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EU launches European Capital of Smart Tourism 2022 competition / EU awards innovative, sustainable and accessible tourism paving the road to recovery

Brussels (ots) -

Today, the European Commission launches the European Capital of Smart Tourism 2022 competition. This initiative rewards European cities for outstanding, innovative and sustainable tourism practices.

The tourism sector plays a crucial role in generating growth and jobs in the EU, and still holds untapped potential – especially in the area of smart tourism. Innovation, accessibility, and sustainability are the future of tourism, and the European Commission aims to keep European tourism ahead of the curve. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the tourism ecosystem. With many cities and destinations now looking to recover and grow more resilient, it is important to develop and implement smart tourism practices in line with green and digital transition.

The European Capital of Smart Tourism is an EU initiative, currently financed under the COSME Programme. It is built on the successful experience of the Preparatory Action proposed by the European Parliament and implemented by the European Commission in 2019 and 2020. The competition is open to cities across both the EU, as well as the non-EU countries that take part in the COSME programme[1]. The initiative seeks to strengthen tourism-generated innovative development in European cities and their surroundings, increase their attractiveness as well as strengthen economic growth and job creation. It also aims to establish a framework for the exchange of best practices between cities participating in the competition, create opportunities for cooperation and new partnerships.

In order to compete for the 2022 European Capital of Smart Tourism title, cities are asked to demonstrate their innovative tourism practices in four areas: accessibility, sustainability, digitalisation, cultural heritage and creativity. Applications will first be evaluated by a panel of independent experts. In the second step, 7 shortlisted cities will be asked to present their city's candidature in front of the European Jury. The European Jury will select two winners, the European Capitals of Smart Tourism 2022, which will be announced in November 2021.

Both winning cities will receive expert communication and branding support throughout 2022. This will include the production of a promotional video, a large hashtag sculpture to install in a prominent location, diverse promotional activities and visibility at the EU level.

The competition has a proven track record of success. The 2022 European Capital of Smart Tourism is the third edition of the competition. Gothenburg and Málaga were selected as the winners of the 2020 European Capitals of Smart Tourism competition, while Helsinki and Lyon won the inaugural competition and jointly held the titles of 2019 European Capitals of Smart Tourism.

To apply, city representatives are asked to complete an [online form](#). **The deadline for applications is 16 June 2021 at 17:00 CET.**

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Notes to Editors

1. Smart tourism responds to new challenges and demands in a fast-changing sector, including the expectation of digital information, products and services; equal opportunities and access for all visitors; sustainable development of the local area; and support to creative industries and local talent.
2. In 2019, amongst 35 EU cities which applied, Málaga and Gothenburg stood out and were selected as the European Capitals of Smart Tourism 2020. In 2018, amongst 38 EU cities, Helsinki and Lyon stood out and were selected the European Capitals of Smart Tourism 2019.
3. The competition for European Capitals of Smart Tourism 2022 opened on 22 April 2021. Details on how to apply and terms and conditions can be found at <https://smarttourismcapital.eu/>. The deadline for applications is 16 June 2021 at 17:00 CET.
4. The competition is open to cities in the EU Member States and COSME countries with a population of over 100,000. In countries where no city has more than 100,000 inhabitants, the largest city is eligible to apply. Please refer to the Guide for Applicants for more information.
5. Eligible applications will be evaluated against a set of established assessment criteria, by a panel of independent experts. The European Commission, based on the evaluation by experts, will shortlist 7 cities, which will be invited to present their candidatures in front of a European Jury. The European Jury will select two European Capitals of Smart Tourism 2022.
6. Cities shortlisted as finalists will be announced in September 2021 and the winners will be revealed in November 2021.

[1] Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine and United Kingdom. <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/39579>

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