



THE NEW HAMBURG HAFENCITY – here shown in a spherical panorama – sets new standards in terms of environmental protection. In 2007 an ecolabel was introduced, and carbon emission targets for heating systems are stricter than anywhere else in town with a limit as low as 89 grams per kilowatt-hour.

Green targets.

EUROPE'S GREEN CAPITAL IN 2011 IS HAMBURG. With an informative approach and ambitious plans for the future, the port plans to make green issues an integral part of the city's everyday life.

"Hamburg is the capital in 2011," the giant posters announce boldly. No false modesty here, certainly. But for once Germany's second largest city is not trying to take Berlin down a peg. Hamburg has in fact been chosen as this year's European capital of the environment.

Inspired by the cultural capital scheme, the European Commission began awarding the new title two years ago. The first city to be given the honour was Stockholm in Sweden. In its second year Hamburg took the lead, competing against 34 major cities including Oslo and Amsterdam. In 2012 the title will pass to the Spanish city of Vitoria-Gasteiz.

When making its selection, the jury takes account of factors like climate protection, traffic and green spaces as well as the way a town manages water supplies, sewage and waste. But whilst the European Green Capital title is a tribute to past achievements, it also places concrete demands on the title holder which must commit itself to implementing the green targets stated in its application. Urban areas have a special responsibility towards protecting the climate, said EU Environment Commissioner Janez Potonik when commenting on the selection of Hamburg. Four out of every five Europeans live in cities, he said, and that is where 80% of carbon dioxide emissions are generated.

However, predominantly industrial cities like Hamburg by no means all give environment and nature conservation issues a high priority rating. According to the city's own estimates, around 40% of its total area is green space. Then there is KlimaCampus, a scheme which provides a joint focus for research on climate change. And over 100 Hamburg-based companies are involved with renewable energy sources. Yet just a few years ago Hamburg hit the headlines, sending out an ecologically negative message with projects like its plan

to build a new coal-fired power station. But the jury also mentioned that the city now has a number of "excellent environmental standards". Although Europe's third largest port and home to over 500 industrial firms, Hamburg's environmental standards rank amongst the highest in Europe. In 2003 it set up an ecological partnership with the business world, and since its formation more than 750 companies have voluntarily optimised work sequences by introducing measures to minimise the impact on resources and the climate. Despite continuous growth, carbon dioxide emissions are now a good 15% lower than they were in 1990, with local transport passenger figures rising from 535 million in 2003 to 638 million in 2008. Other reasons for awarding the title were Hamburg's comparatively low consumption of drinking water, its exemplary waste water treatment facilities and an ambitious schedule for the years ahead. Items on this schedule include not only increasing the proportion of cycle traffic from its current 12% to 18% over the next few years, an effort that is expected to benefit from the citybike rental scheme, but also expanding public transport services as well as cutting carbon dioxide emissions by 80% compared with the 1990 figure by the year 2050.

The image the Green Capital is projecting is a "city learning for tomorrow". To increase awareness levels amongst Hamburg-dwellers and visitors alike, organisers are staging over 200 events, eco-tours and exhibitions including a fair called "goodgoods – Germany's sustainable consumer goods show" and "H2Expo", an exhibition showing new drive technologies. The "Train of Ideas" is a mobile show designed to inspire European neighbours with new ideas for the city of tomorrow. It is scheduled to visit 17 major European cities from April 2011 onwards. ■



EcoPartnership: Project 2011