

Annual Conference “Independent Retail, Heart of the Community”

Barcelona, 18-19 March 2026

***Géraldine Fages
DG GROW, Retail
European Commission***

European Capitals of Small Retail



Small Retail
BIG IMPACT



CONGRATULATIONS TO BARCELONA,
the 1st Capital of small retail for large
cities!



CONGRATULATIONS also to

Caldas da Rainha (PT) and Silandro (IT)



European Capitals of Small Retail

At a glance

The competition celebrates **small**, **medium**, and **large-sized (3 categories) cities** that have achieved remarkable results and have excellent practices to share in supporting small retailers and maintaining vibrant city centres.

Key objectives

- ❑ showcase exemplary support measures for small retailers;
- ❑ highlight successful digital and green transitions in the retail sector;
- ❑ raise awareness of retail's crucial societal and economic impact;
- ❑ foster knowledge and best practices exchange among local authorities across Europe.

Evaluation criteria

Cities are evaluated on their excellence across **four interconnected criteria**:



Sustainability;



Entrepreneurship support and community engagement;



Digitalisation;



City attractiveness and vitality.

EP Preparatory Action (3M EUR) implemented by the European Commission (DG GROW and EISMEA)

European Capitals of Small Retail 2026, first edition

28 applications received from 13 countries

Award Ceremony event in Brussels , 28 January 2026

where all 9 shortlisted cities pitched in front of the European Jury

Vanguard cities (small-sized cities 5 000 – 50 000 inhabitants)

Makarska (Croatia), Silandro (Italy), Silla (Spain)

Vibrant cities (medium-sized cities 50 000 – 250 000 inhabitants)

Braga (Portugal), Caldas da Rainha (Portugal), Fuenlabrada (Spain)

Visionary cities (large-sized cities with over 250 000 inhabitants)

Barcelona (Spain), Utrecht (the Netherlands), Zaragoza (Spain)



European Capitals of Small Retail 2026

Barcelona (ES), Caldas da Rainha (PT), Silandro (IT)

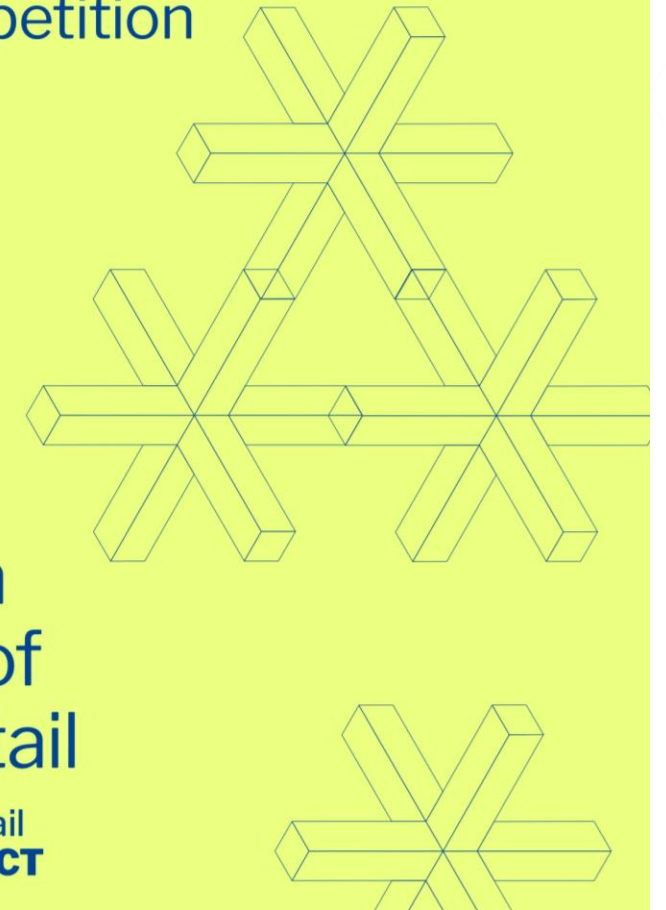
Each winning city will:

- Co-organise a **launch event** in their city (onsite and online) to officially open the title year and raise awareness among media, stakeholders and the retail sector;
Barcelona (28 April TBC), Caldas da Rainha - 26 March, Silandro - 17 April
- Participate in a **Small Retail Exchange Programme** with all finalist cities to share best practices, practical solutions and experiences;
- Organise one **hybrid workshop and up to 3 online webinars** to share good practices on topics such as digital transformation, sustainable retail, community engagement, resilience and collaborative city planning;
- Benefit from a **promotional package** coordinated by the ECoSR Secretariat (digital and traditional media campaigns and targeted communication activities across Europe);
- Receive a professional **promotional video** showcasing their retail ecosystem and vision as European Capital of Small Retail 2026;
- Get dedicated **promotional materials** to highlight their achievements



Geographical coverage of applications received from EU Member States

2026 Competition



European Capitals of Small Retail



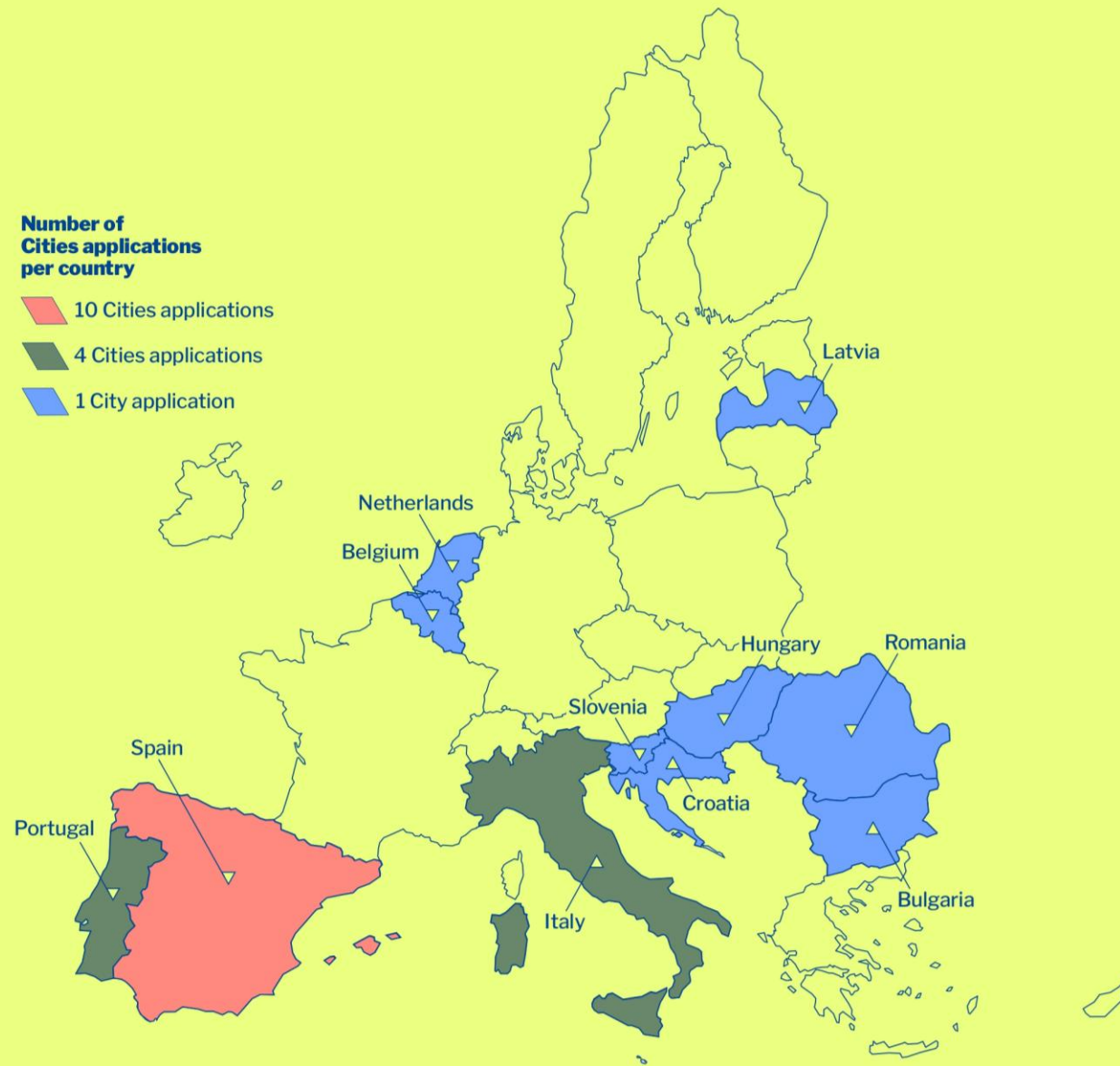
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Number of
Cities applications
per country

10 Cities applications

4 Cities applications

1 City application



+ 2 applications received from SMP countries (Iceland and Armenia)

European Capitals of Small Retail second edition

to select new 3 winning cities - European Capitals of Small Retail 2027

Tentative planning:

May 2026	launch of the call for applications
	outreach activities
June 2026	Information Session I
September 2026	Information Session II
October (TBC)	Deadline for submission of applications
Award Ceremony – end of January /beginning of February 2027	



More information available at:
https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/single-market/services/retail/european-capitals-small-retail-ecosr_en

Stay updated and register to our newsletter:
<https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/eisma/user-subscriptions/8542/create>

#EUCapitalsofSmallRetail

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Joint EC-OECD project on the twin transition of retail SMEs in urban and rural areas

“Local Retail, Global Trends”

How Digital, Green and Skills Shifts in the EU are Reshaping SMEs in Towns and Cities

- **First phase (2023-2025)** completed
- **Second Phase (2025-2027)** will deepen the analysis of the digital transition (AI adoption), provide a Policy Toolkit of best practices and include case-studies of the three European Capitals of Small Retail 2026



Single Market Strategy- May 2025

- Objective is to create a more simple, seamless and strong European home market.
- “One Europe, One Market “
- Relevant issues for retail:
 - Territorial Supply Constraints - TSCs
 - Call for evidence published on 5 March – all languages to come – 4 weeks deadline
 - Public consultation to come in April
 - 4 options proposed to address TSCs
 - Impact assessment – economic study carried out by the Joint Research Centre.
 - Q4/2026
 - Regulatory restrictions
 - Heatmap for MS to remove or reduce retail restrictions – priority on services and notably on retail
 - Guidance on the proportionality of retail restrictions.

Thank you!

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