



Athens is the European Capital of Innovation 2018

Lisbon, 6 November 2018

The European Commission is awarding Athens the title of the European Capital of Innovation 2018 with a €1 million prize.

Athens (Greece) is the winner of this year's European Capital of Innovation Awards, funded by the EU research and innovation programme Horizon 2020. The runner-up cities - Aarhus (Denmark), Hamburg (Germany), Leuven (Belgium), Toulouse (France), and Umeå (Sweden) - received €100,000 each. The prize money will be used to scale up local innovation activities and collaborate with other cities.

Carlos **Moedas**, Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, announced the winning city at the Web Summit in Lisbon: *"Cities are beacons of innovation. They act like magnets for talent, for capital, for opportunity. With the European Capital of Innovation, we reward the cities that go the extra mile to test new ideas, technologies and ways to make citizens heard in the way their city is changed"*.

Commissioner **Moedas** added: *"Athens stands out as an example that a city facing many challenges can achieve great things. Through innovation, Athens has found new purpose to turn around the economic and social crisis. It is proof that it's not the difficulties but how you raise yourself above them that matters."*

The City of Athens has placed a lot of importance to innovation and how it can help the local community bring about change and open up to the world. Some of the innovations promoted include:

- The [POLIS²](#) project aimed to revitalise abandoned buildings by providing small grants to residents, small enterprises, creative communities and other civil society groups and bring life to all corners of Athens.
- The renovation of the [Kypseli Public Market](#), a 90-year old historical building with active support of Athens' citizens aims to create a new social entrepreneurship market hosting exhibitions, workshops, theatre shows and other initiatives.
- Making [Serafeio](#), a popular community playground, a host of initiatives like Athens Digital Lab, Open Schools or Athens Culture Net, and a novel events space, following a joint decision by the municipality and the local community.
- The [Curing the Limbo](#) initiative, which gives refugees and migrants the possibility to connect with other residents in order to learn the language, develop new skills, find employment opportunities, and engage in active citizenship.
- The Digital Council, in which the city brought together companies and educational institutions to offer trainings on digital literacy and civic technology trainings as well as promote sustainable innovations like [smart recycling bins](#).
- '[This is Athens](#)' campaign where the city invites volunteers to talk about the city's present and past to some of the record 5 million tourists that visited Athens in 2017.

Background

This year's European Capital of Innovation contest was launched in February 2018 and opened to cities with over 100,000 inhabitants from EU Member States and countries associated to Horizon 2020. Twenty-six cities from sixteen countries applied. The selection of the winner and the five runner-up cities was made by a high-level independent jury of experts from local administrations, universities, businesses and the non-profit sector. The award criteria – experimenting, engaging, expanding, empowering – analyse how cities use innovation and new technologies to respond to societal challenges engage broad local communities in their decision-making processes and improve lives of their citizens.

The competition first took place in 2014. Past winners include Barcelona (2014), Amsterdam (2016) and Paris (2017). The awards are granted under Horizon 2020, the current EU research and innovation programme with a budget of €77 billion (2014-2020). The next edition of the European Capital of Innovation Awards is planned to be launched in the first quarter of 2019.

For More Information

[European Capital of Innovation Awards](#)

[Promotional video of each finalist](#)

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