



## CALL FOR ACTION

# EUROPEAN GREEN CAPITAL NETWORK:

TO INSPIRE CITIES WORLDWIDE TO BECOME MORE SUSTAINABLE AND CLIMATE-RESILIENT, BY CREATING A GREEN MOVEMENT

SIGNED ON NOVEMBER 23, 2018 IN NIJMEGEN EUROPEAN GREEN CAPITAL 2018 AND PRESENTED DURING THE 24TH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (COP24) IN KATOWICE, DECEMBER 2018

With more than 50% of the world population living in cities, many of the environmental challenges facing our society are concentrated in urban areas. The growing consumption of resources and natural capital and the emission of greenhouse gas and other pollutants are having an impact on our climate, on nature and biodiversity, on air and water quality, and in turn on our health and quality of life in cities. The way we produce and consume is not sustainable in the long term. With a growing urban population, the pressure on services, housing and transport is increasing, pressure on the environment is growing, and therefore it is becoming harder to maintain a high quality of life in our cities. The impacts of human development - storms, floods, heat waves, droughts, wildfires and endangered species - can be felt around the planet, not just in cities. These impacts tend to have a disproportionately negative affect on the poor and vulnerable.

The latest IPCC assessment report states that limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees requires rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society. The commitment and innovation needed to resolve many of these challenges will come from urban areas, making cities key players in the global sustainability challenge. We – the members of the European Green Capital Network, consisting of winners and finalists of the European Green Capital Award<sup>1</sup> – strive to make our cities more sustainable, healthy and livable. Our efforts include adhering to a consistent environmental policy, implementing genuinely sustainable mobility solutions, promoting high-quality nature, biodiversity and green spaces, successfully introducing modern waste management, as well as implementing many other innovative solutions to improve the quality of urban living. In addition to these technical achievements, we prioritise a bottom-up approach involving citizens, businesses and knowledge institutes, in our effort to become more sustainable because we believe that it is only by working together that we can truly shape the urban environment of the future. Creating shared ownership to inspire the *green movement* in our cities - in addition to traditional government-led policy – has inspired us, and we hope this can in turn inspire others.

We recognise our role as drivers of sustainable development and we invite cities worldwide to collaborate and create green movements to become more sustainable and in turn more resilient to the future impacts of climate change. Therefore, we aim to promote partnerships at all levels - local, regional, national and international - in a joint effort to tackle sustainability issues, including our economic, social and ecological challenges. By sharing the lessons we have learned and our practical experiences, we are eager to increase our impact and our legacy by inspiring the green movement in cities worldwide. We will highlight this message during the COP24 conference in Katowice. With this Call for Action we invite other cities to collaborate with us, and to create a bigger green city movement, to become more sustainable and climate-resilient, and to ask national governments and international institutions to facilitate us in our mission. This Call for Action will help us achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, the Paris Climate Agreement, related targets by the Covenant of Mayors and local government-led initiatives such as the Basque Declaration.

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<sup>1</sup> The European Green Capital Award is an annual competition set up by the European Commission in 2008 to reward and promote cities that are committed to environmental, social and economic sustainability.



# CALL FOR ACTION

THE EUROPEAN GREEN CAPITAL NETWORK AIMS TO INSPIRE CITIES WORLDWIDE TO BECOME MORE SUSTAINABLE AND CLIMATE RESILIENT BY DRIVING THE GREEN CITY MOVEMENT

## 1. The Members of the European Green Capital Network will:

- a) **Strive to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees**, taking responsibility to curb global warming, whilst ensuring a more sustainable and equitable society, by adopting ambitious local climate action plans to limit global warming and setting clear milestones towards zero greenhouse gas emissions.
- b) Work on achieving **the Sustainable Development Goals** of the United Nations.
- c) **Raise awareness among citizens and businesses** for the benefits of low carbon pathways, biodiversity protection and the circular economy.
- d) Enable citizens and businesses **to engage in a green movement in our cities** to play a crucial role in becoming more sustainable and climate resilient.
- e) **Spread the message on the international stage** and engage in partnerships on all levels - local, regional, national and international - in a joint effort to tackle sustainability issues.

## 2. We call upon all cities to:

- a) **Set ambitious targets** to prevent the most dangerous effects of global warming, loss of biodiversity and depleting resources.
- b) **Work together with businesses, knowledge and research institutes and citizens** to identify creative and innovative solutions for green challenges.
- c) **Create enabling frameworks for an inclusive, bottom-up approach**, to foster new economic models and cultural change.

## 3. We call upon all national governments and international institutions to:

- a) **Acknowledge the important role of cities** in the transition towards sustainability, and facilitate our actions by adopting supporting legislative frameworks and providing adequate funding.
- b) **Take meaningful steps** towards implementation of the Paris Agreement, by pushing for an ambitious Paris Rulebook in line with the new findings of the IPCC's 1.5 Degree Report.
- c) **Involve cities early on in the process** of developing policymaking on issues of climate change and sustainability, recognising the crucial role cities must play in this process.

## 4. We offer:

to **share our experiences, successes and failures** with other cities around the world. We aim to support the implementation of sustainable development by providing topic-specific recommendations to other cities over the course of 2019-2020 on our Network website:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/applying-for-the-award/egc-network/>

# BACKGROUND | CITIES ARE THE DRIVERS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

## THE URGENCY FOR CITIES TO CREATE A GREEN MOVEMENT TO BECOME MORE SUSTAINABLE AND CLIMATE RESILIENT

A majority of the world's population lives in cities, as flourishing economic, cultural and social hubs. Cities continue to attract people and businesses; it is expected that by 2050 70 to 80% of the world's population will live in cities. This vast urbanisation results in both challenges and opportunities.

### The challenges

With a growing urban population, the pressure on the environment and livability of cities is increasing. As a result of this, the resilience of cities is deteriorating at a rapid pace. Simultaneously, resources are becoming scarcer and the wealth of urban inhabitants is increasing. The demand for raw materials and resources is increasing, while the availability of these limited raw materials and resources is shrinking. Consumption is increasing, the use of energy, water and products is rising and we produce more waste and emit more greenhouse gas and other pollutants. The way we produce and consume is simply not sustainable in the long term.

### The opportunities

Urban growth also offers a window of opportunity to transform cities and its citizens in a more sustainable way and to reduce their footprint. Cities, businesses, academia and civil society are working together to tackle the challenges of increased wealth, resource scarcity, climate change, loss of biodiversity and high urban density. They are considering more sustainable ways to develop and

manage our cities and looking at more sustainable ways to live, commute and do business. The European Green Capital Network Cities have already made remarkable efforts towards achieving more sustainable and climate-resilient cities.

### The urgency

Cities are key players since they have a large share in the urgent global challenges. Addressing these challenges is of vital importance for the health and wellbeing of citizens and to maintain the quality of cities as economic, cultural and social hubs in the future. The global effort for sustainability will be won, or lost. Further action - and the engaging of other cities to become more sustainable - is urgently required. The 7th Environment Action Programme (AEP) of the European Union and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations provide a framework for cities to act (see below). The urgency for change is also emphasised by the recently published report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

### The need for a bottom-up approach

Citizens, businesses and knowledge institutes need to be engaged in the efforts to achieve more sustainable, future-proof cities. Governments cannot achieve this on their own; the necessity to protect and improve our environment and wellbeing is a shared responsibility.



Living well, within the limits of our planet  
7th Environment Action Programme

The 7th Environment Action Programme of the European Union is the guiding European environment policy until 2020. It identifies objectives to protect, conserve and enhance the natural capital, to turn the Union into a resource-efficient, green and competitive low-carbon economy and to safeguard its citizens from environment-related pressures and risks. It also sets priorities to make cities more sustainable and to help them address international challenges more effectively.



The Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations are a collection of 17 global goals (covering 169 targets) set by the United Nations in 2015 for a better world by 2030. The SDGs cover social and economic development issues, including urban challenges such as urbanisation, environment, water, sanitation, energy and climate change.



Limiting global warming to 1.5°C requires rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stated in a Special Report (8 October 2018), drawn up at the request of COP21 in Paris. With clear benefits to people and natural ecosystems, limiting global warming to 1.5°C compared to 2°C could go hand in hand with achieving a more sustainable and equitable society.

# BACKGROUND | EUROPEAN GREEN CAPITAL NETWORK CITIES AS ROLE MODELS

## WHY EUROPEAN GREEN CAPITAL CITIES INSPIRE CITIES WORLDWIDE

The members of the European Green Capital Network have already made remarkable efforts to reduce their ecological footprint. They are dedicated to making their cities more sustainable, healthy, resilient and livable. Their efforts include, for instance, following a consistent environmental policy, implementing sustainable mobility solutions, expanding the territories of green areas, the successful introduction of modern waste management and the implementation of innovative and enterprising solutions to improve the quality of urban living environment.

In addition to the technical achievements, European Green Network Cities stand out in their bottom-up approach to involve citizens, businesses and knowledge institutes in their efforts to become more sustainable cities. The efforts to create shared ownership and inspire a *green movement* in their cities - additional to traditional government-led efforts - provide invaluable lessons. They recognise their role as drivers of sustainable development. According to the European Commission, they are role models for other cities in Europe. In addition, they can inspire cities worldwide, by showing them how to engage a green movement to reduce their ecological footprint.

### The added value for other cities

Showcasing successful examples and sharing lessons learned - from both successes and failures - are an excellent basis for European Green Capital Network Cities to inspire other cities. Therefore, the examples and lessons need to be unlocked, brought together and made accessible for others; practical examples and lessons on how citizens, businesses and knowledge institutes were involved to sustainably transform practical areas of everyday life.

Valuable lessons of the members of the European Green Capital Network which can inspire other cities include:

- How to engage a sustainable movement in the city by involving civil society and other stakeholders to collaborate in the efforts to reduce the city's ecological footprint.
- How to empower society and utilise its potency, strength and creativity.
- The availability of innovative concepts to implement a bottom-up approach.
- The availability of integrated and innovative solutions to reduce the cities' footprint.

### HUMAN SCALE APPROACH | POSSIBLE FOCUS AREAS TO INSPIRE A GREEN MOVEMENT IN CITIES

To be able as a city to engage society in a green movement, it is crucial to bring the sustainability challenge closer to society. Abstract policy frameworks, theoretical tools and government domains need to be translated into understandable focus areas covering day-to-day life and business in the city. Concrete focus areas help to make the sustainability challenge more tangible and to unlock examples and lessons learned. The figure below presents seven possible focus areas which help to inspire a green movement. In the various focus areas what good examples do we have to involve citizens, businesses and knowledge institutes in our efforts to become more sustainable and climate resilient?

- 1 Living and housing
- 2 Work and business
- 3 Shopping and consumption
- 4 Leisure and holidays
- 5 Moving around and transportation
- 6 Care and health
- 7 Learning and education



SIGNED BY THE EUROPEAN GREEN CAPITAL NETWORK

SUPPORTED BY





#### **NIJMEGEN**

This is an initiative taken by Nijmegen European Green Capital 2018 and officially signed in Nijmegen on 23 November 2018 by the members of the European Green Capital Network.

#### **DISCLAIMER**

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