

French, Spanish cities win Europe's green capital award

October 22 2010



European Commissioner for the Environment Janez Potocnik (R) and French Mayor Jean-Marc Ayrault (L) of Nantes smile on stage after Nantes was appointed European Green Capital 2013 on October 21.

The northern Spanish city of Vitoria-Gasteiz, whose entire population lives a stone's throw from a green space, has won the European Green Capital award for 2012.

The European Union also named Nantes as the continent's green capital for 2013 thanks to the western French city's reintroduction of electric trams, which has reduced [air pollution](#).

Vitoria-Gasteiz created a "green belt" to reclaim degraded urban areas surrounding the city centre, putting the entire population of nearly

250,000 within 300 metres (yards) of an open green space, the EU said.

In Nantes, a city of 285,000, officials launched a climate plan aiming to cut [CO2 emissions](#) by a quarter by 2020.

The European Green Capital was created in 2010 to encourage cities to improve quality of life through environmentally-friendly policies.

Stockholm is this year's capital. The German city of Hamburg will wear the green crown next year.

The jury includes representatives from the [European Commission](#), the European Environment Agency, a mayors' group and the committee of EU regions.

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Citation: French, Spanish cities win Europe's green capital award (2010, October 22) retrieved 20 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-10-french-spanish-cities-europe-green.html>

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