



Access City Award 2026 – Rules of contest

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document corresponds to the rules of contest for the Access City Award 2026. The regulatory framework for this EU prize is set out in Regulation 2024/2509 (EU Financial Regulation)¹ for the award of the financial support (see section 8 below) and implemented with the support of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV).

The Access City Award 2026 is launched in accordance with Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030², in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)³ and will be managed with the European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, in collaboration with the European Disability Forum.

We invite you to read the documentation about the Access City Award 2026 carefully on the European Commission's specific webpage⁴, and in particular these Rules of Contest, the Application Form and the Guidance Note for Applicants.

These documents provide clarifications and answers to questions you may have when preparing your application:

- The Rules of Contest outlines here:
 - Background (Section 2)
 - Objectives and expected results (Section 3)
 - What is the Access City Award (ACA) (Section 4)
 - Available budget (Section 5)
 - Procedure and criteria for participating in the Access City Award 2026, including admissibility, eligibility and exclusion criteria, and the indicative timing (Section 6)
 - Evaluation and award process, including the role of the National and European Juries, the different steps (pre-selection, final selection, European Jury deliberation and award stage) and the award criteria (Section 7)
 - Other conditions: payment arrangements, liability of contestants, communication, checks and audits, processing of personal data and applicable law and competent jurisdiction (Section 8)
 - Modification or cancellation of the competition (Section 9)
 - Additional information (Section 10)
 - Contact details (Section 11)
 - Annexes (Section 12)

1 Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (recast) ('EU Financial Regulation') (OJ L, 2024/2509, 26.9.2024): https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L_202402509

2 <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3e1e2228-7c97-11eb-9ac9-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

3 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>

4 Access City Award 2026 webpage: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/disability/access-city-award_en

- The **Application Form** (Annex 1) contains the questions to be answered by the contestants via the ACA online platform: <https://access-city-award.ec.europa.eu/> to participate in the competition.
- The **Guidance Note for Applicants** (Annex 2) provides all the necessary information to help contestants to fill in the sections in the application form correctly and describe their activities successfully.

You are also encouraged to visit the Access City Award website⁵ to consult the list of previous winners⁶, the brochure with the best accessibility practices of previous awarded cities⁷, and the newsletter⁸ to get further information on the award.

2. BACKGROUND

Persons with disabilities have the right for their inherent dignity and worth, to have all their human rights and fundamental freedoms recognised, and to fully participate in all areas of life, on an equal basis with others.

Yet, despite progress, millions of persons with disabilities continue to experience barriers to use products and services, the built environment and public spaces, transport and related infrastructure, information, and communication, including new technologies (ICT), such the internet and mobile apps, and public facilities and services. This issue is not merely a concern for persons with disabilities but for society as a whole.

The Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 aims to make progress in this area, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD). Since 2010, the European Commission organises the Access City Award. This Award recognises and celebrates a city's willingness, ability, and efforts to become more accessible for persons with disabilities, in order to:

- guarantee equal access to fundamental rights.
- improve the quality of life of its population; and
- ensure that persons with disabilities, have equal access to all the resources and pleasures cities have to offer.

More than 100 million people in the European Union (EU) have some form of disability and the EU population is also becoming older. Additionally, Europe is now essentially an urban society, with about 70% of the EU population living in towns and cities. As a society, we have the duty to ensure that persons with disabilities can participate in society and economy on an equal basis with others. By doing good work on accessibility, municipalities ultimately improve the safety and quality of life for everyone. A city is accessible when persons with disabilities can on equal basis with others, for instance:

- get information in ways that they can read and understand.
- get the bus, tram and metro to go to work or meet friends.

5 https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/disability/access-city-award_en

6 https://commission.europa.eu/access-city-award-list-winners_en

7 <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/4b3d9dfb-806b-11ef-a67d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

8 <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/empl/newsletter-archives/view/service/3356>

- go around the streets and enjoy parks and playgrounds.
- get in public buildings like hospitals, town halls, libraries, and sports halls.
- Communicate with the local administration in person, by phone or online.

3. OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS

3.1 Objectives

The overarching message that the award scheme aims to communicate to the local level is that people have a right to live in and visit urban areas in the EU where products, services, public spaces and buildings, transport, communication, and leisure activities should be accessible to all. Cities should therefore strive to improve access to the rights of their citizens and visitors, including those with disabilities, by enhancing accessibility.

In that sense, the Access City Award (ACA)'s aim is to boost accessibility at city level by:

- raising awareness,
- sharing experiences,
- highlighting good practices,
- illustrating synergies with other EU priorities,

on accessibility in cities and in underlining the important role of the local level in achieving UNCRPD implementation.

3.2 Expected results

Participating in the Access City Award is an opportunity for cities to gain European recognition and a unique chance to review their current situation in terms of accessibility and their commitment with their citizens with disabilities. It also allows to share experiences with other European cities, which helps to become an even better city to live in and visit.

The winning city and the two runners-up will receive a financial prize that will help to further improve accessibility in their city. Applicants may also be awarded with a Special Mention if they have done exceptional work in a particular area. The Access City Award 2026 may also award a Special Mention to a city that focuses on developing accessibility in housing to ensure persons with disabilities can live with dignity and fully participate in society and economy on equal basis with others.

4. ACCESS CITY AWARD (ACA)

The European Commission intends to select the winner of the Access City Award (ACA 2026) title following an EU-wide competition.

The award is open to cities of over 50 000 inhabitants (at administrative and political level) in one of the EU Member States. In Member States with less than two such cities, urban areas composed of two or more towns may also participate if their combined population exceeds 50 000 inhabitants.

The outcome of the selection process of the European Access City Award is to award the Access City Award 2026 title to the winning city and to award the second and third place winners. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize will receive a financial support as explained in section 5 below.

Applicants may also be awarded with a Special Mention if they have done exceptional work in a particular area (e.g., built environment and public space; mobility, transport, and related infrastructure; information and communication, including ICT; or public facilities and services). The European Commission also intends to award a Special Mention for 'Accessibility in Housing' to a city that demonstrates how they feature accessibility for persons with disabilities in housing.

It is important to note that **Special Mentions do not include a financial support. To that end, the call for submission of entries for the Access City Award 2026 is also to be seen as the rules of competition for awarding the prize** ⁽⁹⁾.

The title of winner (1st prize) of this year's edition of Access City Award, including the award of 2nd and 3rd prize winners and Special Mention(s), if any, corresponds for the year 2026 ('title year').

The present rules of competition are established and published by the European Commission, which will launch and manage the competition with the support of the external Access City Award Secretariat ('ACA Secretariat'). The financial support will be managed solely by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers.

5. AVAILABLE BUDGET

Since the 10th anniversary of the Award (ACA 2020), the **European Commission awards a financial support** of a total of EUR 350 000. This total amount will be allocated as follows:

- **1st prize:** EUR 150 000
- **2nd prize:** EUR 120 000
- **3rd prize:** EUR 80 000

The financial support for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize winners is to be awarded in year 2025 ('award year') following the procedure and based on the criteria set out in sections 6 and 7 below. Further information on the payment of the financial support and its requirements are laid down in section 8.1 of this document.

6. PROCEDURE AND CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE ACCESS CITY AWARD 2026

The title of winner (1st prize) of the Access City Award 2026, including the award of 2nd and 3rd prize winners and Special Mention(s), if any, will be awarded following a competition between applicant

⁹ The proposed financial support will follow the rules on prizes as set out in [Financial Regulation 2024/2509](#) applicable to the general budget of the Union (Title IX, Articles 209 and 2010).

cities. The first-place winner is the sole winner of the Access City Award 2026 title.

The eligibility, admissibility and exclusion criteria for entering the competition are explained below, as well as the indicative timing and the roles of the National and European Juries.

The application period for the Access City Award 2026 competition will run **from 19 June 2025 to 9 September 2025**.

6.1 Admissibility and documents

Candidate cities are invited to comply with the following formal requirements when drafting their application. Applications that do not follow these requirements at preselection stage shall not be examined further:

- Applications must be submitted electronically via the online application form by the **deadline of 9 September 2025, 23:59 CEST (GMT+2)**. The application form can be accessed via the Access City Award website: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/disability/access-city-award_en
- Paper format applications are **not** accepted.
- The full application must be written in one of the official languages of the European Union. No other languages will be accepted. However, submission of the application in English is encouraged for the smooth and timely running of the assessment of the applications.
- Each candidate must answer to all questions and must complete all sections of the **application form (see Annex I)**. If a question cannot be answered, reasons should be given.
- Applications shall adhere to the word limits indicated per section. Any words above the specified limits will not be considered and may leave application responses incomplete.
- For candidate cities to fill in the sections in the application form correctly, and describe their activities successfully, the **ACA Guidance Note for applicants (Annex II)** should be read in conjunction with the Application form for the Access City Award 2026.
- The signatory of the application should be the mayor or highest-ranking city representative authorised, by national law, to legally represent the city.
- Applications must be complete and contain the application form (Annex I), as well as the following annexes:
 - 1) **Mayoral Declaration** (Annex III), signed by the mayor or the highest-ranking City Representative, authorised by national law to legally represent the city/urban area (**mandatory**)
 - 2) **Declaration on Honour** (Annex IV) (**mandatory**)
 - 3) **Legal Entity Form** (LEF, see Annex V), (**mandatory**)
 - 4) **Financial Identification Form** (FIF, see Annex VI) (**mandatory**).
 - 5) A **ten-slide PowerPoint presentation** in order to illustrate and highlight the strong points of their application (**optional**)

The uploaded files must fulfil the following requirements:

- can be in the national language(s) of the EU Member State taking part to the competition.

- Maximum size of one file is 10 MB.
- Accepted file formats are doc, docx, rtf, pps, ppsx, ppt, pptx, xls, xlsx, pdf, zip, gif, jpeg, jpg, png.
- Each uploaded document must be appropriately named. The file name should clearly state what the file represents or contains.

Once the application is submitted, a confirmation page appears. Applications will subsequently undergo validation, and applicants will be informed no later than two and a half months following the deadline of submission set out above if their application has been accepted into the competition or not.

Applicant cities may be contacted in case of clerical and/or administrative errors or for missing documents.

6.2 Eligibility criteria

This call for entries to the competition for the Access City Award 2026 is open to the following applicants:

- The submitting body must be a governmental authority of a city of over 50 000 inhabitants (at administrative and political level) in one of the EU Member States. A 'city' is understood to be an urban area, excluding metropolitan areas, larger urban zones, and conurbations, and is understood as an administrative unit governed by a city council or another form of democratically elected governmental body.
- In Member States with less than two such cities/Administrative entities, urban areas composed of two or more towns/Administrative entities may also participate if their combined population exceeds 50 000 inhabitants.
- For population data, Eurostat (2024) will be the source of reference. For countries not covered by Eurostat, the European Commission will perform specific checks when assessing the eligibility criteria and might ask any concerned cities to prove they comply with this requirement.
- **Past 1st place winner cities may not apply for a period of five years** after they held the Access City Award title for a given year¹⁰. Past 2nd and 3rd place winners and cities awarded Special Mentions may still apply for this year's edition.

6.3. Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate¹¹:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)

¹⁰This provision took effect as of November 2019 in occasion of the ACA 2020.

¹¹ See Articles 138 and 143 EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

- guilty of grave professional misconduct¹² (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize)
- intentionally and without proper justification resisted¹³ an investigation, check or audit carried out by an EU authorising officer (or their representative or auditor), OLAF, the EPPO, or the European Court of Auditors.

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that¹⁴:

- during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information
- they were previously involved in the preparation of the call, and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

Applicants must sign the Declaration on Honour (Annex IV) stating that they are not in any of these situations.

12 'Professional misconduct' includes, in particular, the following: violation of ethical standards of the profession; wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility; breach of generally accepted professional ethical standards; false declarations/misrepresentation of information; participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition; violation of IPR; attempting to influence decision-making processes by taking advantage, through misrepresentation, of a conflict of interests, or to obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain an advantage; incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence or similar activities contrary to the EU values where negatively affecting or risking to affect the performance of a legal commitment.

13 'Resisting an investigation, check or audit' means carrying out actions with the goal or effect of preventing, hindering or delaying the conduct of any of the activities needed to perform the investigation, check or audit, such as refusing to grant the necessary access to its premises or any other areas used for business purposes, concealing or refusing to disclose information or providing false information.

14 See Article 143(1) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

6.4 Indicative timeline

Tasks	Indicative period
Launch of the competition	19 June 2025
Deadline for the applications	9 September 2025 23:59 CEST
Evaluation by the National Juries	Mid-September/Beginning October 2025
Evaluation by the European Jury (and consensus meeting)	October 2025
Announcement of finalists	Beginning of November 2025
Access City Award Ceremony (and announcement of winners)	5 December 2025

7. EVALUATION AND AWARD PROCESS

7.1. ACA Juries: National and European Juries

The members of the National and European Juries will:

- Have the task to assess the cities' applications. The assessment will include qualitative evaluations, and a peer review of each application based on the award criteria specified in section 7.3 below.
- Have equal status and will take decisions by consensus. The role of the chairperson will be to coordinate the work of the correspondent jury.
- Carry out their task pro bono, while being supported by the ACA Secretariat.

The members of the National and European Juries are individuals appointed in personal capacity and act independently and in the public interest. Individuals appointed in a personal capacity must disclose any circumstances that could give rise to a conflict of interest by submitting a 'Declaration of absence of conflict of interests and confidentiality' before they perform their assessments.

7.1.1. National Juries

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, through their contractor, will set up National Juries, along with the European Disability Forum, in the EU Member States of each applicant city.

The National Jury members have the task to assess the applications submitted by their national cities. Each member of the National Jury will perform their task remotely.

The aim of each National Jury is to select minimum one and maximum two cities (called national candidates), among the national applicants. They will communicate the shortlisted cities to the ACA Secretariat. The National Jury's tasks are set out in section 7.2.1

The National Juries will establish a shortlist of applicant cities that will be evaluated by the European Jury.

The National Juries are composed of a minimum of three and a maximum of five members with different areas of experience related to accessibility:

- 1) One representative of the national administration responsible for disability policy and / or accessibility matters,
- 2) One representative of the National Disability Council,
- 3) One independent accessibility expert,
- 4) One expert for aging population.
- 5) One chairperson (if not member of one of the four above-mentioned categories),

7.1.2. The European Jury

The shortlisted national cities that are admitted to the second phase of the competition will be assessed by the European Jury. The European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers will appoint the European Jury members.

The European Jury will further assess the shortlisted cities.

The European Jury will designate, by consensus, the winner (first place), the second and the third place as well as the cities that will be awarded with a Special Mention, if any. Their deliberation will be based on the assessment report received by the National Juries. The Jury's tasks are set out in section 7.2.2

The European jury will be composed of a minimum of seven and a maximum of nine members. They will represent the European Commission, organisations representing persons with disabilities and aging population and the Access City Award's fields of expertise, as follows:

- 1) Expert on the built environment and public spaces,
- 2) Expert on transport and related infrastructure,
- 3) Expert on information and communication, including new information and communication technologies (ICT),
- 4) Expert on public facilities and services,
- 5) European Disability Forum,
- 6) Age Platform Europe,
- 7) One chairperson (if not member of one of the six above-mentioned categories),
- 8) The Commission will also appoint at least 1 Commission official to be part of the European Jury.

The members of the European Jury will meet in Brussels or online at the latest one month prior to the Award Ceremony for the consensus meeting which might take place online at the decision of the European Commission.

The European Jury members must also have a proficiency level in English.

7.2. Selection and Evaluation process

At a first stage, the ACA Secretariat shall check the received applications on the formal and legal requirements as set out in section 6 above. Applications that do not meet these requirements shall not be examined further and will be excluded from the competition.

For those eligible applications, the evaluation and selection process take place in two phases:

- 1) First assessment and **pre-selection** at the national level, by the National Juries, and a
- 2) Second and **final selection** at the European level, by the European Jury.

The selection of the cities to be awarded with the title of Access City Award 2026 is assessed on the basis of a standard set of evaluation criteria to ensure consistency, transparency and equity in the process. The criteria used and their weight are specified in section 7.3. below.

7.2.1. Pre-selection

The pre-selection phase will be carried out by National Juries. These Juries will be established in each Member State where cities have applied to the ACA competition.

Based on the award criteria specified in section 7.3. below, a shortlist of applications, composed by minimum one and maximum two cities per Member State (defined as national candidates), will be designated by the National Juries and submitted to the European level, to be assessed and selected by the European Jury.

Applicant cities that do not obtain at least 60 points when evaluated by the correspondent National Jury, will not be considered for the pre-selection to the European level of the competition.

Non-shortlisted cities will be informed about the outcome of the evaluation of their application.

7.2.2. Final Selection

The European Jury will assess the shortlisted cities by the National Juries based on the award criteria specified in section 7.3 below. Out of those pre-selected national candidates, the European Jury selects the Access City Award winner and the second and third prize winners, which will be awarded with a financial support, as specified in sections 4 and 5 above.

In addition, the European Jury may decide to award one or several further “Special Mention(s)”, depending on:

- if they have done exceptional work in a particular key area of accessibility. For example, in one (or more) of the core areas of the Access City Award (built environment and public space; mobility, transport, and related infrastructure; information and communication, including ICT; or public facilities and services), or
- the current context and the cities’ related projects/policies, or
- Other specific highlights of the applications (for example, on smart cities, access to cultural heritage, accessibility for persons with intellectual disabilities, etc.).
- For this year’s edition, accessibility in housing will be a topic for consideration.

The European Commission also intends to award a Special Mention for ‘Accessibility in Housing’ to a city that demonstrates how they feature accessibility in housing.

The National Juries' assessment of the shortlisted cities is presented to the European Jury in the form of an assessment report, prior to the European Jury consensus meeting and serves as a background document for the final deliberation of the European Jury.

All cities will be informed about the outcome of the evaluation of their application. Any feedback provided to candidates is not made publicly available and is for the use of the relevant city only and will only be provided at the discretion of the European Commission.

7.2.3. European Jury Deliberation

The members of the European Jury will meet in Brussels or online at the latest one month prior to the Award Ceremony ⁽¹⁵⁾. The European Jury will designate, by consensus, the winner, the second and the third-place winner cities, as well as the cities to be awarded with Special Mention(s), if any. Their deliberation will have to take the form of a consensus report and will be consider the assessment reports received from the National Juries. This consensus report will have to be signed by each European Jury member.

7.2.4. Award stage

The winner (1st prize) of the European Access City Award 2026, along with the 2nd and 3rd prize winner cities and those awarded with Special Mention(s), if any, will officially be announced at the Access City Award Ceremony, that will take place in Brussels, on **5 December 2025**.

7.3. Award Criteria

Both National and European Jury members will assess the candidate cities based on the following award criteria:

1) Relevance to the objectives

The applicant shall provide a description of actions, policies, and initiatives – whether already implemented or at the planning stage – in all four key areas of accessibility:

- a. the built environment and public spaces.
- b. transportation and related infrastructures.
- c. information and communication, including information and communication technologies (ICT).
- d. public facilities and services.

The successful applicant has to demonstrate a coherent approach to accessibility across all four areas and an ambitious vision in tackling accessibility in the city.

2) Ownership, level of commitment

Applicants should outline the structures or framework set up in the city's administration to implement accessibility actions. **The application has to demonstrate that the actions implemented or planned are part of a coherent strategy or policy framework, rather than just *ad hoc* projects.** The accessibility strategy must be mainstreamed in the city's policies and its regulations. A policy statement/commitment on accessibility at high level of responsibility must

¹⁵Please see the indicative timeline in section 6.4 above.

be visible. Information about appropriate resources (staff, budget, etc.) allocated to implement these policies should be provided. Considerations of cost of accessibility must be combined with an assessment of the expected benefits.

3) Impact

The city's policies/initiatives shall have a demonstrable positive impact on the everyday life of persons with disabilities, and on the overall quality of life in the city. Examples of initiatives initially targeting persons with disabilities shall be provided, explaining how they benefit wider parts of the population, when relevant. The applicants shall include qualitative and quantitative data to support claims of success and provide concrete examples. It is important to mention project(s) – if any – involving persons with intellectual disabilities. Planned initiatives and policies will be assessed on the basis of their coherence and potential impact.

4) Quality and sustainability of results

Applicants shall explain what structures, mechanisms and processes have been put in place to ensure the quality and sustainability of the results achieved. **The quality of results is defined in terms of improvements made to the level of accessibility and advancing compliance with standards and legislation.** Delivering sustainable results requires continuous efforts, secure resources, and the establishment of a sound structure; evaluation and monitoring mechanisms (for regular checking, the notification and repairing of problems, the handling of complaints, etc.) are essential to evaluate success.

5) Involvement of persons with disabilities and relevant partners

Active and clear involvement of persons with disabilities, their representative organisations, and accessibility experts must be demonstrated in the planning, implementation and maintenance of city's policies and initiatives aimed at increased accessibility. The applicants shall also outline how they raise awareness around accessibility, whether and how they disseminate, exchange and share experience and good practices with other cities at local, regional, national and/or European level.

Criterion	Maximum number of points
1. Relevance to the objectives	20
2. Ownership, level of commitment	20
3. Impact	20
4. Quality and sustainability of results	20
5. Involvement of persons with disabilities and relevant partners	20
Total	100

8. OTHER CONDITIONS

8.1. Payment arrangement

The winners of the competition will be announced at the Access City Award Ceremony (see section 7.2.4). A formal notification letter will be sent to the awarded cities after the ceremony. Once confirmation of receipt by the corresponding cities, the financial support will be then awarded through bank transfer after the announcement and designation of the winning cities at the official Award Ceremony.

The payment of the amount will be settled in one instalment executed within 60 days from the official announcement of the winners.

8.2. Sole liability of contestants

The European Commission and the ACA Secretariat may not be held responsible for any claim relating to the activities carried out in the framework of the Access City Award competition by the contestant. The European Commission shall not be held liable for any damage caused or sustained by any of the contestants, including any damage caused to third parties as a consequence of or during the implementation of the activities related to the competition.

8.3. Communication, dissemination and visibility of funding

Prize winners must promote the prize and its results, by providing targeted information to multiple audiences (including the media and the public) in a strategic and effective manner.

Communication activities related to the prize (including media interviews, press statements, presentations, etc., in electronic form, via traditional or social media, etc.), must acknowledge EU support through the Access City Award, and display the European flag and funding statement (translated into local languages, where appropriate).

Any communication or dissemination activity related to the prize must use factually accurate information.

8.4. Checks, audits and investigations

Once the authorising officer of the European Commission has established the award decision for the financial support, the contestants accept that the European Commission, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and the European Court of Auditors (ECA) may carry out checks, audits and investigations in relation to the competition and the received financial incentive¹⁶.

¹⁶For the powers of OLAF, EPPO and ECA, see Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 883/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 September 2013 concerning investigations conducted by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1073/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Regulation (Euratom) No 1074/1999 (OJ L 248, 18/09/2013, p. 1), Council Regulation (Euratom, EC) No 2185/1996 of 11 November 1996 concerning on-the-spot checks and inspections carried out by the Commission in order to protect the European Communities' financial interests against fraud and other irregularities (OJ L 292, 15/11/1996, p. 2), Council Regulation (EU) 2017/1939 of 12 October 2017 implementing enhanced cooperation on the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office ('the EPPO') and Article 287 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) and Article 263 of EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509.

8.5. Processing of personal data and rights of use

The European Commission is bound by Regulation 2018/1725¹⁷ on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions and bodies. The financial information that is needed comprise the duly signed Legal Entity Form of the City and the Financial Identification Form.

Personal data contained as part of the submitted application form shall be processed in accordance with the regulations in place. Contestants may, on written request, gain access to their personal data and correct any information that is inaccurate or incomplete (see section 11 below for contact details).

The European Commission shall be authorised to publish or to refer to, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, the following information:

- The name of the winning city,
- The amount of the financial incentive awarded,
- The subject of the award.

By submitting the application, all applicants accept that the European Commission will publish information on the finalists and winners.

In accordance with Article 38 of the EU Financial Regulation (2024/2509) the information about EU prizes awarded and the winners is published each year on the Europa website for transparency. The publication can exceptionally be waived (on reasoned and duly substantiated request), if there is a risk that the disclosure could jeopardise your rights and freedoms under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or harm your commercial interests.

The awarding authority has the right to use non-sensitive information relating to the prize and materials and documents received from the winners (such as pictures or audio-visual material, in paper or electronic form) for information, communication, dissemination and publicity purposes.

Photos and videos taken by the European Commission either in preparation of the award ceremony or during the award ceremony are the sole property of the European Commission.

8.6. Applicable law and competent jurisdiction

Regarding the award and payment of the financial incentive, the Law of the Union applies. The competent court or arbitration tribunal to hear disputes in the General Court of the Court of Justice of the European Union: General Court, Rue du Fort Niedergrünwald L-2925 Luxembourg Tel: (352) 4303-1, Fax: (352) 4303 2100, E-mail: GC.Registry@curia.europa.eu.

17 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32018R1725&qid=1547993085271>

9. MODIFICATION OR CANCELLATION OF THE COMPETITION, WITHDRAWAL OF THE PRIZE AND RECOVERY OF UNDUE AMOUNTS

The awarding authority may modify or cancel the contest or decide not to award the prize without any obligation to compensate participants (e.g. no applications, jury cannot determine winner, winner is not eligible or must be excluded, objectives have already been achieved, etc). In this case, you will be informed via a call update.

The European Commission may withdraw the prize after its award and recover all payments made, if it finds out that:

- false information, fraud or corruption was used to obtain it
- the prize winners were not eligible or should have been excluded or
- the prize winners are in serious breach of their obligations under these Rules of Contest.

10. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The application process and the work of the National and European Juries are facilitated by the ACA Secretariat, which is run by Ecorys Europe EEIG. The ACA Secretariat also assists with PR activities related to the award scheme through the ACA website and through various communication channels such as brochures, social media, film clips, etc.

11. CONTACT

For questions related to the Access City Award, please contact the ACA Secretariat to the following e-mail address: secretariat@accesscityaward.eu and the European Commission at: JUST-EDPD-ACA@ec.europa.eu.

12. ANNEXES

- I. Application form
- II. Guidance Note
- III. Mayoral declaration
- IV. Declaration on honour
- V. Legal Entity Form (LEF)
- VI. Financial Identification Form

