

GREEN CAPITAL AWARDS FINALLY ANNOUNCED



Stockholm and Hamburg recently became the first two European cities to receive the European Green Capital Award. Their dedication to improving the environment has impressed the 'jury' and hopefully, more cities will join them in their green initiatives.

Environmental protection is becoming a major issue frequently discussed by many. Scientists have been consistently sending out warning messages to governments in order to stress the importance retaining our planet's fading health. The **European Commission** is very supportive of any initiative which leads to a better treatment of the environment and has recently announced the launch of a new award - **European Green Capital Award**.

The award relates to an initiative taken by several European cities which intensely work on constantly improving the state of the environment. Initially, fifteen European cities joined the initiative first introduced during a meeting of representatives of several 'green-minded' cities in Tallinn, Estonia, in 2006. Since then, the concept gained the attention and support of 40 cities, including 21 EU capitals.

The award is given out based on diverse environmental criteria, including climate change, transport, air, waste and water. Only a city of more than 200,000 inhabitants qualifies for the competition. By October 1st, 2008, more than thirty cities applied for this award, eight of which were shortlisted. Amsterdam, Bristol, Copenhagen, Freiberg, Hamburg, Münster, Oslo and Stockholm became the final contestants. **Stockholm was announced the Green Capital of 2010, followed by Hamburg for 2011.**

A very important aspect of the competition is that each city needs to prove that a long-term green vision is taken into account in their urban planning. The European Commission is hoping to support and encourage such initiatives and happily announced the first 'winners'. Raising awareness is the major objective and the award is a great way of achieving it.

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