



## 31/10/2019

### 2019 Global Destination Sustainability Index and Awards Released



GLOBAL  
**DESTINATION  
SUSTAINABILITY**  
INDEX  
**TOP 10** RANKING

Today, the GDS-Index released the 2019 ranking of the sustainability performance of 50 global business tourism and events destinations, at the closing ceremony of the 58th ICCA Congress held in Houston.

The Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS-Index) is the leading sustainability benchmarking and improvement programme for business tourism and events destinations around the world. The GDS-Index serves as a collaborative and competitive platform for Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) that promotes the sustainable growth of destinations, regions and countries through knowledge sharing, capacity building, strategy development and certification. Increasingly, the GDS Index is being used on a political level to allow local governments to evaluate their progress in sustainability

In this fourth year of benchmarking, the GDS Index developed and aligned a more demanding set of criteria with other significant stakeholders including the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, the Social Progress Imperative and the Events Industry Council. With the help of an external technical advisory board, this process has brought transparency, rigour and additional value to the GDS Index, further embedding its use in the Meetings, Events and Tourism sectors.

#### **GDS-Index 2019 Results**

The GDS-Index benchmarks performance across four key areas: city's environmental strategy and infrastructure; city's social sustainability performance; industry supplier support; and the destination management organisation's strategy and initiatives.



GLOBAL  
DESTINATION  
SUSTAINABILITY  
INDEX

## /GDS-INDEX TOP 10

#	DESTINATION	2019 SCORE	CHANGE
1	GOTHENBURG	89.6	⬇️
2	COPENHAGEN	88.0	⬇️
3	ZURICH	84.6	⬆️
4	GLASGOW	78.5	⬆️
5	AALBORG	76.2	⬆️
6	REYKJAVIK	75.8	⬇️
7	MALMÖ	75.6	⬇️
8	SYDNEY	74.9	⬆️
9	UPPSALA	74.3	⬆️
10	MELBOURNE	74.3	⬇️



*Annika Hallman from Goteborg & Co receiving the 2019 GDS-Index Leadership Award from James Rees, President of ICCA and Guy Bigwood, Managing Director of the GDS-Index.*

Gothenburg came top of the list of cities in the GDS-Index for the fourth year running. With a score of 89.64 out of a possible 100 points, and with a 7% improvement from last year, Gothenburg received the 2019 GDS-Index Leadership Award.

Annika Hallman Director at Gothenburg Convention Bureau shares: *"The GDS-Index has been a powerful lever in our sustainability work. It has helped us to improve performance and inspire others to become more sustainable. We have lectured and received study visits from other cities and used our top position to drive the sustainable development of the global meeting industry, as well as strengthening Gothenburg's profile as a leading congress and convention destination".*

The 2019 GDS-Index results demonstrate that DMOs are in action on sustainability with a 29% increase in terms of overall performance from 2018. New destinations who advanced into the top 10 included Aalborg and Dublin, with significant jumps in performance for Glasgow, Sydney and Zurich.

### **2019 GDS-Index Awards**

The 2019 GDS-Index [Awards](#) were announced simultaneously to honour the sustainability performance, innovation and improvement of the destinations.

The judging panel, made up of six industry experts, selected Sydney to win the GDS-Index Innovation Award for its outstanding "Sustainable Destination Partnership"; a multi-stakeholder collaboration that has resulted in the environmental footprinting of the Sydney hospitality sector, then the co-creation of a strategy to achieve a 70% reduction in carbon emissions and divert 90% of its waste by 2030. The jury was also impressed by the joint second place projects presented by Wonderful Copenhagen for its Stakeholder Engagement programme and the Green Supply Chains initiative of Ljubljana Tourism.



*Richard Yore from Business Events Sydney receiving the 2019 GDS-Index Innovation Award from James Rees, President of ICCA and Guy Bigwood, Managing Director of the GDS-Index.*

For the first time, the GDS-Index Best Improver Award was presented to a region, with the honours being installed on the Meet in Ireland Partnership representing Dublin, Limerick, Cork and Kerry. They joined the GDS-Index in 2018 with a vision to collaborate and improve destination sustainability as a region. Aalborg and Ljubljana also made major performance and ranking jumps.

Paul Mockler Head of Commercial Development at Fáilte Ireland commented; "We invest in the sustainable development of tourism across the country to ensure that communities nationwide can benefit from the social and economic impact tourism brings to Ireland. We are delighted to see our investment in sustainable practices across our conventions bureaux in Dublin and the regions being recognised with this special merit award. We are at that start of our journey to become recognised as a world leading sustainable destination and look forward to further exciting developments in the coming months."

#### **Best Improvers**

<b>City</b>	<b>2019- 2018 Score Improvement</b>
Kerry	35.25
Limerick	24.13
Dublin	23.69
Aalborg	23.44
Ljubljana	20.04



Lynda Reilly from Fáilte Ireland receiving the 2019 GDS-Index Leadership Award on behalf of the Meet in Ireland Partnership, from James Rees, President of ICCA and Guy Bigwood, Managing Director of the GDS-Index

The GDS Index witnessed many examples of sustainability leadership and best practice from multiple destinations including; Copenhagen, Malmö, Lausanne and Glasgow (strategy), Ireland and Flanders (region programs), Brisbane and Sydney (collaboration and partnerships), Monaco, Lyon and Helsinki (Marketing & Comms) and Gothenburg (Reporting).

Video summary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejR7Lp3xB3Y&feature=youtu.be>

#### Quotes

James Rees, President of ICCA commented *"As the effects of climate change become evident and social pressure for action increases, the meetings and events industry must continue to create positive economic impact for destinations, but also help influence the social and environmental policies that are affected by our business. Destination Management Organisations are a key catalyst and enabler of a sustainable visitor economy, and I am delighted to see the GDS-Index evolving and playing a vital role in accelerating the creation of sustainable destinations."*

Guy Bigwood, Managing Director of the GDS-Index: *"This year's results provide positive signs of a global shift in how Destination Management Organisations integrate sustainability into their strategy, value proposal, stewardship and reporting activities. The results also highlight the need for DMOs to get much better at developing an inspiring vision of change, engaging their stakeholders and managing resources to implement and measure social impact for their communities and visitors."*

Petra Stusek, President of European Cities Marketing: *"I am thrilled to see the GDS-Index evolve into a global movement for change. To me, all participating destinations are leaders and deserve recognition for being on the path to create more sustainable places to visit, meet and thrive in. The*

*GDS Index inspires other destinations to follow their example; the DMO of tomorrow must help ensure sustainable growth and actively work the visitor economy to make a positive impact on the city; socially, environmentally, culturally and democratically."*

Sebastien Tondeur, MCI Chief Executive Officer, said: *"We are avid supporters of the GDS-Index as it helps our industry to ensure that sustainability is a core part of our client value offering, while driving the positive impact of events on the communities we serve. I am inspired to see such a high level of commitment to sustainability and the improvement from the destinations. I would like to congratulate the winners for their performance and achievements"*.

Other key results

Best DMO Performance	2019 DMO Score
Gothenburg	94
Copenhagen	83
Zurich	82
Glasgow	78
Sydney	77
Best Environment Performance	2019 Environment Score
Copenhagen	87
Zurich	87
Reykjavik	85
Oslo	85
Bergen	85
Best Social Performance	2019 Social Score
Uppsala	94
Espoo	94
Stockholm	94
Malmö	94
Gothenburg	94
Best Supplier Performance	2019 Supplier Score
Gothenburg	100
Copenhagen	95
Uppsala	85
Stockholm	80
Zurich	80

For the 2019 GDS-Index click [here](#).

The 58th ICCA Congress took place 27-30 October 2019 in Houston, Texas, U.S.A. and was the biggest ICCA Congress ever in North America with almost 1,000 delegates from 75 countries. See also: <https://www.iccaworld.org/npps/story.cfm?nppage=1760272>

For more information about the 58th ICCA Congress, visit:  
<http://www.congress2019.iccaworld.org/>

**\*\*ENDS\*\***

#### **ABOUT THE GDS-INDEX**

The GDS-Index is a collaborative partnership between ICCA, ICCA's Scandinavian Chapter, IMEX, ECM and MCI Group. It measures, benchmarks and improves the sustainability strategy and performance of meetings, events and business tourism destinations. Founded by pioneering Scandinavian Convention Bureau, its purpose is to engage, inspire and enable destinations to become more sustainable places to visit, meet and thrive in.

[www.gds-index.com](http://www.gds-index.com).

#### **ABOUT ICCA**

ICCA - the International Congress and Convention Association - is the global community and knowledge hub for the international association meetings industry. ICCA represents the world's top destinations and most experienced and leading suppliers specialised in handling, transporting and accommodating international meetings and events, and comprises over 1,100 member companies and organisations in almost 100 countries worldwide. Since its establishment in 1963, ICCA specialises in the international association meetings sector, offering unrivalled data, communication channels, and business development opportunities. [www.iccaworld.org](http://www.iccaworld.org).

#### **ABOUT THE IMEX GROUP**

The IMEX Group, based in the UK, has just one mission: to unite and advance the meetings industry - doing everything it can to educate, innovate and help everyone in the business events industry make powerful connections with the right people. The IMEX team serves this mission, and the industry we love, by delivering two market-leading trade shows every year - one in Frankfurt each spring and one in Las Vegas each autumn. [www.imexamerica.com](http://www.imexamerica.com).

#### **ABOUT MCI**

MCI is the global leader in engaging and activating audiences. Our business is founded on a simple human insight: When people come together, magic happens. This magic is called community. Since 1987 we have been bringing people together through inspiring meetings, events, congresses and association management. MCI helps organisations harness the power of community by applying our strategic engagement and activation solutions to build unforgettable online and offline experiences that foster change, inspire, educate and enhance business performance. MCI is an independently owned company headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, and boasts a global presence with 2,500+ professionals in 60 offices and 31 countries, who work with clients across Europe, the Americas, Asia-Pacific, India and the Middle East. Find out more at [www.mci-group.com](http://www.mci-group.com).

#### **ABOUT EUROPEAN CITIES MARKETING (ECM)**

European Cities Marketing is a non-profit organisation improving the competitiveness and performance of the leading cities of Europe. ECM provides a platform for Leisure, Meetings Industry and City Marketing professionals to exchange knowledge, best practices and widen their network to build new business. European Cities Marketing is linking the interests of members from more than 115 major cities in 39 countries. More information can be found on [www.europeancitiesmarketing.com](http://www.europeancitiesmarketing.com)

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