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Photo contest: “City in the viewfinder”

Federal Environment Agency launches campaign for liveable cities

Whether it is annoying street noise or hazardous particulate matter – constant exposure to it in our cities can lead to health problems. But there is another solution: traffic-calmed pedestrian zones and roads that welcome cyclists and pedestrians; green urban areas as a retreat for people suffering stress and blooming urban gardens instead of concrete jungles. These images are exactly what the Federal Environment Agency (UBA) is looking for in the coming weeks during the “City in the viewfinder” photo contest. Photos depicting innovative ideas and creative examples of environmentally conscious cities are in demand. “Our photo contest is about showing the great potential of liveable inner cities and illustrating the many attractive aspects of life in the city”, said UBA President Jochen Flasbarth.

Without a doubt life in the city is attractive: in addition to the short distances to the workplace, to the day care centre or to the physician's, there is a wealth of cultural and leisure time activities. More and more people are moving to cities, and about 75 per cent of Germany's population today already works and lives in the city – and that figure is on the steady rise. Yet wherever populations grow so does the stress on the individual person and the environment. The noise from cars, trains and airports not only gets on people's nerves, it is more and more frequently making them ill. Noise has been identified as a factor in the increased incidence of cardiovascular diseases. In addition, road traffic is one of the sources of health-damaging particulates. Research by the World Health Organization (WHO) shows that air polluted with particulates reduces average life expectancy in Germany by about 10 months. But cities do not have to be loud and grey, for city gardens in bloom bid its dwellers to come rest, reflect, and play. Seas of cars give way to pedestrians, skaters and cyclists. Old industrial and power plant sites become new locations full of creative and renewable energy. The environment also stands to gain from more people living in cities. Cities handle resources more efficiently than rural areas and consume far less energy per inhabitant. Solid waste and sewage management can also operate more efficiently.

So now it's up to you! What do you especially like about your city? Which creative project, innovative idea, or which inspirational place in the city has made life there liveable? Take a photo of it and let us see! There are no limits to creativity of design. Two photos per contestant can be sent to: stadt_im_sucher@uba.de.

The best entries will be posted on www.umweltbundesamt.de and the UBA Facebook page at www.facebook.com/umweltbundesamt.de and will win attractive prizes. The deadline for entries is 30 September 2013.

For more information about the contest and details about the conditions of participation click here: <http://fuer-mensch-und-umwelt.de/fotowettbewerb-stadt-im-sucher/>.

Further information and links

More information about the thematic priorities "liveable cities" and "noise" is available in the *Schwerpunkte 2013* annual publication of the Federal Environment Agency. You can order or download the publication free of charge at <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien-e/4508.html>.

More information about the EU Year of Air 2013: <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/luft-e/jahr-der-luft-2013.htm>

Dessau-Roßlau, 14 August 2013