

Opening Nijmegen European Green Capital.
Odiza Photography

Nijmegen European Green Capital 2018

wondertuin

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"Sustainability must also be fun"

In many Dutch cities, sustainability is actively endorsed. This year, the city of Nijmegen can even name itself European Green Capital 2018. As part of this theme year various events, projects and national and international congresses are organized in the city on the river Waal.

Each year, the European Union awards two big prizes. In 2018, the city of Leeuwarden in the province of Friesland may call itself European Cultural Capital, and the city of Nijmegen may bear the title of European Green Capital 2018. The latter award is a reward for cities excelling in improving and ma-

king sustainable of the living environment and which may serve as a source of inspiration for other cities. To win the prize, each year twenty to thirty European cities enter a competition. "In order to win the title, you must be able to prove that you are on the right track in the fields of twelve aspects, including energy savings and recycling", says project manager Pieter van Ree. "The jury also considers the city's ambitions and the way the candidates interpret the year." So far, the honor was granted to large cities like Stockholm, Hamburg, Copenhagen and Bristol. In 2019 the title will go to Oslo. "Especially German, Scandinavian and Dutch cities perform well in this election. Of old, these coun-

tries have a structured sustainability policy. Regarding size, (175,000 inhabitants) Nijmegen may seem a little out of place, but it won the award partly because of the fact that citizens and companies have started the green movement together. The role of the government is mainly a facilitating one."

EXCELLING

That Nijmegen is excelling in sustainability is shown, among other activities, by various remarkable initiatives. Van Ree mentions a few. "A very fine example of this is the first co-operative wind park in the Netherlands that has been supplying sustainable energy for over 7,000 households since 2016. The co-operation consists of more than 1,000 shareholders. Partly thanks to this wind park, 10% of the total energy consumption is provided by wind and sun. The local waste energy power station supplies electricity to 5,000 households and that will soon be increased to 14,000 houses. No less than 67% of all waste elements is recycled. Since 2008 the city has grown enormously with the expansion to the other side of the river Waal. And yet the city was able to achieve an energy saving of 18%. Mobility is also a great example. On average, the Nijmegen citizen has 1.4 bicycles and several facilities were realized for cycling traffic. For instance the various fast-cycling routes and cycling streets for which even special cycling bridges were constructed. Or the various free bicycle shelters above and under ground. All the city buses run on green gas. During this year, all these green initiatives will be placed in the spotlights so we are able to present our function as a role model in a proper manner."

EVENT CALENDER

The sustainability of Nijmegen is proved, among other initiatives, by means of 120 large and smaller events, varying from international congresses to festivals, durability cafes, lectures, a tree planting day and to special walking and cycling routes. "Sustainability must also be fun, that is why we chose to join in with the festivalization trend", says Van Ree. "During the three-day Wondertuin festival, with which the year was opened, more than 11,000 visitors could attend various performances in and around Museum Het Valkhof. Astronaut André



Pathé CineMec Nijmegen



Stevenskerk. Photography Patrick van Bree



Lindenberg. Photography Thea van den Heuvel



Kuipers, social entrepreneur Teun van der Keuken and writer Jan Terlouw, amongst others, were guest speakers. The year will be closed with a manifestation late December. Then, inhabitants of Nijmegen will be invited to clean up the city together. With this activity they can earn eco-coins which can be exchanged for, for instance, tickets to special shows." In 2018 Nijmegen also has all kinds of events that have a green edition and

also pay extra attention to sustainability. Examples of these are the Go Short Filmfestival, the well-known more-day walking event the Vierdaagse (Four Days Marches) and music events like the Vierdaagsefeesten and Music Meeting.

CONGRESSES

The calendar also includes a number of national and international congresses. "On 12 April the Ports and the City con-

BOOST FOR THE BUSINESS MARKET

For the congresses and events Nijmegen uses various locations in the city. Stadsschouwburg Nijmegen and Concertgebouw De Vereniging, Pathé CineMec Nijmegen, Van der Valk Hotel Nijmegen-Lent and the Stevens church are very usual venues for large receptions. But also used are the wellness hotel Sanadome, film house LUX, cultural centre De Lindenberg, the Schepenhuis in the town hall and the former industrial locations De Vasim and the Honig compound. Besides that, ACBN, organizer of the festivals around the Four Days Marches, has taken on part of the organization of activities. Convention Bureau Gelderland, part of RBT KAN, is also involved in the organization and responsible for the hospitality function. "Our role is to bring the right parties together", says director Herre Dijkema. "We also assist the congress organizers by means of advice and practical information like surveys of accommodations, locations and transport facilities." According to Dijkema the sustainability sector is a powerful niche and that is why the title is an excellent boost for the business market in Nijmegen and the positioning of Nijmegen on the theme of sustainability, circular economy and energy transition. "The province of Gelderland is an inspiring knowledge region in the area of energy and environmental technology and cleantech. Based on that identity the region has been popular for a long time for meetings with a green nature. Because Nijmegen has been elected European Green Capital 2018 we can – as very first in the Netherlands – bear this title for a year. This puts Gelderland in the international showcase of 'green' destinations. And we notice that in the requests."



Burgemeester Hubert Bruls bij de opening van Nijmegen European Green Capital. Odiza Photography



Tree planting day
Photography Bas Govaarts

gress took place. During this congress the European sector for the inland shipping signed, together with the Dutch minister Cora van Nieuwenhuizen, the 'Declaratie van Nijmegen'. With this declaration, the sector strives to reduce the CO₂-emission of the inland shipping activities by 20% by 2030. Other examples are the Circulaire Economie Festival, the Global Green Destination Days (more-day congress on sustainable tourism), the EcoProcura Congress for sustainable, circular and innovative purchasing, but also the IVN members' day." Besides the congresses, European awards will be presented during the Green Capital Week in June. "We then welcome several delegations from candidate cities that will present themselves to the jury. Apart from these, representatives from the European Union, the government and CEOs from various countries will be present. They will be taking part in a symposium and several study visits, among other activities."

PROFILING

The title of European Green Capital has put Nijmegen firmly on the international map. "It is a great way to profile yourself on a global scale. Reports from cities that were awarded the title before,

have proven that the title really has a huge long-term impact. More visitors and sometimes also new companies", says Van Ree. "Moreover, Nijmegen has performed even better than the other title holders, partly thanks to the efforts and engagement of local social organizations.

This year we can welcome various delegations, varying from the Dutch permanent Committee for Economic Affairs from the House of Representatives and the Environmental Committee from the European Parliament to governmental visits from Belgium, Germany, France and Poland. The international press also pays a great deal of attention to the initiatives taken in Nijmegen. "The Swiss as well as the Flemish television have recorded items for the news shows", says Van Ree, "And even the Financial daily newspaper from Brazil visited." But the efforts regarding sustainability will certainly not stop after this year. In 2019 Nijmegen must report to the European Union and after five years a review will be made on what the title has brought the city. Apart from that, the title is an excellent way of drawing the attention to the environment. On the eve of the Climate Conference of Katowice in December this year, the intention is that all former European Green Capitals will make a joint statement. "We are enormously proud that Nijmegen can be part of the sustainable vanguard of European cities. Our message is short but powerful: it is very well possible to reduce the ecological footprint."



Film house Lux