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# ACCESS CITY Award **2024**

Examples of best practice  
in making EU cities more  
accessible

#EUACCESSCITY

*Social Europe*

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# Access City Award 2024

## Easy-to-read version



Easy-to-read is information that is written in a simple way so that persons with intellectual disabilities and all people can understand it. You can find more information about easy-to-read at: [www.inclusion-europe.eu/easy-to-read](http://www.inclusion-europe.eu/easy-to-read)

## Who are we?



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

Amongst others, we work to make things and services in Europe accessible for persons with disabilities and all people.



For this to happen, we work together with organisations of persons with disabilities in Europe, like the **European Disability Forum**.

For example, every year, we work together to make the **Access City Award** happen.

## What is the Access City Award?



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



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



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

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



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



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

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



For example, if buildings do not have ramps, people in wheelchairs will not be able to get in.



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

So the Access City Award is a chance for cities in Europe to show what they have done to become accessible to all people.



The Access City Award started in 2010 to remind cities how important it is to be accessible for all people.

### Which city won the 2024 Access City Award?



The city that won the Access City Award for 2024 is **San Cristóbal de La Laguna** in **Spain**.



San Cristóbal de La Laguna won the Access City Award because it keeps working on making things and services accessible for persons with disabilities and all people.

Amongst others, in San Cristóbal de La Laguna:

- The city centre is accessible to walk.
- Most public buildings, like the townhall, are accessible so that all people can get in without problems .



- All trams and most buses are accessible so that people can use them to get around.



- There are accessible trails that allow persons with disabilities to enjoy nature.
- Playgrounds, outdoor events and activities are accessible so that everyone can enjoy them.



- People who make decisions for the city ask for the views of persons with disabilities on how to make things better for them.



San Cristóbal de La Laguna got 150 000 euro for winning the Access City Award for 2024.

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

- The city of **Łódź in Poland** won the second place and 120 000 euro.
- The city of **Saint-Quentin in France** won the third place and 80 000 euro.



The next Access City Award will be for 2025.

### Which cities can take part?



Not all cities can take part in the Access City Award. The cities that can take part in the Access City Award should:

- Be in countries that are part of the European Union. The **European Union** is a group of 27 countries in Europe that have come together to make things better for people.
- Have more than 50 000 people living in them. If a country has less than 2 cities with so many people, 2 or more smaller cities can team up. If together they have more than 50 000 people, they can take part in the Access City Award too.
- The city that won the Access City Award this year cannot take part again next year.





## How can cities take part?



Cities that want to take part in the next Access City Award can apply online when the application period starts.

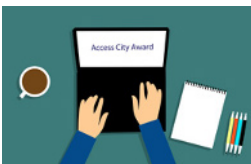
People who run these cities and make important decisions for them should fill out a form on the internet.

In this form, they should:



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

You can find more information on our website at: [www.ec.europa.eu/social/accesscityaward](http://www.ec.europa.eu/social/accesscityaward)



There, we will soon say when the application period will start. When the application period starts, cities can fill out the form and take part in the next Access City Award.

So keep visiting our website to find this information!

## How do we choose the winner?



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



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

Then another group of people in Europe checks all these cities. They choose which of these cities is the best example of all.



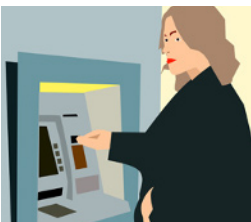
This city wins the Access City Award for this year.

Persons with disabilities and older people are part of these groups.



Amongst others, they check if cities have accessible:

- Buildings and streets;
- Buses and metro;
- Ticket machines and cash machines;
- Websites and other technology that people use to communicate;





- Information that is easy to read and understand for everyone.

They see which of the cities does a better job at making these things accessible to all people.

This city wins the Access City Award.

### When will the winner get their prize?

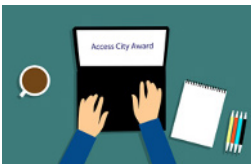


At the end of 2024, we will have a big meeting in Brussels to talk about the rights of persons with disabilities.



In this meeting, we will also say which city wins the Access City Award for 2025. We will hand over the Access City Award to this city.

### More information



If you want more information, you can check our website at: [www.ec.europa.eu/social/accesscityaward](http://www.ec.europa.eu/social/accesscityaward).

If you have any questions, you can send us an email at: [secretariat@accesscityaward.eu](mailto:secretariat@accesscityaward.eu).

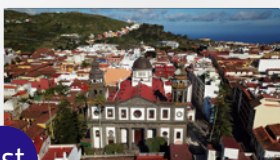


**Ursula von der Leyen**  
President of the European Commission

# Celebrating the winners of the Access City Award

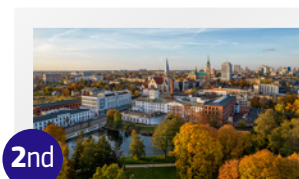
Beyond the buildings and roads, a city's heartbeat is its people. Accessibility is the key to participation, giving everyone the opportunity to contribute to and enjoy the benefits of city life. The winning cities of the Access City Award are turning that key, opening doors to inclusion and empowerment for citizens.

## Winners of the 2024 Access City Award



1st

San Cristóbal de La  
Laguna, Spain



2nd

Łódź, Poland



3rd

Saint-Quentin, France

Special mention  
for New European  
Bauhaus

Tübingen, Germany

Special mention  
for Landscape and  
playground areas

South Dublin County,  
Ireland

## Previous winners of the Access City Award

The winners of the 2024 Access City Award will now join the numerous family of Access City Award winners.

Year	1st prize	2nd prize	3rd prize	Special mention	Special mention	Special mention	Special mention
2023	Skellefteå, Sweden	Córdoba, Spain	Ljubljana, Slovenia	Mérida, Spain	Hamburg, Germany	Grenoble, France	—
2022	Luxembourg City, Luxembourg	Helsinki, Finland	Barcelona, Spain	Porto, Portugal	Palma, Spain	Leuven, Belgium	—
2021	Jönköping, Sweden	Bremerhaven, Germany	Gdynia, Poland	Poznań, Poland	Komotini, Greece	Florence, Italy	—
2020	Warsaw, Poland	Castellón de la Plana, Spain	Skellefteå, Sweden	Evreux, France	Tartu, Estonia	Chania, Greece	—
2019	Breda, The Netherlands	Evreux, France	Gdynia, Poland	Vigo, Spain	Kaposvár, Hungary	Viborg, Denmark	Monteverde, Italy
2018	Lyon, France	Ljubljana, Slovenia	Luxembourg City, Luxembourg	Viborg, Denmark	—	—	—
2017	Chester, United Kingdom	Rotterdam, Netherlands	Jūrmala, Latvia	Lugo, Spain	Skellefteå, Sweden	Alessandria, Italy	Funchal, Portugal
2016	Milan, Italy	Wiesbaden, Germany	Toulouse, France	Vaasa, Finland	Kaposvár, Hungary	—	—
2015	Borås, Sweden	Helsinki, Finland	Ljubljana, Slovenia	Arona, Spain	Luxembourg City, Luxembourg	Logroño, Spain	Budapest, Hungary
2014	Göteborg, Sweden	Grenoble, France	Poznań, Poland	Belfast, UK	Dresden, Germany	Burgos, Spain	Málaga, Spain

Year	Winner	Runner-up	Runner-up	Runner-up	Special mention	Special mention	Special mention	Special mention
2013	Berlin, Germany	Nantes, France	Stockholm, Sweden	—	Gdynia, Poland	Bilbao, Spain	Pamplona, Spain	Tallaght, Ireland
2012	Salzburg, Austria	Krakow, Poland	Marburg, Germany	Santander, Spain	Terrassa, Spain	Ljubljana, Slovenia	Olomouc, Czechia	Grenoble, France
2011	Ávila, Spain	Barcelona, Spain	Cologne, Germany	Turku, Finland	Barnsley, UK	Dublin, Ireland	Grenoble, France	Malmö, Sweden

**HELENA Dalli**

European Commissioner for Equality

## Foreword

**Accessibility is a right, not a privilege; it enables everyone, particularly persons with disabilities, to participate fully in society, access goods and services, and enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms.**

An accessible environment benefits us all. Persons with disabilities, as well as older people, pregnant women, those with children in prams, and anyone carrying heavy bags when grocery shopping.

**I am delighted to present this brochure showcasing the remarkable achievements of the 2024 Access City Award winners and the dedication and innovation demonstrated by this year's two special mentions.**

Through one of the special mentions, we also linked up with another major European Commission initiative – the New European Bauhaus. Its objectives, “beautiful, sustainable, together” put inclusion and accessibility at the heart of efforts to tackle climate change and build more resilient and sustainable cities.

Cities, as vibrant hubs of cultural, economic, and social activity, play a key role in shaping the everyday experiences of their residents and visitors. As such, they should be at the forefront of building inclusive societies.

Striving for accessibility is a strategic investment in the wellbeing and prosperity of our communities. Accessible cities are more resilient, competitive, and responsive to the needs of their residents and visitors, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Together, we have made significant progress in improving the lives of persons with disabilities, this includes major milestones like the 2021–2030 EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the EU-wide accessibility standards and more. However, we still have a long way ahead of us, as 52% of persons with disabilities still report feeling discriminated against.

Therefore the Access City Award is more important than ever. It highlights good practice examples from across the EU

and raises international awareness about the social and economic benefits of cities becoming more accessible.

I congratulate all the winner cities of this year, especially the city of San Cristóbal de La Laguna, in Spain, as the first-prize winner of the 2024 Access City Award. You have shown impressive dedication to accessibility through a comprehensive approach covering urban places, transportation, and social participation, as well as the work of your ombudsman on the rights of persons with disabilities.



# Introduction

The Access City Award shines a spotlight on the commendable efforts of European cities in fostering accessibility for persons with disabilities. This award serves as a platform for cities to illustrate their transformative initiatives, eliminating barriers and setting an inspiring example for others to follow.

For persons with disabilities, an accessible city means the possibility to take the lead of their lives, making their own decisions and engaging fully in daily life and the community, on par with their peers. The impact of accessibility extends across various facets of city life, encompassing public transport, infrastructure, administration, leisure and digital services. Importantly, such cities are also inherently friendlier for everybody else, including older people, tourists carrying their luggage, those with children in prams, and anyone with temporary disabilities.

Open to all EU cities boasting more than 50 000 inhabitants, the Access City Award undergoes a rigorous evaluation process. A national jury conducts the initial assessment, followed by an EU jury comprising accessibility experts, who diligently select the winner and two runners-up. Additionally, special mention awards commend cities excelling in specific areas, acknowledging achievements in information and communications technology, the built environment, public facilities and services, and transportation.

**Are you interested in putting your city forward for the next Access City Award? Check out the section 'Participating in the Access City Award 2025' below to learn more about the eligibility requirements.**



**Winner****160 000 inhabitants**

# San Cristóbal de La Laguna

## Spain

San Cristóbal de La Laguna (La Laguna) is a historic city situated in the northwest of Tenerife in the Canary Islands, Spain. Recognised as the first unwallled city of peace, La Laguna earned the prestigious World Heritage City status in 1999. Embracing its rich cultural, religious and commercial background, the city has actively pursued an inclusivity-focused model since 2005. The objective is clear: to ensure universal access for everyone, everywhere.

In contemporary urban settings, incorporating accessibility into new projects can be relatively straightforward. However, the real challenge lies in adapting existing environments, especially in historic cities with aged infrastructure. Despite these challenges, La Laguna has achieved remarkable strides. While acknowledging the progress made, we recognise there is still a considerable journey ahead. Nevertheless, our commitment remains unwavering as we strive to design an open and inclusive city for everyone.

Luis Yeray Gutiérrez, Mayor of San Cristóbal de La Laguna

## A barrier-free approach to mobility

In 2005, La Laguna started a project to pedestrianise the city's historic centre, extending its efforts to ensure the accessibility of historic streets and buildings.

Presently, 70% of municipal buildings, such as sports centres, social services buildings and cultural venues, are accessible. Ongoing improvement projects aim to implement ramps, enhanced signage, and adapted toilet facilities.

Avenida de La Trinidad, a major route in and out of the city, has acoustic traffic lights and tactile paving to support the mobility of people with visual impairments. Annual plans focus on removing barriers on public roads to guarantee universal mobility.



Street crossings and tactile paths in Skellefteå make the city safer and more accessible.

## Inclusive transportation

La Laguna takes pride in having 100% accessible tramways. Accessible tram and bus apps 'TITSA' and 'VÍA-MÓVIL' enable users to track their journeys and buy tickets online, while 92% of the urban bus fleet and 70% of intercity buses are accessible. Furthermore, La Laguna has 9 adapted taxis for passengers with disabilities, especially those using wheelchairs or mobility aids.



Accessible signs, platforms, seating areas and digital displays ensure accessibility on 100% of La Laguna's trams.

## Digital access to city life

La Laguna promotes digital accessibility by offering administrative procedures, like accessing municipal services, or paying tax, online, using features like easy-to-read forms and documents, user-friendly website design, multilingual support, and compatibility with assistive technologies.

## Fun for all

La Laguna boasts 30 inclusive children's playgrounds, and continually works on increasing the accessibility of recreational spaces.

In the coastal areas of Bajamar and Punta del Hidalgo, the natural swimming pools ensure universal accessibility through reserved parking, ramps, and accessible pathways, toilets, showers, and

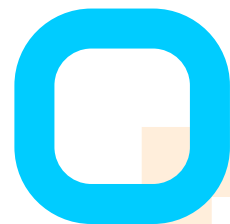
dressing rooms. Gently sloping ramps within the pools, coupled with amphibious chairs and an individual lifeguard support service, guarantee an enjoyable experience for individuals with reduced mobility.

A service called 'Orange Point' acts as a mobile space to host resources for inclusive and accessible events, such as easy-to-read materials, sign language interpreters, anti-noise systems and staff trained in supporting persons with disabilities.

Inclusive activities, such as guided tours and workshops, cater to people with diverse disabilities. 'Folklore Inclusivo' offers unique dance and percussion workshops for elderly, deaf and deafblind persons, and people with intellectual disabilities. The percussion workshops have been attended by 60 people.



Bajamar Seawater Pools is an accessible family water park.





Cruz del Carmen Visitor Centre offers accessible multi-sensory trails for persons with disabilities to enjoy the local nature.

## Improving access to nature

The Cruz del Carmen Visitor Centre provides accessible multi-sensory trails. These trails are thoughtfully designed to engage not only the sense of sight, but also touch, smell and hearing, creating a holistic and immersive experience.

In 2021, La Laguna initiated a project called 'Proyecto Calderón' to deliver inclusive whale-watching excursions for

110 children and youth with disabilities every year.

Using an adapted sailboat in the Teno-Rasca area (a recently declared World Whale Heritage Site), the initiative ensures accessibility with resources like typological models, sensitive backpacks, and easy-to-read materials. Typological models involve tactile representations of the marine environment, helping individuals with visual impairments to better understand its physical characteristics.

## Formal recognition and future commitments

La Laguna's commitment to accessibility is institutionalised in the declaration for the defence of the rights of persons with disabilities. In 2021, the city made further strides by approving the Regulations of the Disability Council. This regulatory framework not only formalises the establishment of a Disability Council (which directly involves persons with disabilities in decision-making through consultative work), but also introduces the role of the Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities.

The Ombudsperson for Persons with Disabilities was first elected in December 2022. This role serves as an independent advisor to the City Council, focusing on coordinating and promoting accessibility initiatives in collaboration with the Disability Council.

La Laguna's formal dedication to accessibility is also reflected in the implementation of various accessibility plans since 2005, with the latest plan approved in 2022. Collaboration with representative disability associations is a cornerstone of the planning process.

These mechanisms for coordinating progress demonstrate La Laguna's structured, collaborative and holistic approach to accessibility. Notably, the city allocates necessary funds in the budget to ensure the successful implementation of its accessibility plan, highlighting its financial commitment to realising inclusivity.

## Concrete actions and support services

The provision of 250 interpreting services for deaf and deafblind persons in less than a year underscores La Laguna's commitment to removing communication barriers. Additionally, the annual aid granted to over 100 persons with disabilities, which amounts to over €120 000, demonstrates the practical support provided to enhance the quality of life for individuals who face unique challenges.

These specific initiatives showcase La Laguna's dedication to implementing tangible measures that positively impact the lives of its residents with disabilities.



**Second prize**

**658 444 inhabitants**

# Łódź

## Poland

Łódź, located in central Poland, is a highly populated city with a unique history. It rapidly transformed into a bustling metropolis during the 19th century thanks to its flourishing textile industry. Łódź embraces multiculturalism, a legacy of the migration that occurred during the industrial boom. Today, it stands as an academic, cultural, and industrial hub, with thousands of historical buildings from that era, six public universities and many cultural facilities.

The main driving forces of Łódź's development are the people – their individual knowledge, experience, feelings, and emotions that together build the city's growing capacity. Creating an inclusive city, where the accessibility of urban life is as broad as possible, means fostering progress and making the city a better, healthier, and more competitive place to live. This award for Łódź means a great honour, but also a commitment to continue the change and make the city a place where everyone can live independently.

Hanna Zdanowska, Mayor of Łódź

## A co-created city, accessible to everyone

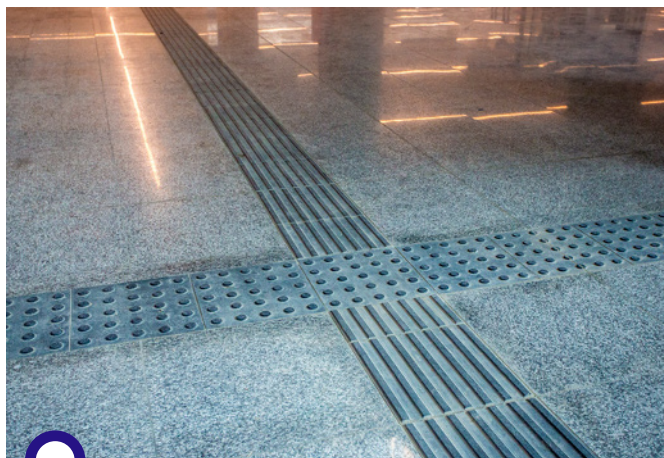
Łódź employs a 'co-created city' strategy, which emphasises social awareness and cooperation. Participatory tools, such as budgeting, counselling and collaboration with NGOs, all incorporate accessibility components. The city adopted 'The Łódź Standard of Accessibility' in 2017, which focuses on horizontal accessibility. The Standard requires universal design principles to be implemented in all the city's public areas, events, and municipal investments.



Ramps are installed at the entrance to buildings in Łódź to improve wheelchair accessibility.

## Continuous and transparent improvements to public infrastructure

Łódź's steadfast commitment to accessibility is evidenced through ongoing monitoring of, and enhancements to, the 'Łódź Accessibility Standard'. The city ensures transparency on these efforts by reporting comprehensively on both accessibility-focused initiatives and broader urban projects in its annual city report. The city created the 'Action Plan for Providing Accessibility for People with Special Needs' to guide accessibility initiatives from 2021 until 2024.



Tactile flooring and the 'TOTUPOINT' system in Łódź's municipality buildings facilitate accessibility for people with visual impairments.

## Urban transformation

Over the past two decades, Łódź has undergone extensive construction work to optimise its public infrastructure to ensure accessibility. Public transport stops and vehicles have been designed to include features like indicator plates, elevation for boarders, and voice and visual information systems. Underpasses at core points in the city centre have been converted into ground-level, easily accessible pedestrian crossings. Future plans include modernisation of the tram network and revitalisation of the historic city centre.



Public transport stops and vehicles in Łódź have accessible features like indicator plates, elevation for boarders, and voice and visual information systems.

## Comprehensive disability services

Łódź's commitment to accessibility is reflected in its dedicated department and city officer for persons with disabilities. This ensures a range of services, including online sign language interpretation, easy-to-read information and induction loops in municipality buildings. The Mobile Officer service, introduced in 2019, focuses on delivering personalised assistance at home to individuals with difficulties to visit the city office. Furthermore, the innovative 'TOTUPOINT' system enhances accessibility for those with visual impairments, using electronic tags connected to smartphones to provide audible information and tactile feedback.



Info kiosks in various locations in Łódź are specially equipped with services for persons with disabilities.



Information kiosks strategically placed throughout Łódź are equipped with voice assistance, large displays and interfaces accommodating different disabilities.

They serve as crucial points for independent access to essential information and services.

## Social inclusion and participation

Łódź's strategy emphasises social inclusion and participation for persons with disabilities. Over 250 non-governmental organisations in Łódź focus on disability issues, actively participating in municipal advisory and support bodies like the Municipal Social Welfare Centre (MOPS), the Łódź Disability Information Point and the Łódź Association of Persons with Disabilities. The Urban Activity Factory, a centre for social communication, plays a crucial role by facilitating social dialogue and participatory processes to support constant improvement.

## Inspiring action at every level

Łódź engages in awareness-raising activities and shares experiences at local, national, and international levels. Locally, initiatives like the 'Accessible Łódź' programme and accessibility committees engage the community through awareness-raising campaigns and online platforms. Nationally, Łódź participates in programmes and conferences like the Accessible Cities and Towns Forum, the National Conference on Accessibility, and the Accessible Tourism Conference to contribute insights to improve accessibility across Poland. Internationally, the city's membership in the European Network for Accessible Cities and commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) provide opportunities for the city to share its successful practices globally.



**Third prize**

**53 100 inhabitants**

# Saint-Quentin

France

Located within the Paris–London–Brussels triangle, Saint-Quentin boasts a rich history spanning over 2 000 years, characterised by the fusion of Gothic and Art Deco architecture. In 2006, the city was named a ‘City of Art and History’ by the French Government, signifying its dual commitment to preserving its rich heritage and prioritising accessibility. Saint-Quentin aspires to be a pioneer in accessibility.

In Saint-Quentin, we have adopted a global strategy to improve accessibility. By working with associations and persons with disabilities, we have made our nurseries, schools, transport networks, and sports facilities more accessible. We have many other projects in mind to develop this inclusive approach. This prize, in addition to being a great source of pride, will enable us to implement all of them, and to go even further to enhance accessibility.

Frédérique Macarez, Mayor of Saint-Quentin

## Revitalising public spaces for universal access

Demonstrating its long-term commitment to accessibility, Saint-Quentin focuses on revitalising public spaces. Ongoing renovations, especially in central areas like the Basilica Square, aim for full accessibility. A remarkable 88% of public buildings, including schools, are now accessible. The city has introduced numerous accessible pedestrian crossings and equipped 60% of traffic lights with sound systems for people with visual impairments.

The city's Notre-Dame Cathedral, House of Culture, sports centre, Grand Pressigny Park, Town Hall and library have all undergone accessibility improvements, such as the introduction of ramps, elevators, and adapted facilities.



88% of Saint-Quentin's public buildings, including schools, are accessible.

## Transportation

Saint-Quentin has made strides in inclusive transportation, with all buses and 70% of bus stops now accessible. The introduction of the 'AndiGO' on-demand transportation service extends mobility benefits to individuals with intellectual and mental disabilities. The 'France Services' bus helps people with reduced mobility to complete administrative tasks, like applying for social benefits, renewing their identification documents, and accessing healthcare services.



'AndiGO' is an on-demand transportation service that enhances mobility for persons with disabilities in Saint-Quentin

## Education and governance

Inclusive measures in nurseries, schools and playgrounds support the active participation of all children. Personalised learning plans, assistive technologies and teacher training on inclusivity help to promote an inclusive social environment. Playgrounds are designed to be accessible, with wheelchair-friendly facilities and sensory-friendly spaces.

The Deputy Mayor, leading the disability portfolio, ensures a cohesive governance approach supported by a dedicated health and disability service, the Municipal Social Action Centre (CCAS). The CCAS offers financial aid, counselling and advocacy for residents facing challenges related to health and disability. It collaborates with local organisations and government agencies to ensure access to essential services, providing referrals to specialised healthcare providers.

Communication initiatives, such as training the city communications department in plain language, benefit everyone, especially people with intellectual disabilities, learning difficulties and visitors with limited understanding of French.

## Changing attitudes to build a more inclusive community

Saint-Quentin actively works to change community attitudes towards disability through inclusive awareness campaigns, events and programmes that educate the community about the rights and needs of persons with disabilities, and foster interaction between persons with and without disabilities. This includes a 'Festival of inclusion' organised by the Association of Paralysed People of France with accessible activities, inclusive sports (like wheelchair basketball), and vocational training centres for job integration.

## Inclusive decision-making

City agents and the ‘accessi-parcours’ team tirelessly evaluate and enhance accessibility in Saint-Quentin, involving persons with disabilities and relevant partners to provide a holistic perspective. The city has established citizen councils, disability councils and mental health councils, further showcasing its focus on inclusive decision-making.

## Cultural and sustainable initiatives

Saint-Quentin implemented comprehensive accessibility measures for the Tour de France, including upgraded infrastructure (temporary ramps, accessible parking, and designated viewing points for spectators with disabilities), sign language interpreters during the event, and information provided in braille, large print, and audio formats. The city raised awareness of these measures through various channels, including, local newspapers, and social media platforms.

The ‘Maréchal Juin eco-district’ and the new sports centre, both projects involving citizens and designed with aesthetic and environmental excellence in mind, showcase the city’s dual commitment to accessibility and sustainable development.



The ‘accessi-parcours’ team involve persons with disabilities and relevant partners in evaluating and enhancing accessibility in Saint-Quentin.



**Special mention for the New European Bauhaus**

**90 000 inhabitants**

# Tübingen

## Germany

Located approximately 30 kilometres south of Stuttgart, Tübingen stands as one of Germany's most vibrant and youthful cities. Striving for a sustainable future, the city has set a visionary goal to achieve climate neutrality by 2030. The New European Bauhaus initiative, launched by the European Commission in 2020, expresses the EU's ambition of creating places, products and ways of living that are beautiful, sustainable, and inclusive.

As an architect, I understand the challenge of the “form follows function” principle. The new Tübingen central bus station successfully combines aesthetics and accessibility. The bus station is a high-quality environment to spend time in. It fulfils all essential functions of the mobility transition and urban design for passengers and operations alike. It is leading the way. Accessibility benefits everyone!.

**Cord Soehlke**, City Manager for Construction and First Mayor of the university town of Tübingen

## Blending aesthetics with accessibility

Tübingen's new bus station is a great example of accessible urban design, blending functionality with aesthetic and green appeal. Initiated in 2017 and set to be completed by the end of 2023, this transit hub prioritises barrier-free mobility. The city actively involved the disability organisation FORUM INKLUSION in the bus station's planning for a period of more than four years to ensure that the space caters to the diverse needs of all individuals, including persons with disabilities.

The elevated station forecourt ensures that all entrances are easily accessible. The innovative design of the bus stop roofs, supported by sloping columns, adds to the station's visual allure while integrating them with a newly planted tree grove. This creates a harmonious blend of modern infrastructure, accessibility and natural elements. Additionally, the inclusion of an orientation plan, a tactile desk, and wheelchair-accessible areas like the water feature contributes to the creation of a truly public space for all in the heart of the city. Moreover, the bus station includes a bike station with a café that is operated by persons with disabilities.



Tübingen's new bus station blends accessible urban design and functionality with aesthetic appeal.



Tactile guidance systems ensure that everyone can access and enjoy Tübingen's modern and historic spaces.



## A holistic approach to accessibility

Tübingen prioritises accessibility well beyond its new bus station. In 2022, Tübingen published its “Action Plan 2022: Tübingen inclusive and accessible” to set up a systematic, sustainable, and extensive approach to accessibility and participation of persons with disabilities in all areas of life. The Inclusion Officers from all municipal communities in the district of Tübingen are part of a network. Moreover, the city has offered regular trainings sessions for its employees, on inclusive language and plain language.

In the historic old town, the city has implemented tactile guidance systems for individuals with visual impairments, keeping the historical and aesthetic characteristics of the area. In new districts, accessible design of public spaces is a standard.

Building entrances and exits feature ramp connections. Curb reductions, diverse guidance systems for visually impaired individuals, and public wheelchair-accessible toilets create an environment that prioritises comfort and convenience for all citizens and visitors.

The city employs a uniform signage and guidance system with contrasting colours, pictograms, and easy-to-read texts. Tübingen also offers barrier-free city tours, and numerous event spaces including an inductive loop system.



A tactile relief model helps everyone to enjoy the architecture of Tübingen's old town.

## Tactile city model

In front of the city museum on Kornhausstraße, there is a bronze three-dimensional model of Tübingen's old town at a 1:500 scale. Braille inscriptions on it provide names and information about landmarks, streets, and the history of the city. This allows everyone, especially persons with visual impairments, to better understand and experience the city and its planning and architecture.

## Education for all children

Tübingen's commitment to making education and daycare centres accessible for all children is also remarkable. The city has made schools physically more accessible with features like ramps and elevators, adopted an inclusive curriculum in schools and provides training on inclusivity for educators. The Tübingen Music School stands out by also offering inclusive early education. Moreover, the city library is accessible and provides books in plain language.





**Special mention for landscape  
and playground areas**

**278 767 inhabitants**

# South Dublin County

## Ireland

Bounded by the River Liffey to the north and the Dublin Mountains to the south, South Dublin County is a vibrant and inclusive region situated 16 kilometres southwest of Dublin city centre. Committed to social inclusion and equal access, South Dublin County prioritises the needs of all residents, including persons with disabilities, when designing and delivering services.

Accessibility in play is a basic human right for all children. Children also deserve to spend their childhoods in close contact with nature and to benefit from its many gifts. This can be especially important for children with Autism and other sensory, mental and intellectual disabilities. Realising this and bringing the values of inclusion, respect for the natural world and community participation into our projects has guided our decision making and delivered enormous benefits.

**Alan Edge**, Mayor of South Dublin



Play equipment is designed to consider the needs of children with diverse abilities.

## Creating inclusive play spaces: A universal design approach

Since 2015, South Dublin County Council has focused on developing over 40 new play spaces incorporating the principles of universal design – namely, Equitable Use, Flexibility in Use, Simple and Intuitive Use, Perceptible Information, Tolerance for Error, Low Physical Effort, and Size and Space for Approach and Use.



Play spaces are characterised by natural features, like streams, hills and meadows, to encourage connection with nature.

The play spaces, characterised by meadows, trees, hills, streams and other natural features, prioritise contact with nature, which has resulted in longer playground visit times, increased imaginative play and a wider range of play experiences for everyone. Providing access to nature has made the play spaces more sustainable, with lower maintenance costs.

Beyond physical accessibility and natural characteristics, the play spaces are designed to accommodate the needs of children with mental, intellectual and sensory disabilities by incorporating features such as sensory play equipment, quiet areas, inclusive play structures, and clear wayfinding signage. These design elements aim to provide a supportive and inclusive environment for all children to alongside their peers.

## A literacy-friendly local authority

South Dublin County Council has established itself as a literacy-friendly local authority, implementing policies and plans accredited by the National Adult Literacy Agency for plain English. The 2020–2024 Corporate Plan is testament to this commitment, ensuring that Council policies and plans undergo regular proofreading for language issues related to equality, accessibility, and plain English.

## Accessible communication

Braille and tactile signage have been implemented across the county, extending to civic offices, libraries, and facilities at Tallaght Stadium and in community centres. Additional measures, such as the provision of induction loops and the Irish Remote Interpretation Service for persons with hearing impairments, underscore South Dublin County Council's commitment to accessibility.

## Inclusive education

South Dublin County Council's nurseries, schools, and playgrounds offer accessible facilities, foster a culture of respect and understanding among students and staff through educational programmes, and provide personalised support services for children with special needs. These measures aim to ensure the active participation of all children, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds. South Dublin County Council also ensures that its libraries are autism-friendly, offering resources and facilities tailored to diverse needs.

## Commitment underpinned by law and policies

South Dublin County's commitment with accessibility is reflected in various policy documents, including the Corporate Plan 2020–2024, County Development Plan 2022–2028, Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Framework, South Dublin County Housing and Disability Strategy, and Our Libraries, Our Future South Dublin Libraries Development Plan 2023–2027.

## Community participation

South Dublin County Council actively involves persons with disabilities in its decision-making processes through initiatives like the Disability Advisory and Consultative Panel, which was established in 2010. This panel, composed of individuals with personal or professional interests in accessibility, provides invaluable insights to ensure that facilities, services, and activities are designed to be accessible to the entire community.

The Council remains committed to continuous improvement and has taken steps to communicate effectively with the public, including Irish Sign Language interpretation, providing communications boards in play areas and seeking feedback on their effectiveness.





# Participating in the 2025 Access City Award

**Are you making an outstanding effort to make life easier for persons with disabilities in your city? Apply for the 2025 Access City Award and join the family!**

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

Participating in the award is a unique chance to gain European recognition and an opportunity to connect with other advanced European cities ensuring accessibility, share experiences, learn from each other and collaborate, helping you to become an even better city to live in and visit.

Winning cities receive a financial prize:

- 1<sup>st</sup> prize: €150 000
- 2<sup>nd</sup> prize: €120 000
- 3<sup>rd</sup> prize: €80 000

## How to apply

To apply, you must be a government authority of a city of over 50 000 inhabitants in an EU Member State. In Member States with fewer than two such cities, urban areas made up of two or more towns may also participate if their combined population exceeds 50 000 inhabitants.

The application period opens every year. To apply, you must complete and submit an online application form by the deadline. You will find all the necessary

information on the official [Access City Award website](#).

To help you, participation rules and a guidance note will be available in all official EU languages.

All eligible cities can apply and re-apply each year to win the Access City Award and Special Mentions, including the second and third prize winners and special mention cities from previous editions. Past winners of the first place may not apply for a period of five years after they held the Access City Award title for a given year.

## Selection process and criteria

Once the application process is closed, the selection process is divided in two phases: pre-selection at national level and final selection at European level.

The **national juries** in each country select a maximum of three cities from the national applicants. Pre-selected candidates then move on to the second phase of the competition and are assessed by the **European Jury**.

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

- built environment and public spaces,
- transport and related infrastructure,
- information and communication, including new technologies,
- public facilities and services.

The juries will evaluate the applications, taking into account the following six criteria:

- scope of the actions,
- ownership, level of commitment,
- impact,
- quality and sustainability of results,
- involvement of persons with disabilities and relevant partners,
- social innovation.

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

After the EU jury evaluation, finalists will be announced by the European Commission.

The winner of the 2025 Access City Award will be revealed during the Award Ceremony that will be hosted during the European Day of Persons with Disabilities Conference (28-29 November 2024).

## Contact us

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



## Getting in touch with the EU

### In person

All over the European Union there are hundreds of Europe Direct information centres. You can find the address of the centre nearest you at: [https://europa.eu/european-union/contact\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en)

### On the phone or by email

Europe Direct is a service that answers your questions about the European Union. You can contact this service:

- by freephone: 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (certain operators may charge for these calls),
- at the following standard number: +32 22999696 or
- by email via: [https://europa.eu/european-union/contact\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en)

## Finding information about the EU

### Online

Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website at: [https://europa.eu/european-union/index\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en)

### EU publications

You can download or order free and priced EU publications at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publications>. Multiple copies of free publications may be obtained by contacting Europe Direct or your local information centre (see [https://europa.eu/european-union/contact\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en)).

### EU law and related documents

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

### Open data from the EU

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

The annual Access City Award recognises European cities for their outstanding efforts to make themselves more accessible for persons with disabilities and older citizens to make life easier for everyone. This brochure celebrates the achievements of the 2024 Access City Award winners, runners-up, and special mentions: San Cristóbal de La Laguna (Spain), Łódź (Poland), Saint-Quentin (France), Tübingen (Germany), South Dublin County (Ireland). This year's cities are making the effort to ensure a holistic approach to accessibility. The 2024 Special Mentions were awarded to Tübingen (Germany) for 'New European Bauhaus' (creating places, products and ways of living that are beautiful, sustainable, and inclusive) and to South Dublin County (Ireland) for 'Landscapes and playground areas' (commitment to accessible leisure and play areas).

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