Helsinki and Lyon awarded titles of
2019 European Capitals of Smart Tourism

The European Union initiative supports the exchange of best practices for innovative solutions by EU cities to strengthen their sustainability and competitiveness as tourist destinations in the new industrial era

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The winners of the first edition of the European Capital of Smart Tourism competition were awarded today at a ceremony in Brussels, on the occasion of the European Tourism Day the largest annual meeting on European tourism.

Pia Pakarinen, Helsinki's Deputy Mayor, Alain Galliano, Vice-President of Lyon Métropole and Jean-Michel Daclin, President of ONLYLYON Tourism and Congress, received European Capitals of Smart Tourism 2019 trophies on behalf of their cities and were delighted that long-term efforts in creating smart environments for tourists in their cities have been recognised at EU-level.

In praise of the winners, Commissioner Elżbieta Bieńkowska, responsible for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, stated: *"I congratulate Helsinki and Lyon for the outstanding solutions that they put in place to make tourism in their cities smart and innovative. Our objective at EU level is to foster the sustainable development of tourism by showcasing innovative solutions from EU cities in tourism. We believe that the European Capital of Smart Tourism initiative will help to establish a framework of exchange of good practices between European cities, including learning from each other and networking, creating opportunities for cooperation and new partnerships. Tourism is important for the EU economy so we all need to work together more effectively to be more competitive and grow in a sustainable way".*

Pia Pakarinen, Helsinki's Deputy Mayor commented*: "We very much appreciate the opportunity to be the first European Capital of Smart Tourism. The first ones always set the bar and we aim high".*

David Kimelfeld, President of Lyon Métropole, proud of his city's achievement said in a video message: *"The exchange of good ideas has always moved us forward in Europe and that is why we are so pleased to receive this Award and to have the opportunity to share with other European cities a few of our ideas about smart tourism. We hope with our initiatives we can also inspire other cities!"*

In addition, four cities received 2019 European Smart Tourism Awards for their outstanding achievements in the four categories of the competition: Málaga (Accessibility), Ljubljana (Sustainability), Copenhagen (Digitalisation) and Linz (Cultural Heritage & Creativity).

The European Capital of Smart Tourism is a new EU initiative, based on a proposal from the European Parliament, which secured its funding for 2018 – 2019 through a Preparatory Action. The initiative seeks to strengthen tourism-generated innovative development in EU 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 contest, create opportunities for cooperation and new partnerships.

In order to become a European Capital of Smart Tourism, a city needed to demonstrate exemplary achievements as a tourism destination in implementing innovative and intelligent solutions in all four award categories: accessibility, sustainability, digitalisation, cultural heritage and creativity. It also needed to convince the European Jury about its suitability to act as role model for other burgeoning smart tourism destinations.

Cities of more than 100.000 inhabitants were eligible in the first edition of this competition. 38 cities from 19 EU Member States applied, but Helsinki and Lyon stood out for their innovative tourism measures and the impressive programme of activities they have put together to celebrate their achievements.

Helsinki and Lyon have been awarded with promotional videos, exhibition at European Tourism Day and purpose-built giant sculptures which will be installed in prominent locations in the two cities. During 2019 both Capitals will benefit also from promotional actions at EU level.

To celebrate their success, Helsinki and Lyon have planned an exciting schedule of activities for 2019. For example, Helsinki will be launching a smart city guidance pilot

scheme, making use of collaborative work with businesses and digital tools to create a smarter way to guide people in the city. Helsinki will organise a workshop with other European cities on smart tourism and will hold the World Tourism Cities Federation's annual global summit and trade fair.

Lyon's representatives will be travelling the globe for shows, press meetings and special events to inform new audiences about the city's smart opportunities. These activities will be supplemented by Lyon's 26,000 strong network of ambassadors. The city is also launching its "World Travel Influencer Meetings" and is taking part in the Global Sustainability Programme.

For all the latest news on the European Capital of Smart Tourism, including updates about the event programmes in both of the winning cities, sign up to our newsletter, or follow us on Facebook or Twitter.

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Notes to Editors

1. The first edition of the competition was open to submissions from 11 April 2018 to 30 June 2018. Terms and conditions are available at www.SmartTourismCapital.eu
2. In the first stage of the competition, an independent panel of experts evaluated applications from 38 cities in 19 EU Member States and narrowed these down to 10 finalist cities.
3. The 10 finalist cities each presented their candidatures in front of a seven member European jury, comprising representatives from the European Commission, European Parliament, European Committee of Regions and the EU Member States: Bulgaria and Austria (holders of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union during 2018) at a Jury meeting in Brussels on 24 September 2018.
4. Two cities winning the title of the European Capitals of Smart Tourism 2019 as well as four other cities scoring the highest in the individual categories of the competition and therefore recognised with European Smart Tourism Awards 2019 received their awards at the European Tourism Day in Brussels on 7 November 2018.
5. 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.