



European
Commission

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EUROPEAN CAPITALS OF CULTURE

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.

All EU Member States, as well as candidate countries and potential candidates for EU membership and European Free Trade Association/European Economic Area countries participating in the Creative Europe programme can host a European Capital of Culture.



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The 2019 Capitals

Under the motto "Together", the programme for **Plovdiv 2019** involves the city of Plovdiv and the entire South Central Region of Bulgaria as well as Varna, Sofia and Veliko Tarnovo. It includes more than 300 projects such as festivals, large-scale shows and community-based projects, structured around four themes (Fuse, Transform, Revive and Relax). They are linked to the characteristic features of Plovdiv, its history, cultural heritage, as well as the challenges facing the city. During the year, one of Plovdiv's hills will be turned into a temporary children's town (the "Children's City" project). The city will invite visitors to discover the Cyrillic alphabet through various exhibitions and workshops ("Cyrillization"). It will present a new production on the theme of

migration, co-produced with theatres from the Western Balkans ("2019: A European Odyssey").

Under the slogan "Open Future", **Matera 2019** celebrates openness as a key element in reflecting on the collective future of European society, with a special focus on social and cultural inclusion and collaborative innovation. Highlights include "Ars Excavandi", a contemporary look at the history and culture of subterranean architecture; "Re-reading Renaissance", a journey through the artistic past of Basilicata and Apulia; and "Poetry of primes", an exhibition on the central role of mathematics in the work of artists throughout the ages. Matera will also stage the first open-air performance of the opera Cavalleria Rusticana in co-operation with Teatro San Carlo.

SOME NUMBERS

34 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, a potential candidate or a country which is part of the European Free Trade Association/ European Economic Area.

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 EUR 5.5 and 6 for the local economy.

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

During Wrocław 2016 (Poland), more than 40% of the city's cultural and creative industries reported an increase in turnover. Out of the 5.2 million tourists who visited Wrocław in 2016, 1.6 million came from other countries, marking a substantial increase in international tourist stays during the year.

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 team running the European Capital of Culture programme.

In Donostia-San Sebastián 2016 (Spain) about 60% of the projects involved local people. This helped achieve the aim of fostering cohesion, and encouraging mutual understanding and respect.

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 EUR 600 million - which was in turn integrated into a multi-billion euro effort to revitalise the city that spanned several decades. Marseille 2013 raised EUR 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.

Develop European connections

In Aarhus 2017 (Denmark), 1,200 international artists contributed to the programme while approximately 80% of projects featured an international partner and/or a cultural exchange within Europe.

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

Did you know that...

... 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?

60 CITIES

European Capitals of Culture from Athens in 1985 to Plovdiv (Bulgaria) & Matera (Italy) in 2019

- 2020 Rijeka (Croatia) and Galway (Ireland)
- 2021 Timisoara (Romania) and Elefsina (Greece) and Novi Sad (Serbia, candidate country)
- 2022 Kaunas (Lithuania) and Esch (Luxembourg)
- 2023 Veszprém (Hungary)

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.