

## PRESS RELEASE

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ICLEI's mission is to build and serve a worldwide movement of local governments to achieve tangible improvements in global sustainability with special focus on environmental conditions through cumulative local actions.

### European Director of ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability congratulates winners of the European Green Capital Award

*Freiburg, February 23, 2009* - Stockholm and Hamburg have been crowned the first Green Capital Cities of Europe. Stockholm will hold the title for 2010 and will then pass it on to Hamburg for 2011. European Environment Commissioner, Stavros Dimas made the announcement at the first European Green Capital Awards Ceremony on 23 February in Brussels.

Eight cities were shortlisted: Amsterdam, Bristol, Copenhagen, Freiburg im Breisgau, Hamburg, Münster, Oslo and Stockholm. These cities have a long standing, international recognised, environmental track record, also within ICLEI's global membership.

The evaluation panel was made up of a group of internationally recognised experts in the environmental field, while the jury, which finally selected the winners, included representatives the European Commission, the European Environment Agency, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, the European Federation for Transport and Environment (T&E), the Union of Capitals of the European Union and the Committee of the Regions.

Regional Director of the ICLEI European Secretariat, Gino Van Begin, joins European Commissioner Dimas in congratulating the winners and the shortlisted cities. "All eight finalist cities presented high quality applications. Choosing the winners from among them was hard because all the cities are environmental front runners. I express my congratulations to each of them."

Mr. Van Begin went on to say that, he was "particularly impressed with the way both Hamburg and Stockholm set several ambitious targets in a range of sustainable development areas, in particular to combat climate change in a comprehensive and innovative 'local' way".

**Stockholm** impressed the evaluation panel with its holistic vision, which combines growth with sustainable development. Its plans for the future include becoming fossil free by 2050 and the city has put strong green programmes and measures in place across the board. The city has a long tradition of fighting climate change. In 2006, in collaboration with ICLEI, it hosted the conference "A Future with Zero CO2 Emissions", calling for all committed communities to join forces and commit themselves to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at a local level. The Swedish capital has also introduced a pioneering Congestion Charging system resulting in reduced car use and reduced emissions.

The city of **Hamburg** was commended for its many comprehensive approaches, policy commitment and for having a strong green vision. The city has set ambitious climate protection goals and has put the infrastructure in place to carry them out. It also contributes to its inhabitant's quality of life by having an excellent transport system with almost 100 percent of citizens within 300 metres of high class public transport.

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The evaluation panel praised all of the short listed cities saying that, “all eight cities have the potential to become a European Green Capital and an excellent role model for cities all over the world”. Judges also said that the finalists have shown excellence in all fields, particularly when putting environmental management systems in place.

**Amsterdam** was praised for its very strong targets, plans, budget to contribute to climate change, as well as its well thought out dissemination programme and transport system.

**Bristol** leads the way in environmental awareness in the UK, and scored well with its dissemination programme which evaluators described as excellent, along with very ambitious measures and plans for the future.

The city of **Copenhagen** also impressed with its transport system and its development of local mobility and passenger transport and has ambitious targets to have 50 percent of commuters use bicycles by 2015.

**Freiburg** also has high accessibility of green and blue space and a clean air plan that has been implemented with a number of effective measures.

**Münster** scored marks with a strong performance on climate change implementations, organising budgets and reaching targets.

While **Oslo** has good accessibility to public transport and an expanding cycle network with very high quality and high accessibility of green and blue space.

The European Green Capital Award, a European Commission initiative, was conceived to promote and reward these efforts, to spur cities to commit to further action, and to showcase and encourage exchange of best practice among European cities. Applications for the 2012 award will open in September 2009.

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#### **More information:**

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital>

#### **Additional Background information on ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability:**

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is a leading international association of local governments, which includes also national and regional local government organisations, that have made a specific commitment to sustainable development and acts as a political advocate for local governments. In addition, ICLEI provides technical consulting, training, and information services to build capacity, share knowledge, and support local government in the implementation of sustainable development at the local level. Our basic premise is that locally designed initiatives can provide an effective and cost-efficient way to achieve local, national, and global sustainability objectives.

In Europe, ICLEI counts more than 180 local authorities and municipal associations among its members.

For further information, please visit [www.iclei-europe.org](http://www.iclei-europe.org)