



EUROPEAN SUSTAINABILITY AWARD

Rules of Contest

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1 BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Background

On 25 September 2015, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda, the "[2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)". Each of the 17 goals has specific targets (169 targets in total) to be achieved by 2030.

In November 2016, the Commission adopted its Communication "[Next steps for a sustainable European future](#)", in response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Achieving the 2030 Agenda is a shared responsibility. Individuals; businesses; academia; civil society; local, regional, national, European and international public and private organisations must work together: all have a role to play towards realizing this agenda. Also small-scale projects and individual acts can contribute to change for the better.

This is why the Communication "Next steps for a sustainable Europe"¹ announced that a European Sustainability Award will be granted annually to "recognize initiatives with a transformative contribution to the global 2030 Agenda implementation".

Europe can learn from some of its greatest innovators, mobilizers and communicators and celebrate achievements being made in every corner of the European Union.

The Commission has set up an [SDG multi-stakeholder platform](#), which will help the Commission in the selection process of the European Sustainability Award².

Objectives pursued

The ambition of this Award scheme is clear: to raise awareness of the SDGs in the EU by giving a human face to the efforts and creativity of European people, businesses and organizations, which are turning the global sustainable development goals into concrete solutions and opportunities.

The specific objectives of the European Sustainability Award are:

- to recognize initiatives in the European Union with a transformative contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- to promote further development of initiatives in the European Union focusing on sustainable development, including an increasing awareness and involvement of citizens and stakeholders in the European Union;
- to identify initiatives able to act as "sustainability ambassadors" for the European Union, in order to encourage others to progress towards better sustainable development outcomes.

¹ COM(2016) 739

² COM(2016) 739

The European Sustainability Award builds on the wealth of existing Awards at both national and European levels.

Focus of the 2019 European Sustainability Award

The European Sustainability Award aims at championing inspiring initiatives in the European Union with a transformative contribution to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Given the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs, the European sustainability Award focuses on a certain theme, linked to the theme adopted for the UN High Level Political Forum of the United Nations.

For 2019 the theme is “**Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality**” which refers to a cluster of SDGs: SDG4 on quality education, SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, SDG 10 on reduced inequalities, SDG 13 on climate action, SDG 16 on peace justice and strong institutions, and SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals.

Even if the theme is specific and includes a cluster of goals, initiatives which apply for the European Sustainability Award will have to respect the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs and address the three dimensions of sustainable development (Environmental, Economic, Social).

The Award

The European sustainability Award is a prestigious recognition for all who incorporate the principle of sustainability into their daily activities, operations and practices. The Award is immaterial and brings high visibility in the form of renewed public interest and increased media coverage.

2 RULES OF PARTICIPATION

1. The application process will be open to 4 stakeholder categories: (1) Public bodies, (2) Private bodies, (3) Civil society; and (4) Youth organisations. For the first three categories, sub-categories are foreseen to ensure the principle of diversity among Award winners.

For the purpose of the Award, the 4 stakeholder categories are defined as follows:

- a. **Public bodies** are defined as (i) **subnational legal public entities**, i.e. public institutions with legal personality, below the level of central government (e.g. regions; cities; local authorities, public universities and research institutes) **or** (ii) **associations of subnational legal public entities**, i.e. umbrella organisations based on membership and representativeness of sub-national public legal entities.

Given that applicants can be substantially different in nature and size, a distinction is being made between:

- (associations of) subnational legal public entities reaching a population above 100.000 individuals; and
- (associations of) subnational legal public entities reaching a population equal to/under 100.000 individuals.

b. **Private bodies**

Given that applicants can be substantially different in size, a distinction is being made between:

- **Micro, small or medium-sized enterprise** (SMEs) as defined in Recommendation No 2003/361/EC³, i.e. enterprises which (i) engage in an economic activity (including, in particular, self-employed persons and family businesses engaged in craft or other activities, and partnerships or associations regularly engaged in an economic activity); (ii) employ fewer than 250 persons (expressed in 'annual working units') and (iii) have an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million.
- **Large Enterprises**, all enterprises which do not qualify as a micro, small or medium-sized enterprise.

c. **Civil Society/'Non-profit organisations'**, i.e. entities whose members serve the general interest through a democratic process. These entities are non-profit-making or have a legal or statutory obligation not to distribute profits to their shareholders or members.

d. **Youth organisations** are defined as non-governmental, non-profit organisations (associations, clubs or movements) that have been set up to serve young people, including through the representation of their rights and interests.

2. Submitted projects/initiatives can **only** cover activities taking place (i) **inside the European Union** (at national level or at cross border level between Member States of the European Union) except for applications from the civil society, who can also submit projects/initiatives taking place **outside the European Union** (at local or global level). All applicants must be based/registered in a Member State of the European Union.
3. Submitted projects/initiatives must be **completed**.
4. Submitted projects/initiatives must address all **three dimensions** of sustainable development (Environmental, Economic and Social).

³ Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (notified under document number C(2003) 1422), Official Journal of the European Union L 124, 20.5.2003, p. 36.

5. A total of 7 Awards will be attributed in the 2019 edition of the European Sustainability Award:

Award Category description	Number of Awards
Public body: subnational legal public entities reaching a population above 100.000 individuals Project/initiative must take place inside the European Union	1
Public body: subnational legal public entities reaching a population equal to/under 100.000 individuals Project/initiative must take place inside the European Union	1
Private body: SME Project/initiative must take place inside the European Union	1
Private body: Large enterprise Project/initiative must take place inside the European Union	1
Civil Society/Non-profit organisation: Project/initiative taking place inside the European Union	1
Civil Society/Non-profit organisation: Project/initiative taking place outside the European Union	1
Youth organisations Project/initiative must take place inside the European Union	1
Total number of awards	7

6. The Commission may exclude participants which are in one of the situations referred to in Article 106(1) and Article 107 of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the Union and its rules of application⁴. This includes inter alia participants which are in one of the following situations:
- bankrupt, being wound up, having their affairs administered by the courts, entered into an arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or subject to any other similar proceedings or procedures under national law (including persons with unlimited liability for the participant's debts).
 - declared in breach of social security or tax obligations by a final judgment or decision (including persons with unlimited liability for the participant's debts).

⁴ Regulation (EU, EURATOM) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002, Official Journal of the European Union L 298, 26.10.2012, p. 1.

- found guilty of grave professional misconduct by a final judgment or decision (including persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control).
 - convicted of fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control).
 - shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under a procurement contract, grant agreement or grant decision financed by the European Union or the Euratom budget (including persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control).
 - found guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No 2988/95⁵.
7. Participants may also be excluded if they:
- have misrepresented information required for participating in the contest or fail to submit such information.
 - were involved in the preparation of the award documents and if this entails a distortion of competition.
8. The European Sustainability Award shall respect the principles of transparency and equal treatment and shall promote the achievement of policy objectives of the Union.

3 APPLICATION PROCESS

1. SUBMISSION:

Applications must be sent to the dedicated functional mailbox of the Secretary General (SG-STAKEHOLDERPLATFORM-SDG@ec.europa.eu).

Applications must be readable, accessible and printable.

Applications may be filled in and followed up by any representative actor of the participant. However, the submitted application requires the signature of a senior representative of the applying organisation.

2. LANGUAGE:

Applications must be completed in one of the official languages of the European Union. However, to facilitate the handling, analysis and comparison of applications; applicants are invited to submit their applications in English.

⁵ Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2988/95 of 18 December 1995 on the protection of the European Communities financial interests, Official Journal of the European Union L 312, 23.12.1995, p. 1.

3. STRUCTURE:

The application must obligatory include an eligibility section (Part A), an executive summary (Part B) and a proposal (Part C).

Under **Part A**, the eligibility section, the applicant is invited to (i) indicate the category for which he/she applies; (ii) the Member State of the European Union in which he/she is registered/based and (iii) confirm that the submitted project/initiative is completed, and (iv) confirm that the submitted project/initiative addresses all three dimensions of sustainable development (Environmental, Economic and Social) and is in line with the 2019 theme of the European Sustainability Awards.

Under **Part B**, the applicant is invited to present an executive summary describing the project's/initiatives' context, relevance, effectiveness, transferability and partnership approach, as well as the motivation behind the application. The total page limit for the Executive Summary is 2 pages (1000 words).

Under **Part C**, the proposal, the applicant is invited to describe the project/initiative that is being submitted. Part C consists of 5 sections:

1. Context: Description of the project/initiative;
2. Relevance: Evidence that the project/initiative made a transformative contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
3. Effectiveness: Evidence that the project/initiative brought about (behavioural) change;
4. Transferability: Evidence that the output is transferable and applicable to other projects/initiatives;
5. Partnership: Evidence that the project/initiative was carried out in a partnership/collaboration.

The total page-limit for Part C is 20 pages (10 000 words).

Optional: Applicants can include samples/examples of their project deliverables to support the claims made in the application (e.g. presentations, videos, graphic materials, websites; documents etc.). These supporting documents can be submitted in all languages of the European Union. It should be noted however that the application will be judged upon the quality of the application itself (part A, B and C) and not of the supporting documents; all relevant information should thus be included in the application itself (part A, B and C).

Applicants may be asked at a later stage for further documents (e.g. declaration of honour on exclusion grounds (see section 2, paragraph 10), etc.).

Annex 1 provides further clarification on the expected structure of the applications.

4 SELECTION PROCESS

An **evaluation committee** chaired by the Secretariat-General of the European Commission and composed of EU officials working in the field of sustainability will carry out a first **eligibility screening** to ensure that applications fulfil the necessary requirements as set out in section 2 of the present rules of contest (see also part A of the application).

After the eligibility screening, there will be a **two-stage selection process**.

- During a **pre-selection** stage, the evaluation committee will evaluate each application's executive summary (part B of the application) and proposal (part C of the application), as elaborated upon in section 3 and Annex 1. The evaluation committee will prepare a **shortlist of outstanding applications** per category. The exact number of shortlisted applications will be determined by the evaluation committee. The pre-selection evaluation is planned to take place between October and November 2018 (indicative).
- **A Jury will then decide on the winners based on the shortlist prepared by the evaluation committee.** The Jury will choose the winners based on unanimity. In case no unanimity can be reached, the Commission representative in the Jury will choose the winners amongst the preferred applicants of the other Jury members. The Jury evaluation is planned to take place between November and December 2018 (indicative).
The Commission, after consultation of the SDG multi-stakeholder platform, will nominate the Jury, the composition of which ensures that all three dimensions of sustainability are adequately represented. The Jury will consist of four people chosen from representatives of members of the SDG multi-stakeholder platform and possibly also from external distinguished SDG experts. The Secretariat-General of the Commission will act as the chair of the Jury. In total, the Jury will thus be composed of five people.

The **winners** of the 2019 European Sustainability Award will be announced during a Ceremony held in Brussels beginning of 2019 (indicative).

Indicative Timeline	
Opening of submissions	June 2018
Closing date for submissions	14 September 2018
Pre-selection deadline (Pre-selection panel)	October – November 2018
Selection deadline (Jury)	November – December 2018
Award ceremony	Beginning 2019

5 OBLIGATIONS OF THE WINNERS

By applying to the European Sustainability Award 2019, the Winners agree to carry out the benefits and responsibilities associated with the Award. Specifically:

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

2. Winners should agree to meet during 2019 for several (1 to 4) European Union related sustainability events (e.g. Award ceremony, meetings of the multi-stakeholder platform, etc.)⁶.

3. Unless the Commission requests or agrees otherwise or unless it is impossible, any communication activity by the winners related to the awarded project/initiative (including in electronic form, via social media, etc.) must (i) display the European Union emblem in a prominent position and (ii) include the following text close to the organisation logo: “Winner of the European Sustainability Award 2019”. When displayed together with another logo, the European Union emblem must have appropriate prominence. For the purposes of their obligations, the Winners may use the European Union emblem without first obtaining approval from the Commission. This does not, however, give them the right to exclusive use. Moreover, they may not appropriate the European Union emblem or any similar trademark or logo, either by registration or by any other means. Winners agree the proper use of the European Sustainability Award logo.

4. All winners will provide the Commission with a short video describing its project/initiative in an attractive way⁷. The Commission will be allowed to use those videos for the promotion of the Award. More generally, the winners grant to the Commission the right to use, for its communication and publicising activities, information relating to the project/initiative, documents and in particular executive summaries as well as any other material, such as pictures or audio-visual material, received from the participants (including in electronic form).

The Commission will publish the name of the winners, the name of their Member State of origin, the nature of the project/initiative and its purpose.

The Commission will promote the winners’ projects/initiatives through its regular and ad hoc media channels, events, etc.

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

6 OTHER CONDITIONS

6.1 PERSONAL DATA

Any personal data will be processed by the Commission under Regulation No 45/2001⁸.

All winners consent that the Commission publishes the following information:

- Name

⁶ For non-profit organisations (including youth organisations), travel expenses will be covered by the European Union.

⁷ For non-profit organisations, the Commission Communication services may be able to assist with the creation of a short video.

⁸ Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data, Official Journal of the European Union L 8, 12.1.2001, p. 1.

- Member State of origin (address)
- The nature of the project/initiative and its purpose

6.2 CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The participants must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective Award of the prize is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests').

They must inform the Commission without delay of any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interests and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation.

The Commission may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline.

6.3 LIABILITY FOR DAMAGES

The Commission shall not be held liable for any damage caused or sustained by any of the participants, including any damage caused to third parties as a consequence of or during the implementation of the activities related to the contest.

6.4 WITHDRAWAL OF THE PRIZE

The Commission may withdraw the prize after its Award, if it finds out that:

- (a) false information, fraud or corruption was used to obtain it;
- (b) a winner was not eligible or should have been excluded;
- (c) a winner is in serious breach of its obligations under these Rules of Contest.

6.5 ADMINISTRATIVE SANCTIONS

If a participant has committed irregularities or fraud or has made false declarations, the Commission may also exclude the participant from all future contracts, grants and contests financed from the European Union or Euratom budget for a maximum of five years.

6.6 CANCELLATION OF THE CONTEST

The Commission may cancel the contest or decide not to give any Award — without any obligation to compensate participants, if:

- (a) no applications are received;
- (b) the jury does not find a winner;
- (c) the winner is not eligible or must be excluded; or
- (d) the objective of the contest has already been achieved.

7 CONTACT

For more information, please see the Award website

https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/international-strategies/global-topics/sustainable-development-goals/multi-stakeholder-platform-sdgs_en

In case of questions, please contact SG-STAKEHOLDERPLATFORM-SDG@ec.europa.eu.

ANNEX 1: APPLICATIONS – TEMPLATE and GUIDELINES

Your application must contain the following information:

Section A: Eligibility section (mandatory)

Please indicate for which of the below categories you are applying and substantiate where appropriate (please select only one option):

This application is made as:

☐ **Public body:** (association of) subnational legal public entities reaching a population above 100.000 individuals. Project/initiative must take place inside the European Union

or

☐ **Public body:** (association of) subnational legal public entities reaching a population equal to/under 100.000 individuals. Project/initiative must take place inside the European Union

or

☐ **Private body: SME.** Project/initiative must take place inside the European Union

or

☐ **Private body: Large enterprise.** Project/initiative must take place inside the European Union

or

☐ **Non-profit organisation.** Project/initiative taking place inside the European Union

or

☐ **Non-profit organisation.** Project/initiative taking place outside the European Union

or

☐ **Youth organisation.** Project/initiative must take place inside the European Union

Please indicate the registration place of the applicant organisation and provide the relevant supporting documents (e.g. registration extract)

☐ based or registered **in a Member State** of the European Union

or

☐ based or registered in a Member State **outside of the European Union**

Only applicants who are based/registered in a Member State of the European Union are eligible to participate under the present contest.

Please indicate the stage of your project/initiative and substantiate where appropriate:

☐ starting/just started

☐ Ongoing

☐ completed

Only projects which have been completed are eligible to participate under the present contest.

Please confirm that the following elements are covered by your project/initiative and substantiate where appropriate:

☐ the economic, social and environmental dimension of sustainable development;

☐ the theme of the 2019 European Sustainability Award “*Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*” – which refers to a cluster of SDGs: SDG4 on quality education, SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, SDG 10 on reduced inequalities, SDG 13 on climate action, SDG 16 on peace justice and strong institutions, and SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals.

Only projects/initiatives linked to the theme of the 2019 European Sustainability Award, and which cover the three dimensions of sustainable development and which respect the cross-cutting dimension of the SDGs are eligible to participate under the present contest.

Section B: Executive Summary (mandatory)

The total page limit for the Executive Summary is 2 pages (1000 words).

Description and overall story: *Summarise the application in one short statement of why your organisation deserves to be the winner of this Award (maximum of 300 words) in any of the given categories. The executive summary should also shortly describe the project/initiative and its context, relevance, effectiveness, transferability and partnership approach.*

This summary can be used to present the project/initiative on the Award website and for other purposes.

Section C: Proposal (mandatory)

The total page-limit for the application – excluding the executive summary – is 20 pages (10 000 words).

Criterion 1: Context/Description of the project/initiative: *Summarise the project/initiative (concept; implementation; output). Where appropriate, also quote additional information on what makes the project unique.*

Criterion 2: Relevance: *Evidence that the project/initiative made a transformative contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Relevance looks at the relationship between the needs and problems in society and the objective of the project. Describe how the project/initiative corresponds to the SDG objectives and priorities; what outputs it has already delivered and which type of long term impacts are expected.*

Criterion 3: Effectiveness: *Evidence that the project/initiative brought about (behavioural) change: Describe how successful your project/initiative has been in achieving or progressing towards the SDG objectives and bringing about behavioural change. The section should describe the progress made to date and the role of your project in delivering the observed changes. If there are external factors driving or hindering progress these should also be described. Impact related statements should be, where possible, supported by evidence (e.g. independent label, ISO, certificate, audit, etc.).*

Criterion 4: Transferability: *Evidence that the output is transferable and applicable to other projects/initiatives: Describe the extent to which the results of your project/initiative can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings.*

Criterion 5: Partnership: *Evidence that the project/initiative contributes to strengthening partnerships/cooperation: Describe how your project/initiative has contributed to strengthening the commitment to partnership and cooperation needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, in line with SDG 17 on partnerships for the SDGs.*

Section D: Supporting material (optional)

For example, evidence and/or references:

- *Previous Awards*
- *Proof of project implementation/completion*
- *Documentation*
- *Videos/pictures*
- *Survey results*
- *Article*
- *Press releases, online media, printed material, etc.*

It should be noted however that the application will be judged upon the quality of the application itself (section A, B and C) and not of the supporting documents (section D); all relevant information should thus be included in section A, B, C.

