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European Commission announces new competitions for 2026 - European Capital and Green Pioneer of Smart Tourism

Brussels (ots) -

Today, the European Commission launches the 2026 edition of the European Capital of Smart Tourism and the European Green Pioneer of Smart Tourism competitions. Tourism destinations across Europe are invited to submit their innovative practices of smart and sustainable tourism to become leading examples in European tourism.

As one of the EU's largest economic sectors, tourism plays a crucial role in economic growth and job creation. The Smart Tourism initiative recognises cities implementing new digital tools and practices such as equal opportunity and access to visitors, sustainable development and support to creative industries and local talent. With these competitions, the European Commission promotes and awards the future of smart and sustainable tourism in Europe.

To compete for the 2026 titles, cities are asked to demonstrate their innovative tourism practices and [submit their applications online](#). Applications will first be evaluated by a panel of independent experts. In the second step, shortlisted cities will be asked to present their candidature in front of the European Jury. The European Jury will select two winners, the 'European Capital of Smart Tourism 2026' and the 'European Green Pioneer of Smart Tourism 2026', which will be announced in November 2025.

Both competitions are open to cities across both the EU as well as to [non-EU countries participating in the Single Market Programme \(SMP\)](#) – formerly the COSME Programme. Eligible countries include all 27 EU Member States and non-EU countries participating in the SMP, including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Kosovo[1], Liechtenstein, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Türkiye, and Ukraine.

European Capital of Smart Tourism 2026 – Smart gets you further

The **European Capital of Smart Tourism** recognises outstanding achievements by European cities as tourism destinations in four categories: sustainability, accessibility, digitalisation as well as cultural heritage and creativity.

It has a proven track record of success. The 2026 European Capital of Smart Tourism is the seventh edition of the competition. Torino was selected as the 2025 Smart Capital. Previous winners include Dublin as 2024 Capital, Pafos and Seville as 2023 Capitals, Bordeaux and València as the 2022 Capitals, Gothenburg and Málaga as the 2020 Capitals, while Helsinki and Lyon won the inaugural competition and jointly held the 2019 titles. Since 2024, there is only one winner of the European Capital of Smart Tourism competition due to a change in competition rules, whereas previous editions featured two winners annually.

The European Capital of Smart Tourism competition is open to cities with a population of over 100.000. For more information, please refer to the [European Capital of Smart Tourism Guide for Applicants](#).

European Green Pioneer of Smart Tourism 2026 – Green leads the way

The European Green Pioneer of Smart Tourism competition recognises emerging sustainable tourism destinations across Europe. It aims to reward smaller destinations that have successfully implemented strategies to promote sustainable tourism through green transition practices.

The competition is founded upon the principle of promoting the development of sustainable tourism in smaller destinations which brings value to the economy, the planet, and the people. Being the European Green Pioneer of Smart Tourism 2026 will allow the winning city to serve as an inspiration to other tourism destinations across Europe, enhance their city's profile as a quality travel destination, attracting visitors and generating economic growth in a sustainable way.

The Green Pioneer competition is open to cities with a population between 25.000 – 100.000. For additional information, please refer to the [European Green Pioneer of Smart Tourism Guide for Applicants](#).

Both, the European Capital and Green Pioneer of Smart Tourism 2026 will benefit from communication and branding support throughout 2026 which will tell the story of the outstanding smart, innovative and sustainable practices that made them stand out and win. 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 EU level and internationally. The winners will also have the chance to join a growing and active network of smart destinations that were shortlisted in the previous editions of both competitions, exchange best practices and learn from one another.

For both competitions, applications must be received by:
30 May 2025 at 17:00 CET.

For all the [latest updates](#) on the Smart Tourism initiative, follow us on our [website](#), [Facebook](#), or [X](#), and subscribe to our EU Smart Tourism Podcast series in [Spotify](#) and [Amazon Music](#).

[1]This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

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