

The motto for Europe's villages is to find "local answers to global challenges"

26 villages from 26 regions in twelve different countries compete for the highly coveted European Village Renewal Award 2018, under the motto "local answers to global challenges". The international and interdisciplinary jury has begun its assessment process – Corona induced with a delay of several month – in the course of a meeting in Prague in early September. In the following weeks and months this process will continue with On-Site-Visits of all the participating locations. The decision is estimated for late spring 2021. When and in which form the awarding ceremony can take place in Hinterstoder (Upper Austria), the last contest's winner, can take place depends from the pandemic development and situation. The most successful participants will be listed in the digital Rural Roadmap containing the best European village and municipality development projects.

"Especially in times when the word crisis appears to paralyze many, it is of immense value that people proactively strengthen the sustainability of their immediate habitat. This is exactly what happens within the villages and municipalities that applied for the 16th European Village Renewal Award", stated the chairman of the European Association for Rural Development and Village Renewal, the former Lower Austrian State Governor Erwin Pröll, on the occasion of the first jury meeting in Prague, Czech Republic. He finds the courage, creativity, persistence and foresight the projects are presented with to be very impressive, and he is certain that these projects will sustainably enhance the economic potential, the ecological quality, the solidarity and the cultural identity of the participating villages.

In prospect: Listing in the digital Rural Roadmap

Organizer of the contest, which has been awarded every other year since 1990, is the European Association for Rural Development and Village Renewal. Aside from the "European Village Renewal Award", which remains reserved for the winning village, awards in Gold, Silver and Bronze and "laudatory recognition" can be obtained as well. In addition to the Trophy and a high-quality enamel plaque successful participants will be listed in the digital Rural Roadmap containing the Europe's best village and municipality development projects.

Within the next weeks and where appropriate in the first third of 2021 the members of the international and interdisciplinary contest-jury will try to visit every single participating location in order to get an idea of the area. The final decision will be taken within the second valuating jury meeting late spring/early summer. When and in which form the awarding ceremony can take place in Hinterstoder (Upper Austria), the last contest's winner, can take place depends from the pandemic.

The jury focuses on the reaction of the community when faced with the strength and weaknesses that arise at the beginning of the developmental process, as well as the reaction to external threats and chances. This concerns the specific actions and projects in the sense of economic development, creation of contemporary social facilities, architecture, settlement development, ecology and energy supply as well as the cultural initiatives and advanced training activities. Just as important, however, are the chosen methods and strategies, which should point out an integrated attempt, orientation towards sustainability, civic involvement, individual initiative and a willingness to cooperate.

"The aim of this contest is to bestow recognition on the commitment of villages and municipalities, to further motivate them and to enhance the exchange of experiences with other rural areas throughout Europe. Additionally, we want to encourage other villages and regions to imitate them, we want to raise public awareness for the importance of rural areas for society as a whole, and we want to enhance the integration of Europe", explains Theres Friewald-Hofbauer, chief executive of the European Association for Rural Development and Village Renewal.

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