



European  
Commission



# 10 years

of the

## Access City Award

Examples of best practice in making  
EU cities more accessible

#EUACCESSCITY



# 10 years of the Access City Award

Ávila, Spain

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

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

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

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

## Access City Award Network Meeting

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

Lyon, France

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# Access City Award: 10 winning cities

**2011** – Ávila, Spain

**2012** – Salzburg, Austria

**2013** – Berlin, Germany

**2014** – Gothenburg, Sweden

**2015** – Borås, Sweden

**2016** – Milan, Italy

**2017** – Chester, United Kingdom

**2018** – Lyon, France

**2019** – Breda, Netherlands

**2020** – Warsaw, Poland



## Map of award winning cities:

A map of the EU in 2020

# 2011

## Ávila, Spain



*Tactile model of the walls of Ávila*

© City of Ávila

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



*Access to the Carmelite Convent of St Teresa*

© City of Ávila

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

*The Mayor of Avila*

# 2012

## Salzburg, Austria

Evaluating the success of Etappenplan

© City of Salzburg

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

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

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

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

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

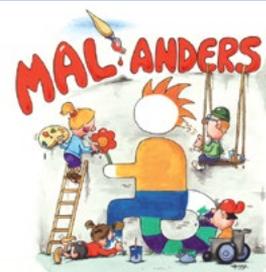
The Etappenplan is divided into six action areas for which the city of Salzburg is responsible:

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

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

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

*Sabine Neusüß, Disability Representative,  
City of Salzburg*



Ein lustiges Ausmal-Buch  
nicht nur für Kindergarten-Kinder

The colouring book with positive images of disability

© City of Salzburg

# 2013

## Berlin, Germany



Berlin, Germany

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

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

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

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

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

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



The Berlin Mobility Act came into force in summer 2018

© City of Berlin

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

*Ingmar Streese, Permanent Secretary for Transport, City of Berlin*

# 2014

## Gothenburg, Sweden

Gothenburg, Sweden

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

© City of Gothenburg

# 2015

## Borås, Sweden



Borås, Sweden

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Extension of tactile paving in Borås city centre

© City of Borås

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

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

# 2016

## Milan, Italy

*Inauguration of the inclusive accessible park Villa Finzi*

© City of Milan

Milan was recognised in 2016 for its clear commitment and wide-ranging approach to delivering accessibility. In 2011, Milan adopted the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. At the same time, it made a commitment to develop a new culture of accessibility and a strategic, integrated approach to delivering a 'city for all'.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*City of Milan*

*Accessible playground equipment, Indro Montanelli Park*

© City of Milan

# 2017

## Chester, United Kingdom



*The new bus interchange*

© City of Chester

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



*Improved pedestrian walkways*

© City of Chester

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

*CLlr Val Armstrong, Cheshire West & Chester Council*

# 2018

## Lyon, France

Lyon, France

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Guide to accessible culture

© City of Lyon

# 2019

## Breda, The Netherlands



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

© City of Breda

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

© City of Breda

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

*Miriam Haagh, Deputy Mayor of Breda*

# 2020

## Warsaw, Poland

Warsaw, Poland

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Rafał Trzaskowski, Mayor of Warsaw*

*The River Vistula in Warsaw*

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020

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Print ISBN 978-92-76-19458-3 doi:10.2767/776010  
KE-02-20-422-EN-C

PDF ISBN 978-92-76-19456-9 doi:10.2767/318846  
KE-02-20-422-EN-N



Publications Office  
of the European Union