



European Commission

Florence, Lisbon, Prague EUROPEAN CAPITALS OF CULTURE more than 30 years

What is a European Capital of Culture?

European Capitals of Culture are one of the most recognised EU projects. They started in 1985 on the initiative of the then Greek Minister of Culture Melina Mercouri.

The idea is to put cities at the heart of cultural life across Europe. Through culture and art, European Capitals of Culture improve the quality of life in these cities and strengthen their sense of community. Citizens can take part in the year-long activities and play a bigger role in their city's development and cultural expression.

Being a European Capital of Culture brings fresh life to these cities, boosting their cultural, social and economic development. Many of them, like Lille, Glasgow and Essen, have demonstrated that the title can be a great opportunity to regenerate their urban centres, bringing creativity, visitors and international recognition.

But there is also something for all Europeans: Capitals of Culture highlight the richness of Europe's cultural diversity and take a fresh look at its shared history and heritage. They promote mutual understanding and show how the universal language of creativity opens Europe to cultures from across the world.



The 2017 Capitals

With "Rethink" as its central theme, Aarhus 2017 (Denmark) will show how arts, culture and the creative sector can help us to rethink and shape our basic social, urban, cultural and economic patterns of behaviour and find new solutions to common challenges. A rooftop Viking saga performance, an art exhibition stretching across the city and the coastline, a "Creativity World Forum" and an international children's literary festival are

just some of the many events which will create new ways to build on our shared past.

Pafos 2017 (Cyprus) will embrace its experiences of multiculturalism and the city's geographical proximity to the Middle East and

North Africa to strengthen relations between countries and cultures. "Linking Continents, Bridging Cultures" is the common thread running through hundreds of events which will unite the city and bring citizens, migrants and visitors together through culture. Building on a tradition of thousands of years of cultural life in open spaces, Pafos is set to become an immense open stage, an "Open Air Factory", where cultural actors and citizens can come together to explore contemporary ways of creating and living.

SOME NUMBERS

32 years of European Capitals of Culture

2 European Capitals of Culture each year and (starting in 2021) a **3rd** one every third year in a candidate country or a potential candidate

Being a European Capital of Culture brings real and lasting benefits. It has helped to...

Create Economic Growth

Each euro of public money invested in Mons 2015 (Belgium) is estimated to have generated between 5.5 and 6 euro for the local economy.

Marseille-Provence 2013 (France) attracted a record number of 11 million individual visits.

Pécs 2010 (Hungary) experienced a 27% increase in overnight stays, which rose to 124,000 during its year as European Capital of Culture.

Build a Sense of Community

Through the “Foster the City” programme, inhabitants of Pilsen (2015, Czech Republic) identified public spaces that were in need of improvement, developed an Action Plan for each, chose which projects they wanted to fund and helped implement the improvements themselves, supported by expertise and funding from the ECOC team.

Liverpool 2008 (UK) had nearly 10 000 registered volunteers; all schoolchildren in the city participated in at least one activity during the year.

In Linz 2009 (Austria), local volunteers and students built 900 polythene animals as part of Flut (“The flood”); school workshops spread the message across Upper Austria with a programme called “I Like to Move It, Move It...”. A dozen “Cultural neighbourhoods of the month” across the city set up their own cultural events, generating works in such unusual venues as shop-windows, tunnels under the city, and even a bus route.

Regenerate Cities

Marseille-Provence 2013 (France) transformed itself physically with additions such as the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations. The European Capital of Culture was part of an investment project in new cultural infrastructure of more than €600 million - which was in turn integrated into a multi-billion euro effort to revitalise the city that spanned several decades. Marseille 2013 raised €16.5 million in private sponsorship from 207 companies.

In Košice 2013 (Slovakia), the private sector and local universities worked together to transform an industrial city to highlight creative potential, new cultural infrastructure and establish Košice as a tourist hub for the Carpathian Region.



Did you know that...

... Wrocław 2016 (Poland) attracted one of the biggest investments ever for a European Capital of Culture, with a total of around €615 million?

... when Stavanger (Norway) was European Capital of Culture in 2008, cultural collaborations, co-productions and exchanges took place with more than 50 countries?

... when Brussels was European Capital of Culture in 2000, the city hosted its first Zinneke Parade which – since then – has taken possession of the city streets every two years?

... Pilsen has opened its first incubator for cultural and creative industries “DEPO2015” in a former tram and bus depot?

56 CITIES

European Capitals of Culture from **Athens** in **1985** to **Aarhus & Pafos** in **2017**

- 2018 **Leeuwarden** (Netherlands) and **Valletta** (Malta)
- 2019 **Plovdiv** (Bulgaria) and **Matera** (Italy)
- 2020 **Galway** (Ireland) and **Rijeka** (Croatia)
- 2021 **Timisoara** (Romania) and **Elefsina** (Greece) and **Novi Sad** (Serbia)

6 YEARS

- **Competition** for the title starts at least 6 years in advance, to give bidding cities enough time to:
 - **ENGAGE** with their citizens as well as their cultural, economic and social stakeholders,
 - **DEVELOP** an ambitious programme, fully integrated into their overall development strategy and
 - **HAVE** all new cultural infrastructure projects **READY** for the start of the year.