practices in the city tackling each of the numbered items.

The applicant should also provide information on other activities where circular economy is being promoted, including how the EU GPP-criteria are being used in competitive tendering.

Cities are encouraged to use waste data in the form of tables and charts to support the responses. Any data submitted should be clear and complement the qualitative response.

Past Performance

In response to this section the applicant should focus on describing how the programme of waste management, its implementation and development of infrastructure (collection and treatment) has progressed in the city over the past ten years. Each numbered item is to be addressed and it is recommended that data tables and charts are used to complement the response.

The applicant is encouraged to mention other activities where circular economy have been promoted, including GPP-criteria, in the past ten years.

Future Plans

In response to this section the applicant should focus on describing the future plans, objectives and targets the city is aiming to achieve whilst emphasising the commitment to and continual assessment of the delivery programme.

In responding the applicant should also make reference to the circular economy and the steps the city intends to take in the move away from linear economic models, including GPP-criteria.

Each bulleted item is to be addressed and it is recommended that data tables and charts are used to complement the response. The EU Circular Economy Action Plan¹³, EU Strategy for Plastics in the Circular Economy and EU Monitoring Framework for the Circular Economy are key reference documents for responding to this question.

General Notes

Waste data should be provided using the definitions set out in Article 3 of the **revised** Waste Framework Directive. In particular, please ensure to provide data for **all municipal waste** (and not just household waste) and **all packaging waste**. Where such data is not available for the city please explain why not and provide the most relevant data that is available.

Reference to 'measures' must include compliance with the EU Waste Framework Directive in terms of the preparation and implementation of 'waste management plans' and waste prevention programmes on either a municipal or regional basis as well as the specific use of economic instruments. Where

entities with a structured framework to assess and select products and services that meet their operational needs but aligning with environmentally responsible practices. For more information, see https://green-business.ec.europa.eu/green-public-procurement_en

¹³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1583933814386&uri=COM:2020:98:FIN>

specific packaging waste data is not available for the city or only available at a national level then measures to promote the prevention, reuse and recycling of packaging waste should be outlined.

The meaning of the 'polluter pays' principle is as described in Article 14 of the WFD. Refer Article 8 and 8a for information Extended Producer Responsibility.

When describing measures for treatment of residual waste, information should be provided on any energy recovery measures such as Waste to Energy facilities and, where applicable, the relative efficiency of the recovery measures (e.g. combined heat & power).

2.4 NOISE

Noise is an environmental stressor affecting public health, recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) among the top environmental risks to health. The European Environmental Agency (EEA) report 'Environmental noise in Europe - 2020¹⁴' underlines that an estimated 113 million people are affected by long-term day-evening-night traffic noise levels of at least 55 dB(A). Road traffic is the source of noise with the greatest population exposure in Europe, according to the report, followed by railways, airports and industry. The report also says that noise considerations should be incorporated into planning and building new infrastructure and that, moreover, quiet areas should be protected.

The Environmental Noise Directive (2002/49/EC) (END) is one of the main instruments to identify noise pollution levels and to trigger the necessary action both at Member State and at EU level. It relates to the assessment and management of environmental noise. The Directive refers to noise that people are exposed to continuously and **not** to noise created by persons themselves, their neighbours, their workplaces or while in transit. Its aim is to provide a basis for developing EU measures to reduce noise emitted by major sources, in particular, road and rail vehicles and infrastructures, aircraft, outdoor and industrial equipment and mobile machinery.

The city must provide clear evidence of its commitment and involvement in the improvement of its acoustic quality. This includes actions undertaken or planned, and information on the municipal policies regarding the reduction of noise and the improvement of the acoustic environment as well as the management of areas with good acoustic quality in the municipal territory in its application.

For EGL Award applicants, the following applies: if your city is not part of wider agglomeration, it is not required to prepare END disposals regarding noise maps and action plans. If this is the case, please provide details on the noise management tools and measures that the city has implemented, is currently implementing, or plans to implement.

Present Situation

Regarding the present situation, noise data should be provided, at least on the share of population exposed to total noise values of L_{den} (day-evening-night indicator) above 55 dB(A) and above 65 dB(A) and to total noise values of L_n (night indicator) above 50 dB(A) and 55 dB(A). In addition, figures for

¹⁴ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/environmental-noise-in-europe>

noise exposure to individual noise sources (e.g. road, rail, air, industry, and leisure/entertainment) can also be provided for a better picture of the present situation.

Information on existing **quiet areas**, or sound improved areas, should also be included. Recommendations and advice concerning quiet areas shall be found in the 'Good practice guide on quiet areas' - EEA Technical Report No 4/2014.

Past Performance

In the description in section Past Performance the applicant should:

- Comment on which measures have been most effective.
- Explain how the implemented measures have influenced the present situation.

Future Plans

The **medium and long-term objectives** for the quality of the acoustic environment and the proposed approach for their achievement must be described in detail together with assigned budgets, and put in the context of the noise-related targets of the Zero Pollution Action Plan for 2030. The applicant should:

- Emphasise to what extent plans are adopted, consolidated by commitments, budget allocations, and monitoring and performance evaluation schemes.
- Indicate the target foreseen reduction in the share of population exposed to noise values of L_{den} above 55 dB(A) and above 65 dB(A) and in the share of population exposed to noise values of L_n above 45 dB(A) and 55 dB(A), mention other targets.
- Refer to stakeholder involvement, consultations, and actions to manage and preserve urban and open country quiet areas, and actions concerning sound improved areas (holistic/qualitative approaches to the acoustic environment, e.g. by soundscape design approaches).

2.5 CLIMATE CHANGE: MITIGATION

The European Green Deal aims to make Europe **climate neutral by 2050**. To make this objective legally binding, the Commission proposed the [European Climate Law](#), which also sets a new, more ambitious net greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of at least **-55% by 2030**, compared to 1990 levels.

In order to achieve the decarbonisation objectives, emissions must be reduced **in all sectors**, from industry and energy, to transport and farming. Legally binding targets have been set for each Member State but also local authorities play an important role in meeting these targets.

The European Commission set out proposals in July 2021 to set the EU on a path to reach its 2030 climate targets in a fair, cost effective and competitive way. With the 'Fit for 55' legislation now adopted, the EU has legally binding climate targets covering all key sectors of the economy. The package includes emissions reduction targets across a broad range of sectors; a target to boost natural carbon sinks; an updated emissions trading system to cap emissions, put a price on pollution and generate investments in the green transition; and social support for citizens and small businesses.

Increasing energy efficiency is a key strategy for achieving a carbon neutral energy system, but it is equally important to lower energy demand and shift it away from moments of grid congestion through campaigns and incentives for citizens, organisations, companies and public institutions.

The production of materials is a major source of carbon output. Especially the construction industry is responsible for a large output of CO₂. The Commission is actively working on strategies and initiatives regarding the whole life carbon of buildings and infrastructure, stimulating the use of materials with low embodied carbon, low global warming potential and/or high stored carbon content.

Present Situation

Please consider the following while answering the questions on this section; level of quality and quantitative data and numerical analysis, baseline inventory (CO₂, GHG) methodological approach, relevant infrastructure and systems, state of play with environmental performance, integrated approaches to environmental management, private sector engagement and governance arrangements.

Refer to the built environment of the city in current development or action plans and the current status of energy performance including buildings, industry, tertiary and transport sectors. Similarly, information should be given on whole life carbon and stored carbon for buildings and infrastructure.

When reporting on the specific indicators in section 1:

- Note that explanatory leaflets on their preparation are available within the Reference Framework for Sustainable European Cities¹⁵;
- The methodological approach used should be explained. Make clear whether or not it addresses both direct emissions (from sources within the city boundary) and indirect emissions (from goods and services provided outside the city but consumed inside the city). Mention the main sources of data and the sectors covered by each indicator, distinguishing between national and local information sources.

Past Performance

Please consider the following while answering the questions on this section; strategies, plans, measures, and trends implemented over the last ten years (justifying decisions on actions), quantitative data, innovation and mechanisms used, and monitoring arrangements.

Future Plans

Please consider the following while answering the questions on this section; realistic and achievable plans with clear objectives (short and long-term), highlighting clear measures in place (not implemented) and those already adopted, clear budget allocations and performance indicators identified.

For future and in particular long-term future energy plans, systems visions about transport, industry and food systems may also be included. In addition to the building stock, these three sectors are important given their high energy demand and GHG emissions. Therefore, information should be provided to explain plans to reduce emissions and increase the use of renewable energy in these

¹⁵ <http://www.rfsc.eu/>

sectors, and how these are integrated in the overall future energy system. A particular emphasis should be given to describing urban transport planning to facilitate a greater uptake of zero-emission (including active) mobility. Similarly, information should be given on whole life carbon and stored carbon for buildings and infrastructure.

Whether or not national governments have established legal requirements or targets for local authorities on climate change, applicant cities will be expected to show that they are able to establish a CO₂ (and possibly other GHGs) emissions baseline inventory (which is considered a basic requirement for this indicator) for a specific year using an EU¹⁶ or internationally recognised methodology (providing specific references), identify the main sources of emissions, set achievable territorial targets aligned with EU objectives, take action to reduce emissions (justifying the decisions on the implemented policies and measures), and continuously measure and monitor their progress towards agreed targets year by year.

2.6 CLIMATE CHANGE: ADAPTATION

In February 2021¹⁷, the European Commission adopted its new EU strategy on adaptation to climate change. The new strategy sets out how the European Union can adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change and become climate resilient by 2050. The Strategy has four principal objectives: to make adaptation smarter, swifter and more systemic, and to step up international action on adaptation to climate change.

For this indicator, cities should, depending on their state in the adaptation process, pay special attention in their application to:

Present Situation

- The city's approach to assess climate change vulnerability and risk.
- The monitoring approach to evaluate progress in implementation of adaptation measures and the effectiveness in terms of reduced risks and vulnerabilities.
- Governance of adaptation including participatory approaches.
- The level of awareness among its stakeholders, the commitment to take action at local level and engagement in European/international initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, Urban Agenda for the EU, URBACT etc.

Past Performance

As climate change adaptation is a relatively new policy area, most action in cities is often at an early stage and is in the process of being built up. In this regard, it is important to describe the past starting conditions, the evolution of action since this starting point and achievements to date.

¹⁶ Such as the Joint Research Centre (European Commission)'s Guidebook 'How to develop a Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP)', <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC112986>. Part 1 focuses on 'The SECAP process, step-by-step towards low-carbon and climate-resilient cities by 2030'. Part 2: Baseline Emission Inventory (BEI) and Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (RVA). Part 3 focuses on 'Policies, key actions, good practices for mitigation and adaptation to climate change and Financing SECAP(s).

¹⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/clima/eu-action/adaptation-climate-change/eu-adaptation-strategy>

Future Plans

It is important to describe the short and long-term future plans to become more climate-resilient and to show how the need for adaptation can be used as an opportunity to make cities even more attractive and liveable. Include time scales, level of commitments, budget and staff allocations. Please reflect on:

- The selection, prioritisation, planning ,and implementation of measures.
- The approach to mainstream and interlinked measures with other policy areas such as climate change mitigation, disaster risk reduction, water management, biodiversity, health etc. and the use of win-win solutions.

Useful References

- EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change adopted in February 2021:
https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/adaptation/what_en
- Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy:
<http://www.covenantofmayors.eu/en/>
- Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy reporting guidelines:
https://www.eumayors.eu/index.php?option=com_attachments&task=download&id=815
- Urban Adaptation Support Tool:
<https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/knowledge/tools/urban-ast/step-0-0>
- Joint Research Centre (European Commission)'s Guidebook 'How to develop a Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP)' - Parts 1-3:
<https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/338a9918-f132-11e8-9982-01aa75ed71a1/language-en> (and 'Related publications' link)

2.7 GOOD PRACTICES

The provided flagship project and best practices are evaluated by the Panel of Experts, influencing the overall assessment. Experts may assign weight or points to indicators when good practices strongly support them. When describing the project or practices, please focus on the following:

- Briefly outline current and/or potential future environmental impact.
- Highlight how the project/ practice contributes to the sustainability transitions.
- Emphasize the innovative nature and its role as a model for other cities.
- Discuss the engagement with stakeholders and communication strategies.
- Support claims with concise arguments, facts, and relevant data.

3 ANNEX 1 – EXAMPLES OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Please see below for sample tables (Tables 3.1 - 3.2 - 3.3) and sample graphics (Figures 3.4 and 3.5 and Figures 3.6 and 3.7).

Table 3.1 - Sample of Table Format to be used in the Application Form

Building Type	Potential area for roof gardens or Urban agriculture		Additional areas for extensive green roofs or habitats for biodiversity	
	No. of roofs	Total m ²	No. of roofs	Total m ²
Industrial buildings	21	21	21	21
Office and retail	32	32	32	32
Schools	43	43	43	43
Hospitals and care homes	54	54	54	54
Residential buildings	65	65	65	65
Mixed use buildings	76	76	76	76
Other buildings	87	87	87	87
Total	378	378	378	378

Table 3.2 - Sample of acceptable Table where there would be no addition to the Word Count

Main Identified [1] Climate Change Hazards and Challenges in Lahti	Action, Project Name	Partners	Lahti City Consortium Staff Allocation	Year	Estimated Cost (€) and Funding Source	Monitoring and Performance Evaluation Scheme
City Floods	City centre vulnerability assessment	Lahti School of Applied Sciences (LUAS), City of Lahti	1	2014	10 000 LUAS, student thesis	Assessment, did not contain monitoring
Eutrophication	Large-scale investment and R&D project <i>Hybrid Solutions for Urban Storm Water</i>	City of Lahti, University of Helsinki, Smart & Clean Foundation, LADEC, City of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa	2	2017-2020	Circa 2 M€ Finnish Government 2017-2018. Applications will be sent to several other funding sources	Monitoring (quantity and quality of storm water) is part of the project
Heat Waves and Health Risks	District cooling system analysed for new residential areas	City of Lahti, Lahti Energy, private companies	1	2012-	Planning costs, 10 000 €	No investments made.
	Good network of street trees (<i>Tilia vulgaris</i>) Circa 3 000 trees in the centre of Lahti and 10 000 overall (Fig. B4)	City of Lahti, private companies	1	1900-	Maintenance 150 000 €/a.	Maintenance is monitored

All information provided in Table 3.2 is essential in order to understand the information featured in the table, and would not be included in the word count (Lahti Application 2021).

Table 3.3 - Sample of Table with Excessive Text

1. Circle based
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Residual waste from households shall be reduced by a minimum of 30% per capita by 2025, compared to 2015-level. 2. Food waste from households shall be reduced by 30% by 2025. 3. A minimum of 60 % of food waste from households shall be collected and recycled by 2025. 4. A minimum of 60 % of plastic waste from households shall be recycled by 2025. 5. The municipal waste-to-energy plants shall have an energy recovery rate of minimum 95% by 2025. 6. Oslo shall be one of the cities with the most cost efficient waste management systems in Norway, by 2025.
7. Health, environment and climate
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>All hazardous waste and electric and electronic waste</u>, shall be collected and treated safely. 2. The waste management in Oslo shall be climate neutral by 2025. 3. The number of illegal dumpsites shall be halved by 2025, compared to 2017-level. 4. A minimum of 50% of the household waste shall be collected by underground and automatic waste systems by 2030.
5. The City of Oslo
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Residual waste from the City shall be reduced by a minimum of 30% by 2025, compared to 2015-level. 2. There shall be recycling bins in all larger parks and public spaces by 2025. 3. Residual waste from enterprises shall be reduced to a maximum of 30% by 2025. 4. By 2020 a minimum of 70% (by weight) of construction and demolition waste shall be prepared for re-use, recycled or undergo other material recovery. 5. Regional solutions for waste management shall be established by 2025.
6. Inhabitants
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By 2025, 95% of the inhabitants will have confidence that the waste resources are properly utilized. 2. By 2025, 80% of the inhabitants shall experience that it is easy to sort waste and recycle in Oslo. 3. By 2025, 90% of the inhabitants shall know about facilities where they can deliver materials and items for reuse.

Table 3.3 is an example of a table which would be considered to have a high word count, and this text would all be counted in the Indicator Word count (Oslo Application 2019).

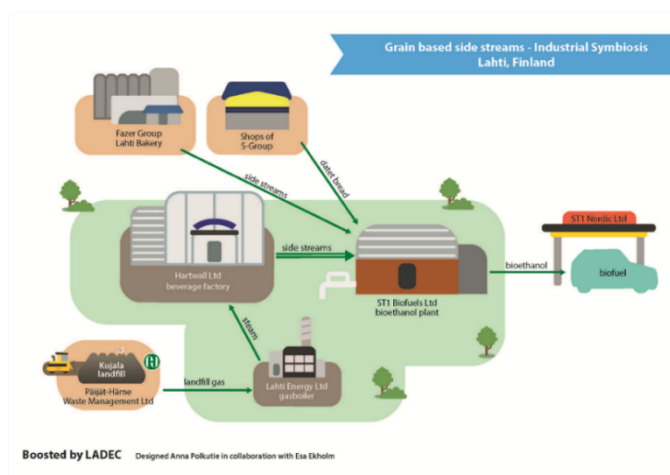
**Figure 3.4 and 3.5. Examples of infographics where there is no addition to Word Count (Lahti 2021)**

Figure 3.4 and Figure 3.5 illustrate two sample 'Graphics/Images' where all text is necessary to understand the information within. The labels of each 'place' and 'process' are necessary to understand the diagram.



Figure 3.6. Example of a text-based infographic where there is no addition to Word Count. (Lahti 2021)

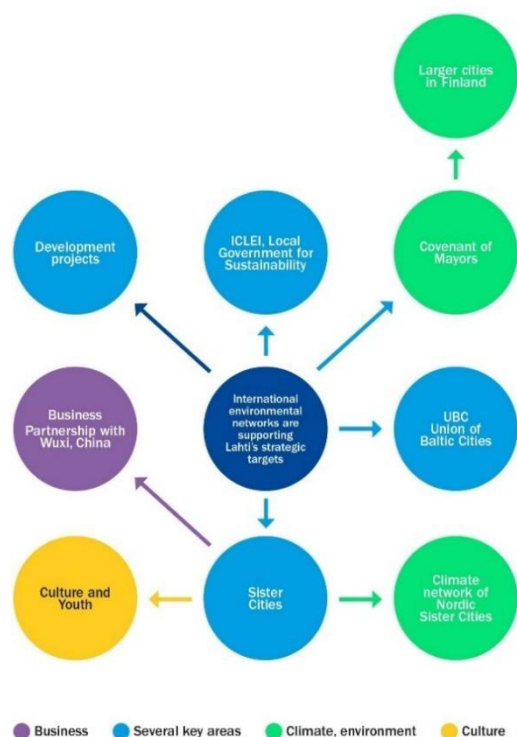


Figure 3.7. Example of a text-based infographics where there is no addition to Word Count. (Lahti 2021)

Figure 3.6 and Figure 3.7 illustrate text-based 'Graphics/Images' where the information consists of concise descriptions of projects, titles or relationships where all text is necessary to understand the information within, and would not be included in the word count.