



Dynamic city

VALMIERA
2027

European Capital
of Culture | Candidate City



The war in Europe has changed everything.

No.

We cannot turn away from it. It is simply not possible to continue doing what we did before the war. In Latvia, where historical reflection on the devastating wars of the 20th century has always been at the core of identity, we feel this catastrophe particularly keenly. Even more so in Valmiera, which was destroyed in the wars of the past. Immediately, at that very hour of the early morning, it was crystal clear to us what it meant. We remember it all too well. Perhaps better than the nations whose history saw the last world war end in 1945. Because we had to wait and fight for almost another half a century. All the usual things suddenly changed their meaning after 24 February.

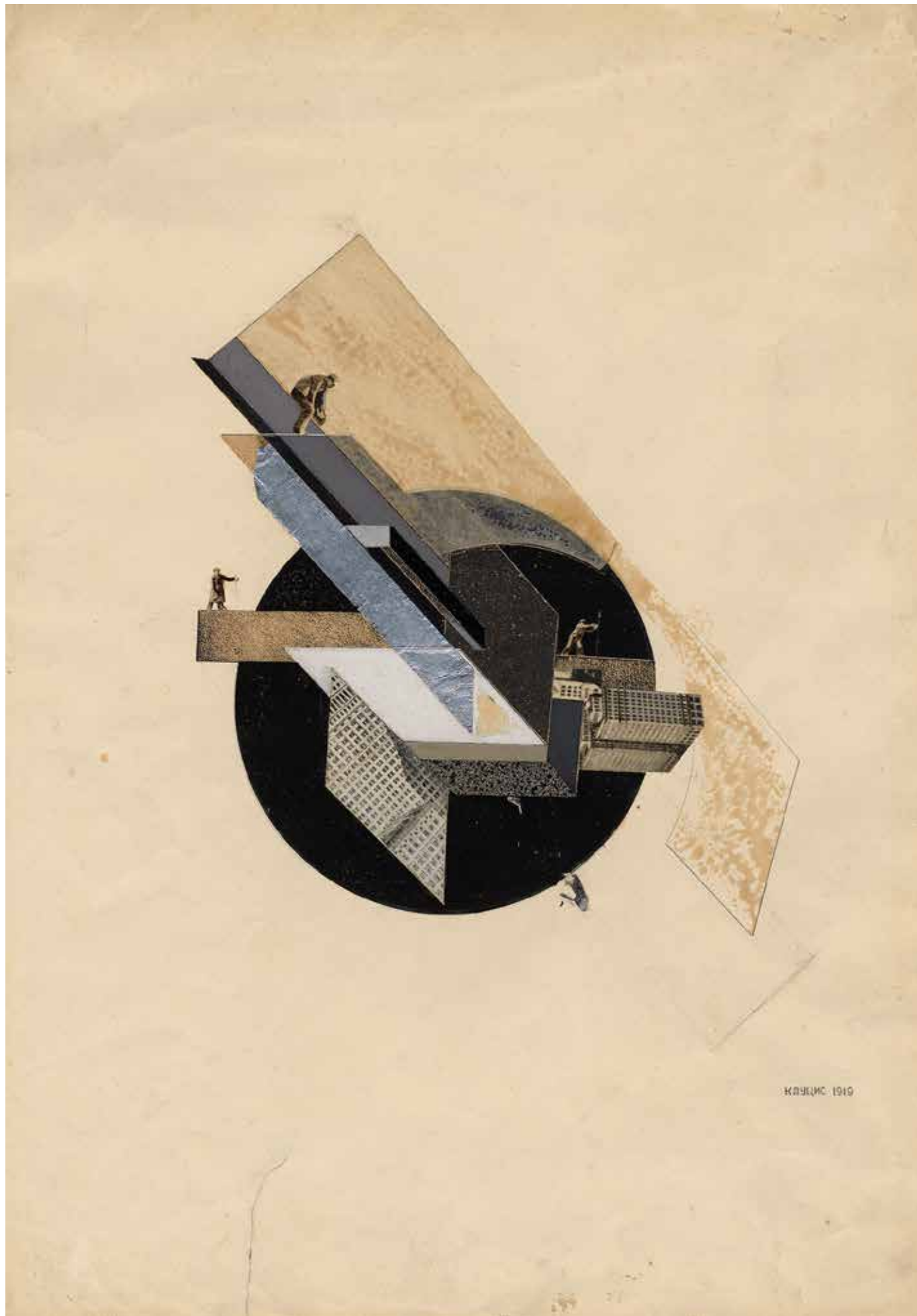
Today you open your unfinished poem and you cannot continue, because the only possible next word no longer follows from the pre-war line. You want to reply to a letter you received before the war and you realize that it will now be received by a completely different person. You turn on a postponed popular science lecture and can't understand why on earth you were ever interested in plant luminescence. You pretend to fill in the "Topicality of Project" box in an application and realize you have nothing to put in it. You try to think back to an idea you have had for a long time and can no longer see what it was that used to keep you awake at night until recently. You pick up a book and suddenly read between the lines that right now you should actually be at a place where they are sorting humanitarian aid. You no longer need to look for better words. Only ones that would be more effective. What is needed is not striking gestures, but effective action. Many of the things that used to keep you busy can now be cancelled instead of simply postponed.

So what is the point of what we are doing? What is the real point of any of our pre-war plans now? Maybe we just won't need any of them anymore. Shouldn't we turn our full attention to something really pressing? Are you putting all of yourself into the fight right now? Are you taking on all the volunteer activities you can pull off? Does war really cancel everything and make what we love, what we consider our values, worthless?

Ecological thinking, sustainability, multi-culturalism, inclusion, participation, tolerance, responsible action, prosperity, and other progressive European values cannot lose their relevance as long as humanity exists. Even if we have to go to the aid of our Ukrainian friends to clear the rubble off the streets of Kyiv on our way to 2027, the plans we have set – albeit only on paper – are of incalculable significance. Perhaps even more so than before this war began. In these documents we formulated our maximum, our project for a decent future, the future we want for Europe, the future to which we have dedicated our lives so far. Even more than usual, culture has assumed the role of the memory of civilization. In our visions, we are preserving the world as it should be – generally and for the best – even if they are no longer destined to come true. We will safekeep them for better times.

We are now writing this down to better remember our story of normality. Of normal people living normal lives in a normal world.

Poet: *Artūrs Puutē*



Gustavs Klucis (1894–1938)
Paper, photomontage, collage
Gouache, graphite, aluminium foil
37,6 x 25,8 cm

Dynamic city, 1919
Latvian National Museum
of Art collection
Inv.nr. VMM Z-6701

Introduction – GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS (Q1)

Q1

Has the concept of the programme described for the ECoC year changed between the pre-selection and the selection stage?
If yes, please describe the new concept and explain the reasons for the change.

"Conversion - the process of changing from one thing to another in order to transform the use of the residential environment" (Cambridge Dictionary explanation).

We are confident about where we are and where we want to be. That is why the leitmotif of the Valmiera2027 programme is **CONVERSION**, as we will initiate processes that will **bring about a significant change in thinking and attitudes, together with residents, civil society organisations and international partners, building Valmiera as a micro-city, a great place to live for people interested in culture, economics and a sustainable environment.**

We are now in a current of events, conversations, productive discussions, and even more - we are the source of the current! We are asking uncomfortable questions to ourselves, the cultural community and the society in the region as a whole, and together we are looking for answers. We are building international partnerships, learning about and adopting the experience of our European partners. As a large, active family, together we are learning to see the depth and breadth of cultural perspectives and the opportunities they bring, addressing sustainability issues, so that today's actions create a solid and secure foundation for the society of the future.

In developing the Valmiera2027 programme, we are looking for solutions to a number of important challenges that are relevant not only for the region and Latvia, but also for many cities and communities in Europe and worldwide. We have set them out in the European dimension chapter. The objectives of our EcoC programme have not changed:

NOTICE AND RECOGNISE US! We aspire to become a cultural place that is recognised nationally, in Europe and around the world. For us, being noticed and recognised means firstly recognising ourselves, appreciating and being proud of our cultural traditions and achievements, building empathy and tolerance for diversity within ourselves and society as a whole, and being open to other cultures. We will build the self-confidence of individuals and the community as a whole and transform our outlook and attitudes.

BRIDGING THE CULTURAL GAP! We recognise that we are at a cultural divide. Our intention and goal is to fill this gap with new, diverse contemporary cultural offerings and content, based on traditional culture and developed in

Valmiera2027

creative partnerships with many European and global cultural organisations and initiatives. We are creating a qualitatively new cultural space in our region, where there is room for creative expression and creativity and where everyone can become a creator of culture and a recipient of the experience it brings.

CREATING A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT!

Through cultural processes we will build awareness and responsibility for sustainability and, through the interaction of different groups in society seek answers to the big, complex questions of the environment and the future. This is particularly important for the region, as we are a prime example of the symbiosis of industry and nature - an industrial city surrounded by the Gauja National Park, the North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve and rural areas. In this unique form, a micro-city must be able to interact deeply and genuinely with nature.

In the preselection stage, we saw the objectives as fundamental pillars on which to base our choices. Now we see and accept them as currents, a dynamic movement in which each stream - an idea or set of ideas, a group of like-minded people, a movement - while fulfilling its unique mission, makes a special contribution to the achievement of our common goals. Our work and achievements will send a strong message and set an example to Latvia, Europe and other cities and communities around the world about the power of the cultural current in bringing about social change or conversion (please see Chapter 2 for the creative proposal).

We have chosen **DYNAMIC CITY** as the slogan for the ECoC programme. Or maybe the slogan has chosen us? Among many options, it is this idea of a dynamic city, created by Gustavs Klucis more than 100 years ago, which "turns on its axis, but no matter how you turn it, it is always correct, without a top or a bottom", that most accurately and expressively describes Valmiera's strategy - to be in constant motion and not be afraid to change or transform the city, while still remaining correct - recognised and appreciated by its citizens. Because a correct city is one that constantly in process of evaluation, creation and motion.

Q2

Describe any changes to the cultural strategy since the preselection stage, and the role of the ECOC pre-selection in these changes, if relevant. Indicate specifically which priorities of this strategy the ECoC action intends to contribute to, and how?

the Valmiera region, where the city's capacity is complemented by the region's smaller towns of Rūjiena, Mazsalaca, Seda and Strenči, with local production, services and a relatively more relaxed pace of life; with manor houses, green living and green production areas such as Valmiermuiža, Kocēni, Kauguri and Brenguļi; while Zilaiskalns, Naukšēni, Rencēni, Matīši, Burtnieki, Rubene, Dikļi, Vaidava and other villages preserve traditional cultural values and the rural farming traditions of Vidzeme.

Not only does the ECoC application working group, but the municipality's management team also recognizes the importance of the ECoC programme in initiating and driving currents that will bring about a significant transformation of the living environment of the city and county, becoming a **highly cultural urban micro-city** with a continuous symbiosis between culture and pragmatic management traditions. The municipality identifies the micro-city with important premises: an educated, cultured and active society, internationally competitive entrepreneurship, a sustainable and high-quality living environment and urban-rural synergies. These premises have been transformed in the forthcoming Sustainable Development Strategy into goals that take into account the present and future interests of society, deep and genuine **community involvement** and the adoption of **European best practice** in close, long-term cooperation.

The creative philosophy and at the same time rational approach of the ECoC programme is both a contribution and a tool for building a **model micropolitan municipality that embraces industrial environments and rural areas and is able to successfully address the co-existing challenges in the different dimensions of societal life.**

The objectives of Valmiera2027 are closely aligned with the objectives of the Cultural Strategy (CS) and the Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) of the municipality and are in line with the Specific Objectives (SO) of the ECoC Programme and their rationale. Each of the activities included in the ECoC programme will address a priority issue of the Valmiera Regional Culture Strategy. We have outlined this connection below:

Our aspiration to become a European Capital of Culture (ECoC or Valmiera2027) is not only a question of the image of a high-quality and attractive living space, but also a need based on pragmatic considerations. Creating and ensuring a quality cultural offering and environment for the Valmiera region is not just an assignment. It is a mission in which we, together with residents and civil society organisations, artists and cultural organisations, involving other sectors and learning from the achievements and experiences of our European partners, shape the county into a modern, dynamic territory.

The county's Cultural Development Strategy 2018–2028 has not changed between the ECoC pre-selection and final selection stages. It maintains its goal of **becoming a spiritually and materially strong city and municipality and a centre of contemporary and traditional culture in the Vidzeme region** and demonstrates its political and strategic readiness to become the ECoC capital of Latvia. However, the scope of the strategy has changed to include the city of Valmiera and the seven municipalities which were independent until 1 July 2021, which have agreed on common values and goals by becoming one – the Valmiera Municipality. **Culture is one of the new council's core values!** The development of cultural content and environment is a task that needs to be completed in order to achieve the broader goal.

The importance of culture is clearly and unambiguously outlined in the new municipal development planning documents that have been submitted for public consultation: the Valmiera Municipality Sustainable Development Strategy 2022–2038 and the Valmiera Municipality Development Programme 2022–2028. The Strategy sets the goal of **"Valmiera - a Baltic economic, educational, ICT, cultural and sports centre"**, while the Action Plan of the Development Programme includes tasks for culture which, if achieved, will make Valmiera **"the cultural and sports centre of Vidzeme with a diverse cultural and sporting life and a creative and healthy society"** by 2028. When we say "Valmiera", we mean



– Proportion of total population, %
Children and youth: 17%
Adults aged 25–34: 9%
Adults aged 35–64: 53%
Population aged 65 and over: 21%

CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF VALMIERA MUNICIPALITY

31 cultural institutions and cultural venues at least 335 cultural professionals, 129 artistic groups, incl., 16 choirs, 39 dance groups, 23 open-air stages, 3 museums, 1 theatre, at least 100 nature and cultural heritage sites of local or national importance, incl., 28 manor houses and castles, 16 churches of different denominations

EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE

61 libraries, including 34 public libraries, 32 educational institutions, incl., 7 vocational art and music schools, 23 comprehensive schools, 1 vocational education institution, 1 higher education institution, 6 youth centres

Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (academic year 2021/2022)

17 study programmes, 670 students, including , 18 foreign students, 94 number of elected academic staff, 17 foreign lecturers and researchers

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND CRAFTS

At least 75 creative industries businesses at least 650 creative industries employees, at least 300 craftspeople

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

at least 25 NGOs, including 8 in the sphere of culture, 55 sporting and active lifestyle organisations and institutions

– Population: 51092 (CSP, according to ATR 2021), of which about 45 % live in Valmiera and 55 % live in the rest of the territory
– Unemployment rate: 4.1% (on average in the territory of the newly created municipality)
– Distance from Valmiera to the furthest point of the municipality: 67 km
– Valmiera municipality area (as of 01.01.2022): 2947,91 km², of which 37,71 km² or 1,3% is urban area, 98,7% rural area.
– ECoC coverage: Valmiera region, which includes Valmiera as the national capital, 4 cities (Rūjiena, Mazsalaca, Strenči, Seda) and 26 municipalities.

– Population by nationality
In Seda: Latvians 28%, Russians 55%, Belarusians 9%, Ukrainians 2%, Poles 1%, Lithuanians 1%, other nationalities 4%. In Strenči: Latvians 89%, Russians 8%, Belarusians 1%, Poles 1%, Lithuanians 1%, other nationalities 1%. In Rūjiena: Latvians 95%, Russians 2%, Belarusians 1%, Ukrainians 1%, other nationalities 1%. In Mazsalaca: Latvians 92%, Russians 4%, Belarusians 1%, Ukrainians 1%, other nationalities 1%.

– Number of businesses in the municipality: 4743

– Share of Valmiera municipality's GDP in the national economy: 1,57%, GDP per capita (2020): 16 917 euros, the 2nd highest in Latvia

CONTRIBUTION TO THE LONG-TERM STRATEGY (Q2-Q4)			
Valmiera 2027 objectives			
Valmiera Municipality Culture's Strategy and Sustainable Development Strategy objectives			
Objectives and rationale of the European Capital of Culture Programme			
Valmiera2027 events most relevant to the objectives *			
NOTICE AND RECOGNISE US!	CS1: Ensure a clear cultural positioning of the Valmiera Region.	SO4: Increase the international visibility of the city through the support of culture.	The ECoC programme as a whole, in particular the approximately 80% of events that will be implemented in international partnerships.
	CS2: Strengthen cultural cooperation locally and internationally.		- Establishment of the Kurtuve Contemporary Art Centre, all contemporary art events; -Establishment and development of a dance house, contemporary dance events; -The forest has ears and the river has eyes; -Trajectory Strenči; -Summer Theatre Festival; -Winter Dance Festival; -Culture market; -Art exhibitions: Gustavs Klucis, Niklāvs Strunke, Māris Bišofs; -Spiritual Music Festival; -Global Camp for Kokle Players; -Musical cycle "Lullabies of the World"; -"Simjūds +" major event; -Contemporary circus performance; -Transformation fixations
	CS3: Provide a balanced and high quality offering of cultural products and services throughout the year for different target audiences.	SO1: Increase the range, diversity and European dimension of cultural offerings in cities, including through transnational cooperation.	
BRIDGING THE CULTURAL GAP!	CS4: Ensure the research, preservation of cultural heritage.		
	CS5: Ensure competitive cultural education in art and design.	SO3: Strengthen the cultural sector's operational capacity and connection with other sectors.	-Multimedia development and festival -International Festival "Gardens of Light" -Multimedia performance at the Neikenkalna Nature Concert Hall -Establishment and launch of the Industrial Design and Innovation Centre -Community Cinema -Contemplative sound art exhibition
	CS6: Attract talent and develop creative industries.		
CREATING A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT!	CS7: Promote the development of creative potential and the transfer of innovation in education and entrepreneurship.		
	SDS1: Personal development – an educated, active, cohesive, creative, self-aware, healthy, responsible and inclusive society, people as creators of a sustainable environment.	SO2: Increase public access to and participation in cultural processes.	-Do it yourself or creation of DIY movement -Public participation and cultural audience development programme, including a Youth Agency -European Academy -All creative activities involving civic participation (please see Chapter 2)
	SDS2: Business development through sustainable and responsible use of resources.	Rationale for ECoC: To contribute to the sustainable development of the city and its surrounding areas through the power of culture to create long-term cultural, social and economic impact.	-Four Seasons Pavilions -The Creative Awakening of a Living Environment -Creating a network of manors -Garden for a friend -Red Valmiera Ride -International Cycling Film Festival "KINO PEDĀLIS"
	SDS3: Functional, aesthetic and green urban and village environments – high quality indoor and outdoor living spaces, designed and managed using renewable resources.		
	SDS4: Urban-rural synergy – balanced development.		
		* Each development is listed once under the most relevant objective, but many of them also have an impact on other objectives.	

Although the objectives of the current Valmiera Municipality Cultural Development Strategy have not lost their relevance, we would like to further emphasise and integrate the cultural environment and vision of the seven previously independent municipalities in the strategy, as well as to complement it with objectives relating to aspects of residents, civil society organisations, international cooperation and inter-sectoral cooperation. After numerous discussions with representatives of the public and social organisations, we believe that it is essential for the Cultural Strategy to address issues related to the practice and accessibility of culture for different social groups. Therefore, development of the new Cultural Development Strategy 2024-2034 will already commence in the second half of 2022.

In preparing the second round proposal, we have looked in depth not only at the European dimension, but also at other aspects relevant to the success of the ECoC programme (described in Chapter Q4) and included them as objectives, indicators or targets where appropriate. Although the programme proposal currently covers mainly the Valmiera region, we have included a **regional dimension to involve the whole of Vidzeme**, through which participants and guests from neighbouring counties, Estonia, Lithuania and further afield will come by taking roads both large and small. The region's involvement is evidenced by the decision of the Vidzeme Planning Region Development Council (Q39), by events planned elsewhere in Vidzeme, such as the industrial culture celebrations in Cēsis, and by the involvement in planned cultural events, such as the participation of regional song and dance groups in the "Simjūds +" event. Within the framework of the Regional Culture Programme (Q18), Vidzeme artists, cultural groups and collectives will be able to submit and implement their creative projects.

We have strengthened our links with the social sector. Regional and Latvian cultural and social NGOs have been involved in identifying interests and needs, preparing events and their content, and will be involved in their implementation and the development of various solutions (Q15-16). Associations are the curators of several creative events (Q6).

Strengthening the operational capacity of the cultural and creative industries sector is one of the priorities of the ECoC programme. Creative undertakings include diverse, regular events that will be implemented with the support and participation of artists and professionals from Europe and other countries.



CONTRIBUTION TO THE LONG-TERM STRATEGY (Q2-Q4)		4	12
<div><div>Q3</div><div>Have your intentions in terms of long-term impact of the ECoC action on the city changed since pre-selection? Please describe the changes or further impact foreseen!</div></div>			
The results of Valmiera2027 will be a catalyst for the transformations we launched in 2021. We will assess impacts in four areas: culture, social, economic and development of the urban or residential environment, covering the territory of the Valmiera region. Our plans and projections for long-term impacts have not changed, but have become more measured and concrete, with planned outcomes closely linked to objectives and their measurability.			
Valmiera2027 objectives, areas affected, impact assessment indicators, indicators to be achieved and data sources			
Indicators and sources of information: Valmiera Municipality reports and data from the 2021 population survey (VMR), Central Statistical Office database (CSO), information from the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (OCMA), Eurobarometer studies (EB), data from a study commissioned by the Ministry of Culture (MC).			
Objectives and areas	Impact, result	Impact assessment indicators	Indicators to be achieved (each indicator is followed by the source of the existing data or data to be obtained, using an abbreviation)
Culture	–Valmiera region as a recognised, appreciated and acknowledged cultural space in Europe.	–Number or share of Latvian and international cultural and creative organisations and artists involved in the cultural activities of the Valmiera region. –Increase in the number of foreign visitors, their impact on the image of Valmiera. –Valmiera2027 receives positive feedback from visitors.	–At least 80% of the events involve artists and cultural organisations from Europe and other countries. ^{VMR} –At least 80% of visitors give a positive rating to the Valmiera2027 cultural programme and the Valmiera region. ^{VMR} –The number of visitors to the region has increased by at least 30% compared to 2019. ^{CSO}
In the social sphere	–Increase in the level of self-confidence and tolerance of residents in the region, increase in pride in the city and region.	–Proportion of the total population that feels self-confidence, tolerance towards diversity and pride in the region and the Valmiera2027 title. –Residents’ pride and support of the Valmiera2027 title. –Increase in people’s sense of the importance of being citizens in Europe and Latvia.	–At the end of 2027 at least 60% of the population feel self-confidence, belonging and pride in the region and the ECoC title. ^{VMR} –Increase of at least 20% in the share of citizens who consider their voice important in Europe compared to 2021 (20%). ^{EB} The proportion of people who consider their vote to be important in Latvia increases by at least 20% compared to 2021 (29%). ^{EB}
Economics	–New products and services from the cultural and creative industries that are well-known and in demand in Latvia, Europe and the rest of the world.	–Dynamics of joint projects with foreign partners in cultural and creative industries. –Cultural and creative industries of the Valmiera region are respected and recognised internationally. –Existence of new cultural products or services.	–Cultural and creative industries organisations have implemented at least 20 major product or service development projects, at least 10 in international partnerships. ^{VMR} –Cooperation with at least 10 new foreign partners in the creative industries. ^{VMR} –At least 20 new cultural products or services created. ^{VMR}
Urban development with regard to the rest of the municipality	–Successful implementation of the micro-city model. –The micro-city model is appreciated by municipalities in other European countries. –International recognition for implementing sustainable solutions in the environmental, social and economic sectors.	–Valmiera micro-city approach and achievements in international competitions and rankings. –Cooperation and new collaborations between environmental and urban planning professionals from different fields.	–At least one international recognition. ^{VMR} –At least 5 European cities have been supported with experience and expertise in implementing the micro-city model. ^{VMR} –Increase in the share of initiatives in international partnerships on urban and territorial development by at least 25% compared to 2021. (16). ^{VMR}

CONTRIBUTION TO THE LONG-TERM STRATEGY (Q2-Q4)		Valmiera2027	
2ND OBJECTIVE – BRIDGING THE CULTURAL GAP!	Culture	–A wide range of cultural activities in traditional and contemporary cultural spheres, including offerings created in cooperation with foreign partners. –Cooperation initiatives in cultural projects, events and creative industries implemented in international cooperation. –Increased participation of residents in cultural activities. –Residents satisfied with the cultural offering and its quality. –Increase in the range of contemporary cultural events. –Cultural projects by artists and creative organisations from Valmiera County implemented in international partnerships. –Increase in the range of interdisciplinary cultural projects and products. –The existence and quality of digitally accessible cultural events.	–Increase in the proportion of the population involved in traditional cultural activities by at least 20% compared to 2021 (33%). ^{VMR} –30% increase in the share of the population involved in contemporary culture compared to 2021 (0.5%). ^{VMR} –Residents' satisfaction with the quality of cultural services has increased by at least 15% compared to 2021 (56%). ^{VMR} –Creation of a sustainable offering of contemporary cultural events in at least two cultural sectors. ^{VMR} –At least 40 major cultural projects have been implemented by all types of cultural organisations, and at least 32 are interdisciplinary and in international partnership. ^{VMR} –At least 35% of cultural events are available in digital format (remotely or as digital material). ^{VMR}
	In the social sphere	–Opportunities for developing creative abilities and skills (education, skills, careers) –Active participation of cultural organisations, community groups and individuals in shaping the cultural offering and consumption. –Accessibility of cultural offering to social risk groups, especially children and young people from social risk families, seniors, people with functional disabilities and ethnic minorities. –Creation of a new cultural education offering. –Emergence of new cultural organisations. –Increase in activity and performance of cultural organisations. –Increase in the proportion of volunteers. –Proportion of socially at-risk groups (creators and consumers) actively involved in cultural activities. –Accessibility of culture to people with functional disabilities	–At least 2 new or significantly improved cultural education programmes in vocational education institutions (music, arts). ^{VMR} –At least 8 new cultural organisations, including at least 80% established and operating as NGOs (8 cultural NGOs registered in 2021). ^{VMR} –Cultural NGOs have implemented at least 30 projects of public interest, at least 15 in international partnership. ^{VMR} –The proportion of volunteers has increased by at least 15% compared to 2021 (15%). –At least 45% of people at social risk are involved in cultural activities. ^{VMR} –85% of ECoC events are adapted for the presence and participation of people with disabilities, 15% of events have alternative means of access, including digital solutions. ^{VMR}
	Economics	–Increase in the number of cultural and creative industries, economic activity, economic performance. –Increase in the number of cultural and creative industries businesses in the region. –Increase in turnover of cultural and creative industries enterprises in the county. –New jobs created by the development of cultural and creative industries.	–The number of cultural and creative industries businesses has increased by at least 10% compared to 2021. ^{CSO} –The county's cultural and creative industries have increased their revenues by at least 20% compared to 2021. ^{CSO} –At least 30 new jobs have been created in the cultural and creative industries. ^{CSO}
	Urban development with regard to the rest of the municipality	–Adequacy and accessibility of the infrastructure developed for cultural events. –Use of outdoor (natural and environmental) facilities for cultural events. –Accessibility of cultural venues for people with functional disabilities. –Increase in the number of buildings and places accessible to people with functional disabilities. –Accessibility of buildings and places for cultural events.	–Newly-created cultural venues and facilities fully meet the cultural needs of all sectors of society. ^{VMR} –85% of cultural venues used for ECoC are adapted for the presence and participation of people with disabilities. ^{VMR}

Culture	<div>–New cultural and creative spaces created by transforming historic industrial sites, adapting existing spaces and developing outdoor facilities using sustainable solutions.</div>	<div>–Presence of new cultural objects: Kurtuve, Industrial Design and Innovation Centre. –Renovation or improvement of existing cultural centres and other cultural facilities in the region. –Revitalised natural area (revitalisation of the Gauja river banks).</div>	<div>–At least 2 newly created, sustainable cultural objects in historic industrial buildings.^{VMR} –At least 6 ha of natural areas.^{VMR}</div>
In the social sphere	<div>–Residents of the region have knowledge and an understanding of sustainability, the role of individuals and communities in the efficient use of natural resources, conservation and improvement of the environment. –County residents are involved and participate in projects for the development and improvement of the living environment.</div>	<div>– Increased awareness and knowledge of sustainability issues among residents of the region. – Increased participation of residents in improving their living environment. – Satisfaction of residents of the municipality with the changes made to the living environment in and around the municipality.</div>	<div>– Increase in the proportion of the population involved in improving their living environment by at least 15% compared to 2019 (41%).^{MC} – Increase in satisfaction with the living environment by at least 25% (23% in 2021)^{VMR} – At least 10% of the population involved in improving their living environment through a participatory budgeting approach.^{VMR}</div>
Economics	<div>–The development of various sites and areas has created economic opportunities for businesses in other sectors. –New, attractive jobs created by the development of cultural and creative industries.</div>	<div>– Increase in the number of cultural and creative industries-related businesses in the county. – Increase in turnover of culture and creative industries-related enterprises in the county. – Number of new jobs created by the development of cultural and creative industries-related enterprises.</div>	<div>–The number of businesses has increased by at least 5% compared to 2021.^{CSO} –The revenue of the related sectors in the county has increased by at least 10% compared to 2021.^{CSO} –At least 30 new jobs created in related sectors.^{CSO}</div>
Urban development with regard to the rest of the municipality	<div>–Sustainable management of municipally-owned and managed sites, environmental facilities and buildings. –Recreation and leisure areas, their suitability for cultural and leisure activities. –Better accessibility of places through sustainable mobility solutions (e.g. linking different modes of transport in a single system). –Increased attractiveness of the region as a living and working environment.</div>	<div>–Increase in the number of sites that are renovated and managed using sustainable solutions. –Increase in the proportion of nature and green areas in Valmiera. –Increase in the coverage of cycling infrastructure in the municipality (new infrastructure). –Increase in the population of the municipality.</div>	<div>–At least 15% more sites managed using sustainable solutions compared to 2021.^{VMR} –At least 10% more nature and green spaces compared to the 2021 public indicator (30%).^{VMR} –At least 15% more cycle lanes compared to the length of cycle lanes in the county in 2021^{VMR} –At least one sustainable mobility solution.^{VMR} –Population growth of at least 1% compared to 2021.^{PMLP}</div>

The European dimension and influence are most clearly reflected in the first objective of **NOTICE AND RECOGNISE US!** and the second objective **FILL THE CULTURAL GAP!** indicators. However, we would like to note that the third objective **CREATING A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT!** - is closely linked to the other two objectives and the actions chosen to achieve them.

In preparation of the second round application, we focused specifically on the sustainability aspect. Why? For several years now, sustainability has been a specific indicator of the performance and achievements of Valmiera Municipality. According to an evaluation conducted by researchers at the University of Latvia (using the UN Sustainable Development Model localisation tool), **Valmiera has the highest sustainability index among the 9 largest cities in Latvia.** We have pragmatically agreed to integrate sustainability aspects into all thematic areas within Valmiera2027, addressing them in three areas of vital importance for wellbeing: 1) **sustainability of nature and the environment**, meaning responsible behaviour towards the environment

and nature by individuals and public sector organisations and business actors in order to preserve its diversity, ensure environmental conservation and the efficient and considerate use of natural resources; 2) **economic sustainability** - concern for the responsible and efficient use of the economic resources available to the county, where investments in the economy are made in such a way as to achieve a balanced positive impact on the development of the county and the material and social well-being of different groups in society; 3) social sustainability - responsible behaviour by each individual towards fellow human beings and society in a wide variety of contexts, in particular towards socially disadvantaged people, and respect and esteem for the shared and community values of society. In this way, the ECoC programme and its implementers will not only "think and act sustainably", but at the same time contribute to the **development of a sustainable lifestyle awareness movement**, which will build and strengthen a core of activists and involve more and more people as a rolling process.



Q4

Describe your plans for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the title on your city and for disseminating the results of the evaluation.

What will allow us – the Valmiera Region - to say that we succeeded? What do we consider a success? In the Strategy chapter (Q2-Q3) and the European Dimension chapter (Q11-13) we set out what we want to achieve and influence. We will have succeeded if we have improved the areas and processes we set out to transform, if we have achieved the indicators that will show what we have achieved, and if everything we have started in the cultural field has become a natural part of the cultural ecosystem and will continue into the foreseeable future. We will have succeeded if people say - That was great! We want to continue! We want to do more!

The Valmiera2027 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan comprises two related sets of actions. 1. Monitoring and evaluation using a methodology developed for the programme, which takes into account the guidance on impact assessment in the European Commission Decision No 445/2014/EU and related documents, and using the data sources analysed in the baseline assessment (see later in this chapter); 2. A study by Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences on the impact of the ECoC programme on the socio-economic development of the municipality and the Vidzeme region.

From 2022 to 2027 the leader of evaluation will be the local partner **Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences. The other partner is the Latvian Academy of Culture. The two higher education institutions will set up a joint evaluation team, which will include professionals who will prepare the evaluation methodology and provide the necessary competences in all thematic areas covered.** Both institutions have experience in research on cultural processes and creative industries, development of evaluation methodologies and analysis of performance and results. They are involved in extensive international networks and cooperate with Latvian and foreign research institutes, universities and professional organisations. In order to be prepared for the task as well as possible, the experience of other ECoC cities (Q13) will be heard, and experts from partner cities will be involved where necessary. The ECoC Office will be involved in the evaluation processes, in particular in data acquisition and accumulation. A mobile app will be developed to capture data and information, and everything will be compiled in an ECoC database to be created and maintained by the Valmiera ECoC Office (Q28-29). The

data and information will be analysed and included in the Valmiera2027 implementation progress assessment reports, together with conclusions and recommendations. **An external evaluation will be carried out at the conclusion of the ECoC programme.**

A cultural expert with significant experience in preparing and managing the implementation of long-term, large-scale cultural events will be recruited in early 2028. Adequate funding has been earmarked for this purpose. The expert will have two main tasks: 1. to assess the impact of implementation of the ECoC programme on the set objectives and indicators; 2. to assess the impact of the ECoC on the development of the Valmiera municipality as a whole in the cultural, economic, social and sustainable development of the territory.

We have set **interim objectives and targets for the period between the selection of the ECoC and the year of the event:**

1. To develop an evaluation methodology by the end of 2022 and update it within 3 months after each evaluation.
2. By June 2024, carry out an interim impact evaluation for the period 2022-2023.
3. By June 2026, carry out an interim impact assessment for the period 2024-2025.
4. By March 2027, carry out an interim impact assessment for the period 2026.
5. After each interim assessment, decide on the necessary actions, delegate duties and responsibilities.

We will use reports and studies from Valmiera Municipality, the Vidzeme Region, Latvian and EU institutions as baseline data, including but not limited to:

- Valmiera City Region Sustainable Development Strategy 2022-2035, Valmiera City Region Development Programme 2022-2028 (not yet approved and published), reports, assessments
- Vidzeme Planning Region Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 and Development Programme 2021-2027 (in preparation)
- Cultural consumption and participation study in the future Valmiera region, 2021 (aim - to find out the views of the residents of Valmiera city and region about Valmiera's participation in the ECoC2027 competition and citizens' participation in cultural processes.
- Study on the impact of cultural consumption and participation.

Report on results of the study, 2020.
<https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/media/11801/download>

- Draft Guidelines for Cultural Policy 2021-2027 "Culture State", 2021.<http://tap.mk.gov.lv/lv/mk/tap/?pid=40501590>

- Access to culture in Latvia: factors and possible solutions, 2018.kulturas-pieejamiba-latvija-faktori-un-iespejamie-risina-jumi-2020.pdf (wordpress.com)

- Cultural and Creative Cities
<https://composite-indicators.jrc.ec.europa.eu/cultural-creative-cities-monitor/performance-map>

- K. O. Eliassen, J. F. Hoviden, O. Prytz (2018) Contested Qualities Negotiating Value in Arts and Culture
<https://www.kulturradet.no/documents/10157/c20cf3c8-5663-4943-be0f-8f699f59e1cf>

- Successful investments in culture in European cities and regions: a catalogue of case studies.
https://nws.eurocities.eu/MediaShell/media/Catalogue_09112016-2.pdf

- EU Culture and Creativity Programme Resource Base: Document library | Culture and Creativity (europa.eu)

- UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators Suite (CDIS)
https://en.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/cdis_methodology_manual_0_0.pdf

- Demographic, economic, cultural and innovation data from the Latvian Central Statistical Office and EUROSTAT.

- The evaluation will use data and reports published by the county, Vidzeme region, Latvian and European Union institutions, which are available on a restricted basis.

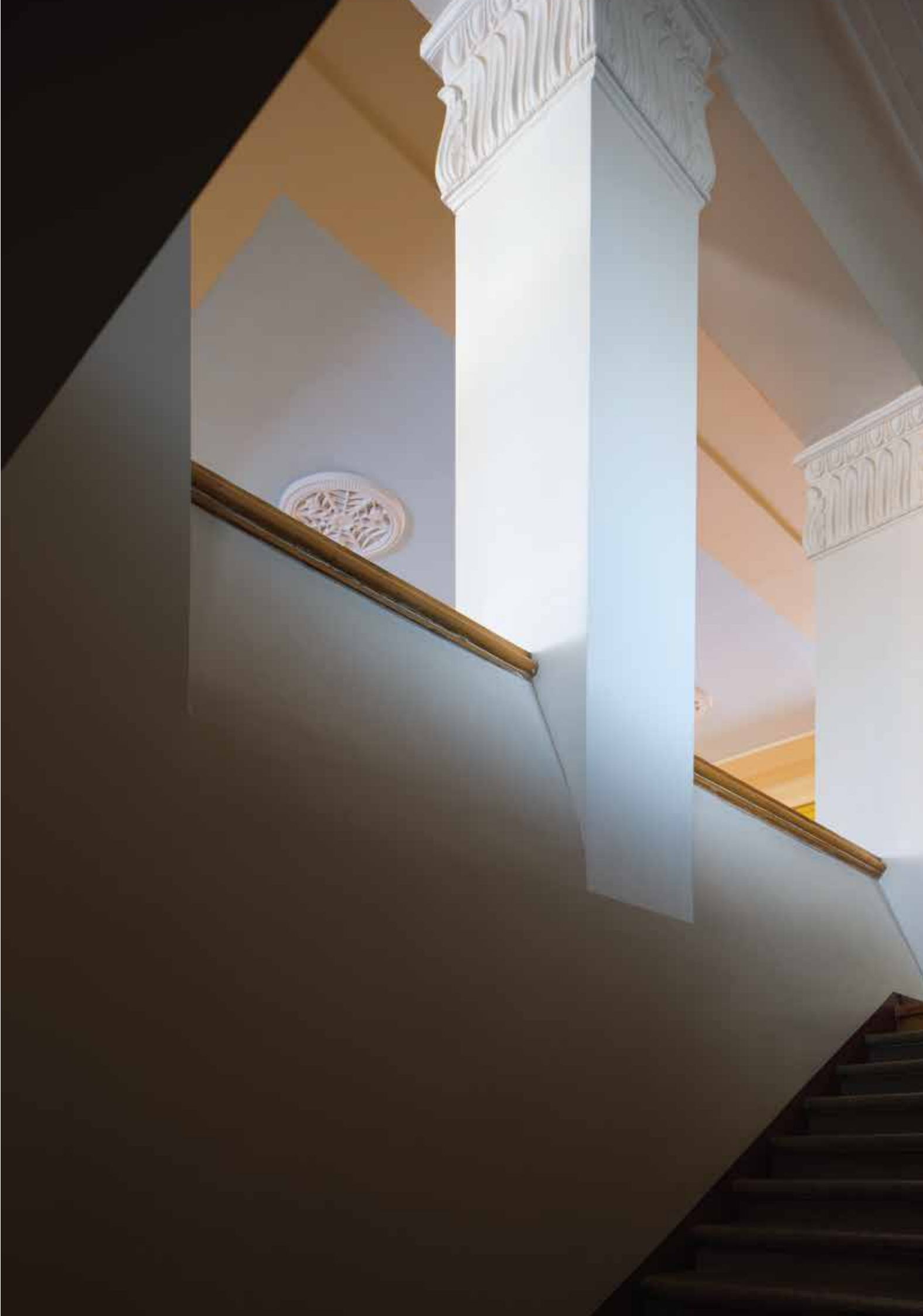
MUNICIPAL data on culture, economy, education, public participation, the environment, source: the annual progress report of the Valmiera2027 Office, general annual report of the municipality, annual report of the Culture Administration - budget, events, cultural events, capacity building events, etc., Development Administration reports on the implementation of the investment plan, Education Administration reports on the developments in educational institutions, international projects, etc. Summaries of surveys and interviews with local residents, communities, organisations.

REGIONAL cultural, economic, educational, public participation data, source: reports of the Vidzeme Planning Region and its constituent municipalities.

Data COLLECTED BY NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS on cultural events and budgets, economic performance of cultural and creative industries, educational indicators in vocational schools, environmental objectives, source: overviews and reports of the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Economics, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Environment and Regional Development and their institutions, as well as data of the Central Statistical Office. Data from EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS on cultural and creative industries, their progress, public participation, regional development, etc. Source of data: document repositories of the relevant institutions, EUROSTAT, EUROBAROMETER studies, other ECoC materials, etc.

The results of the evaluation will be shared with partners, national and EU institutions and made available to the general public:

- The Valmiera2027 evaluation reports and summaries will be published in Latvian on the EcoC website <http://valmiera2027.eu/> and on the Valmiera Municipality website, as well as on social media. Press releases will be prepared and sent out to attract the attention of a wider audience;
- A summary of each evaluation report will be prepared in English and sent to foreign partners;
- The conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations will be discussed by the Valmiera2027 Executive Council, which will include the state, the regional administration and private sector companies, as well as in the Vidzeme Planning Region Council;
- At least one international event will be organised to disseminate the experience and knowledge gained, inviting a wide range of national and international stakeholders, in particular other cities involved in the preparation or candidature of the ECoC. In order to increase the number of participants, both face-to-face and remote participation will be possible;
- The event could be included in the programme of the Latvian Presidency of the European Union (2028) (we plan to discuss and coordinate participation with the responsible institutions);
- The results of the study on the impact of the EcoC programme on the socio-economic development of the county and the Vidzeme region will be presented at scientific events and included in scientific publications;
- The final evaluation report of the ECoC programme will be submitted to the European Commission and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia by 31 December 2028. The report will be published on the Valmiera2027 website, Valmiera Municipality website, Vidzeme Planning Region website, and a summary of the report will be published in national and regional media, as well as other information channels as appropriate. The report will be sent to all cooperation partners.



Q5

Describe in detail the artistic vision and the strategy for the cultural programme of the year outlined at pre-selection stage, explaining any changes brought in since preselection.

make culture accessible and understandable to everyone in the region. We – the county community – will do these things together, because we see and accept people both as cultural audience and as partners. And we have already started to do so.

We understand that a **sustainable cultural environment** can only exist and continue to develop where sustainability is integrated into all dimensions of society: in economics, social sphere, development of surrounding environment and nature conservation. Our strategy is to establish a strong cultural link and interaction with these dimensions. Meanwhile with our participation in cultural events, we will raise the big societal issues of nature and environmental sustainability, green thinking and the importance of citizen participation in addressing these issues.

At the same time, we are aware that this process is not that simple.

We have to bridge the cultural gap – the **common challenges** of the region and its society, which are not directly related to untapped cultural potential, such as:

- thinking in terms of personal wants and needs;
- a view of culture that is too superficial – involvement in processes that do not require critical thinking;
- an inability and sometimes avoidance to see the interconnectedness and interaction of societal processes;
- a lack of empathy and tolerance towards diversity;
- polarisation of different groups in society;
- a lack of opportunities for creative expression as well as insufficient knowledge, especially about contemporary culture;
- a superficial understanding of European cultural values.

On the one hand, we have diverse cultural traditions, artistic processes and cultural venues, and a society that gets involved in cultural endeavours, but on the other hand, until now, we have lacked a broader perspective, as well as cultural depth, a vision of the breadth of possibilities and the beauty of diversity, and the courage to dare to change. **The solution or the answer is to create and experience cultural transformation.**

The ARTISTIC STRATEGY of the **Valmiera2027** programme was already clear at the beginning of the **ECOC journey**. Its intention is to develop and strengthen the perspective of cultural depth and breadth of possibilities, embracing and involving the entire cultural ecosystem of the **Valmiera region**: different cultural genres and creative industries, artists, craftspeople and cultural professionals, the diverse tangible and intangible cultural heritage, organisations with a cultural and educational mission, as well as Latvian and European partners.

The programme will create a deeper understanding within the **society of the county** of different contemporary and traditional cultural genres, the context of cultural messages and their inextricable link with other spheres of life. By involving people in cultural processes, together we will learn to think critically and recognise the new and the different. We will make society more open, so that people are able and willing to engage in the discourse that cultural events offer.



We will create a new and diverse **cultural offering**, as well as content and space in which creativity and innovation will have ample opportunities to express and develop. We will

Q6

Describe the structure of the cultural programme, including the range and diversity of the activities and the main events that will mark the year.

For each one, please provide with information about project partners and estimated budget.

The final cycle, **AUTUMN - REFLECTION**, will feature events related to the autumn season, both in nature and in people's lives, as well as new cultural developments (e.g. a light festival, industrial dance, multimedia festival), provoking a paradigm shift and encouraging reflection on past and future transformations.

Although we have emphasised one main goal in each of the first three cycles of 2027, there will also be a deeper meaning or current of the other two goals as a clearly defined task or cross-thematic element - an idea or rhetorical question that Valmiera2027 participants and visitors will have to answer through cultural expressions - an exhibition, performance, music, dance or other event.

Each cycle of artistic events, like the seasons, will follow each other, simultaenously conveying important messages and ongoing developments to the next phase. But what they all have in common is a **European dimension, the presence of which is encoded in important messages, partnerships and international developments**. We have worked carefully to identify and highlight themes that are not only important for ourselves, but also relevant in the context of the shared values and challenges of the European Union. One of the themes - climate change and global warming - will already be raised at the first event in 2027, highlighting the power of culture and its ability to influence global processes.

The diversity of content and events in our programme is a deliberate tactic. We do this so that culture can not only reach out to the general public, but so that everyone can see the special offering and content that encourages them to be involved, have critical thinking, open-mindedness, empathy and self-awareness. We do this because we want to make a meaningful difference in other dimensions of society.

We have support of artists, cultural and other organizations both in Europe and world in seeking answers and actualisation of challenges described. 80% of mentioned partners have confirmed their participation in the implementation of the programme. With the remaining 20% discussions have been started.

Our ECoC Valmiera2027 programme is designed as a dynamic flow, a current connected with natural events - a set of five consecutive and simultaneously interconnected cycles, where the PROCESS cycle includes the programme preparation period and the other four - the events of 2027. We remain convinced that the time of preparation and anticipation is part of the celebration.

The first cycle **PROCESS - CONVERSION will be a time of significant change**. It should meet the main objective - to fill the cultural space of the municipality with new cultural and creative offerings, content, events, a culturally-aware audience, participation of the county community, new Latvian, European and global cultural partnerships, events and cultural venues. We have already started this in 2021 and will continue until the end of 2026.

We have linked the 2027 cycles to natural events - the seasons - and the broader objectives that permeate the ECoC programme, which have not changed:

- **WINTER - NOTICE AND ACKNOWLEDGE US!**
- **SPRING - BRIDGING THE CULTURAL GAP!**
- **SUMMER - CREATING A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT!**

2021-2026 PROCESS – CONVERSION

Conversion is a clear path for the cultural ecosystem of Valmiera to discover what has been done and achieved in 2027, as well as to assess the impact of change. We will have filled the cultural gap in Valmiera by revitalising a diverse and high quality cultural offering, involving the public more closely and meaningfully in cultural development processes, creating a sustainable environment, creating and renewing infrastructure. We are confident that it will be a **transformation visible at European level**.

By the end of 2026, with the involvement of the Valmiera Municipality community, Latvian and European partners, we will develop and maintain a creative discourse, shape cultural content, create conditions for the entry of new cultural genres in the municipality, improve existing and create new cultural spaces, acquire new knowledge and skills. Valmiera2027 will feature a significant role for community participation and audience development activities, which we have planned together with local communities, national and European cultural organisations, both as a component of cultural events and as a parallel series of events starting in 2022 and continuing beyond the programme. Specific educational programmes for artists as well as for the general public will be developed and implemented in several cultural genres.

Establishment of the Kurtuve Contemporary Art Centre

Related EcoC events: Gustavs Klucis' exhibition. Niklāvs Strunke's exhibition. Humour in Contemporary Art. Māris Bišofs. Art Space "no BORDERS in sight". "Light up and show enthusiasm!". Dance House. Contemporary Art Spectator School.

Contemporary culture is currently the Achilles heel of Valmiera. The cultural environment is characterised by a symbolic cultural gap - a large majority of Valmierians consume understandable, rational and easily comprehensible information, including entertainment culture, but do not attempt to take part in experiments and expressions of contemporary art. As one of the solutions to this challenge we have defined the creation of **Contemporary Art Centre "Kurtuve"** in the building that was the city's boiler house for over 40 years. In other words, we have started the process of transforming the building, both physically and materially, so that it can be fully used for contemporary culture and become a creative platform. We have chosen the name "Kurtuve" as a significant interweaving of different eras and aspects of life. **A furnace - a bonfire, stove or fireplace - has been a source of heat for centuries and through the ages. A furnace - a real place, a former boiler house. A furnace - an ignition, an impulse, a current for creative processes.**

In 2021, the Valmiera Municipality Council decided to transfer the development rights of the former boiler house for the purposes of Kurtuve development. The process of physical transformation of the building has begun, and a timetable has been outlined for the essential changes: a reconstruction project will be prepared by 2023 (architect Reinis Liepiņš, author of other cultural spaces such as the "Hansa Platform" in Riga, has been approached); in 2024-2025, reconstruction works will be carried out, with solutions for environmental accessibility in mind. The building is scheduled to open in 2026. However, this does not mean that Kurtuve will be fired up and only become operational in 2026. Cosmetic renovations will be carried out as early as spring 2022 to fill 678 m2 of the physical space with cultural content as soon as the works are completed.

Cultural life in Kurtuve started already in 2021 - the exterior walls of the building were the location of an exhibition of large-scale photographic portraits of local people, part of an international photo project INSIDE OUT, and during the summer, the international summer school of temporary architecture and urban planning, "Festival'and", made use of the premises, and installed temporary architectural objects in the building and its surroundings. It was also the venue for the presentation of "Valmiera2027".

After the winter lull, the space will come alive once again in the spring-summer cycle of 2022 with the help of a curatorial programme, marking out a permanent cultural centre not only in the Valmiera region, but on the map of the entire Vidzeme region. The Valmiera Culture Council has already agreed on cultural initiatives in Kurtuve in 2022, by collaborating with a number of creative and educational institutions: the Department of Contemporary Dance Arts at the Latvian Academy of Culture, UCSB Dance Company (California, USA), the organisers of the Valmiera Summer Theatre Festival, the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, Valmiera School of Design and Art, as well as internationally renowned Estonian artist Kaido Ole.

Alongside the initiatives already planned, we will continue to work on the projects that will enable Kurtuve to fulfil its **mission - to become and be the starting and confluence point of the contemporary cultural movement**. To achieve this, close collaboration will be established and maintained between artists, thinkers, researchers and other actors in the cultural ecosystem of the region, Latvia and abroad, through interdisciplinary programmes and residencies, and by supporting diverse creative expressions. We will realise our mission through three interconnected programmes:

a residency programme, an alternative education programme and a national cultural support programme, which will be platforms for conversation, research and education.

One of the main tasks of Kurtuve is to promote the development and expression of existing and emerging talents in visual and performing arts in the Valmiera region. A special mentoring programme, led by European and Latvian art and industry professionals will provide artists and students from different art fields with an international exchange of professional experience, and interdisciplinary contemporary art residencies will give



young artists the opportunity to learn new skills and develop their artistry.

Alongside the initiatives already planned, we will continue to offer several weeks of paid residencies in industrial companies in the region, where artists will create works by drawing ideas from the history of the companies and the experiences of their employees. These artworks will be created through immersion, conversation, participation in working life – a unique way to talk about the post-Soviet industrial heritage and the contemporary entrepreneurship based on it in an innovative way and with the power of art, as well as to make it internationally visible and recognised.

In early 2026, various contemporary art initiatives will commence and continue in conjunction with the grand opening of Kurtuve. For example, **meetings of young artists and professionals, brainstorming sessions with the participation of European and Latvian contemporary art greats, rehearsals and performances at the Dance House, audience development programmes, co-creations, showcasing of art projects created in residency programmes, exhibitions, interdisciplinary lectures, meetings of young artists and professionals.**

These will continue not only in 2027, but will have become an integral part of the cultural life of Valmiera. The achievements of PROCESS will be reflected in many ECoC events. The reinvention of Kurtuve as a cultural space is the expression of the European New Bauhaus in action, creating a sustainable, environmentally and people-friendly place. We already know that we want to use not only the Kurtuve building, but also its roof – for events, discussions, conferences. We will therefore emphasise the full and functional use of the whole building – a practice that is not common in the region and Latvia as a whole, yet has great potential. Once the reconstruction is complete, we plan to become a full member of Trans Europe Halles, a network that brings together people and events in abandoned buildings (Valmiera is currently an associate member).

Kurtuve will be transformed into an independent cultural institution, the maintenance costs of which will be covered by the municipality's cultural budget, while the sources of funding for cultural activities will be diversified through municipal, state and other programmes funded by national, EU and other foreign donors, as well as private sector donations and grants.

CURATOR: Valmiera Municipality Culture Council

VENUE: Kurtuve Contemporary Art Centre

PARTNERS: LOCAL - Valmiera Summer Theatre Festival organisers, Valmiera School of Design and Art, local artists; INTERNATIONAL- Silver Architecture, Latvian National Museum of Art, Hansa Platform, Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, Latvian Academy of Culture; INTERNATIONAL - Dumu Fabrikas (Lithuania), Menu fabrikas - Loftas (Lithuania), MO Museum (Lithuania), Esch2022 Massenoire program (Esch2022, Luxembourg), KULTUURKATEL Creative Hub and representatives from Tallinn2011 team (Estonia), UCSB Dance company (USA), TEH - Trans Europe Halles
BUDGET: EUR 300,000

Establishment of an industrial design and innovation centre

Related ECOc events: launch of the Industrial Design and Innovation Centre. Multimedia industry development. Valmiera Multimedia Festival. Performance "Industrial Currents". Industrial a cappella "360°".

Valmiera produces globally unique and interesting products that shape and sustain Valmiera's relationship with Europe and the world. Products from local companies have been used in the construction of South Korean skyscrapers and have been noticed by global brands such as *Chanel*, rockband *Rammstein* and many others. They are iconic and innovative, and they are linked to the stories of companies and their employees in the industrial sectors (glass fibre, woodworking, metalworking, etc.) which we have already started collecting. These stories are a source of inspiration for innovation in today's economy.

We will create a **multifunctional industrial design and innovation centre in Valmiera** and, through the collaboration of different sectors and professionals, encourage, support and facilitate the access, creation and exchange of knowledge, technologies and innovations needed for development. It will create and maintain links between different fields: applied and artistic sciences, cultural and artistic industries, education, business. The Centre will create a space for innovation, attracting and developing of talent, as well as showcasing of the historical and present achievements of companies from Valmiera in Latvia, Europe and the world. The target audience of the Centre: entrepreneurs and start-ups, representatives of creative industries, design and technology students, school students, researchers, experts in various fields, design and industry stakeholders and enthusiasts.

The exhibitions of the Centre will allow anyone to be able to view a variety of physical exhibits, take part in technology demonstrations, and experience virtual reality solutions. The exhibitions will also be available in a virtual environment, allowing them to be explored by anyone in the world, as well as shown to the general public in urban environments. The **permanent exhibition** will include exhibits and information on products and the transformation of the industrial process over time, Valmiera's "footprint" in the areas of industrial design and cultural values. The **changing exhibition** will provide an insight into the latest developments in industrial design. The basis of both exhibitions will be established in cooperation with National Library of Latvia and its Digital collection of Industrial heritage – first digital collection of its kind in Europe, containing more than 20 000 repository objects related to Latvian industrial history.

Another important part of the centre will be the **technology residencies**, where both experienced and start-up companies will be able to develop and refine globally sought-after products and technologies to further strengthen their position in the European and global economy. The Centre will be our Bauhaus, providing access to the latest technological know-how, providing opportunities for sharing it, and building and maintaining a wide network with similar centres in Europe and worldwide. The

residences will consist of several equipped rooms:

- a transformable space (up to 200 visitors) for various events: conferences, hackathons, biennales, etc;
- a makerspace equipped with prototyping facilities that will provide creative workshops for children and youth, as well as an opportunity for young designers and entrepreneurs to develop their business ideas;
- co-working spaces for individuals and young entrepreneurs, including digital nomads.

The third direction of the Centre's activities will be a **laboratory for the future of entrepreneurship**. Its task is to promote the formation and strengthening of an entrepreneurial mindset in Valmiera and Vidzeme through public education and involvement in various creative activities. Within this framework, creative workshops will be organised for different groups of society, especially young people and rural residents, to address specific contemporary and future challenges related to the business environment, technologies and products in a broader economic sectoral context, not only from a design perspective.

The centre will be developed on the territory of the Valmiera Industrial Park, renovating a historic building for its purposes. The project will be implemented and the core activities of the centre will be financed by the Valmiera Municipality. From 2022 to 2027 exhibition materials will be identified, collected and systematised, and a permanent physical and digital exhibition will be created. At the same time, we will develop cooperation and use the technological capabilities of existing local partners (Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Valmiera School of Design and Art, Valmiera Technical School, Valmiera Business Incubator and regional companies) and organise events.

CURATOR: Valmiera Municipality (infrastructure development); Valmiera Development Agency (content development) **LOCATION:** Industrial Design and Innovation Centre in the Industrial Park **PARTNERS:** LOCAL - Valmiera Entrepreneurs Club, Valmiera, Valmiera Business and Innovation Incubator, Valmiera Design and Art Secondary School, Valmiera Technical School, Valmiera Museum, Valmiera Integrated Library; NATIONAL - Art Academy of Latvia, Riga Technical University Science and Innovation Centre, National Library of Latvia; Associates Partners & Sons (Edgars Zvirgzdiņš personally) INTERNATIONAL - EIT Climate-KIC, which brings together 450 partners, Politechnica University (Romania), UC Leuven - Limburg University of Applied Sciences (Belgium), Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences (Hungary), Polytechnic Institute of Setubal (Portugal), St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences (Austria), International Design Center Berlin (Germany), The Bauhaus-Archive (Germany), Die Neue Sammlung (Germany), Arts at CERN (Switzerland); Germans Ermics (Netherlands) **BUDGET:** EUR 600,000

Establishment and development of the Valmiera Regional Dance House

Related EcoC events: Winter Dance Festival Performance "Industrial Currents". Contemporary dance performance "The Age of Man". Multimedia performance at the Neikenkalna Nature Concert Hall.

Martha Graham a 20th century American modern dancer and choreographer, said, *"Dance is revelation."* We would like to add to this: it is the revelation of something new that creates an impact. We want to introduce new dance genres to the people of the region, strengthen community confidence and develop the courage to be creative. Because that means you'll be noticed! Children and youth searching for their own path and ways of expression need it the most. And this movement is a good ally for youth in search of the great truths. Currently our biggest challenge is the homogeneity of dance genres, the limited educational opportunities in dance art and the low visibility of contemporary dance in society. We will overcome it! How? Building on the strong and broad tradition of dance, together with professionals in the field, we will create and develop a regional dance house based at Kurtuve. Dance teachers in Valmiera and their students will be involved in development of the dance house, as well as cooperation has been established with schools and regional associations. The Dance House will be established and operate as a **national level professional development school of contemporary dance** (there is no such school in Latvia), which will also serve as a leisure centre for people of different generations. It will be based on the experience and knowledge of dance houses in other European countries, such as *tanzhaus.nrw* in Düsseldorf, *Tanzhaus* Zürich in Zürich. Professional contemporary dance has existed in Latvia since 1996, but it still does not have its own permanent residence, so the **establishment of a dance house in Valmiera will be an achievement of national significance.**

During working hours, the dance house will be used by professional contemporary dance artists, and in the evenings, by local residents who will be able to learn dance and other movement skills, for example, seniors – ballroom dancing, youth – hip-hop and contemporary dance, expectant mothers – movement classes. New offerings will be created with the help of experts, using dance to enhance people's well-being, such as dance therapy for victims of violence, classes for people with mobility problems. Collaboration will be developed between contemporary dance and circus artists and specific communities or institutions, e.g. youth at risk, residents of social welfare centres and nursing homes, etc. Contemporary dance professionals will use the dance house for artistic creativity and development – staging new works, residencies for local and international artists, international summer camps, premieres or sketches of works in progress, informal conversations with the audience, bringing artists and residents together. Dance school preparation works have commenced in 2022 with the furnishing of the premises and programme development. The first events in the dance house will already be held in autumn. **The 2027 dance and visual arts series** at Kurtuve will include a number of projects highlighting the collaboration between contemporary dance and contemporary visual arts. They will be developed by well-known dance artists from across Europe:

Manuel Pelmus (Oslo/Bucharest). The Oslo-based Romanian choreographer is an internationally-claimed dance artist, who created the Romanian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2013.



Alexandra Pirici (Bucharest) is a Romanian choreographer who creates sculptural and architectural works with dancers, in which she talks with humour about monuments, borders and divisions created in the public and social space.

Boris Charmatz (Renne) is one of the most internationally renowned and radical contemporary dance choreographers, performers and thinkers of the 21st century, known for his virtuosic solo and duet works.

CURATOR: Valmiera Culture Centre, Agnese Lutce
LOCATION: Kurtuve Contemporary Art Centre, Valmiera and other cities in the region

PARTNERS: LOCAL - Valmiera County Culture Houses and Dance Groups; NATIONAL – Choreographers' Association, Latvian Academy of Culture, Patriarch Autumn Festival, Ģertrūdes Street Theatre, LAUKKU Association, Latvian Dance Information Centre, online magazine dance.lv, International Summer Dance School "Riga ON";

INTERNATIONAL - Arts Printing House (Lithuania), STL (Estonia), Zodiak Dance Centre (Finland), Notafe Summer Dance School and Festival (Estonia), tanzhaus.nrw (Germany), Tanzhaus Zurich (Switzerland), Manuel Pelmus (Norway), Alexandra Pirici (Romania), Boris Charmatz (France) BUDGET: EUR 200,000

Development of a Manor Network

Related ECoC activities: Musical cycle "Lullabies of the World in Manor Houses and Palaces". "Latvian Voices" A cappella festival. International Festival "Gardens of Light".

Valmiera was almost completely destroyed in the two world wars. The region unfortunately cannot offer a picturesque, historic Old Town, but we are proud of 28 castles and manor houses, which impress with the architectonics of their buildings, as well as the exquisite



beauty of their parks and gardens. This heritage is diverse - from a single building to an entire farm with gardens, parks and farmland. Historically, manor houses were the economic, social and spiritual centres through which **European cultural values and knowledge** entered Latvia. Unfortunately, in the course of historical events, the manors were confiscated and nationalised, thus condemning this cultural heritage to a slow demise: the buildings were mismanaged, irresponsibly destroyed and arbitrarily adapted to inappropriate functions, with no respect for artistic and cultural values. Today, the owners of manor houses in Latvia and Vidzeme are local municipalities, which use the buildings for public purposes, as well as associations, entrepreneurs and private individuals who have acquired the property at auction rather than inheriting it from generation to generation, as is still the case elsewhere in Europe. The **Manor Network** concept is based on the desire of

enthusiasts, employees, owners and active citizens of manor houses, castles and cultural heritage sites in Valmiera to cooperate in problemsolving, realise ideas and find new uses for historic sites. The **Manor Network will be a platform for cooperation** on various ideas and challenges related to the exploration and preservation of cultural heritage, responsible management, tourism development and events organisation. The **Valmiermuiža Culture Society** will coordinate the development of the network and its activities. The development of a sustainable network of manor houses is a short-term goal, but in the long term it is a tool to provide knowledge, skills and opportunities to network members. How will society benefit from this? For visitors, the network will be an invaluable resource and an opportunity to enjoy culture and nature at a leisurely pace, providing a sense of interaction between the historic and the contemporary.

The protection and preservation of cultural heritage is an important issue throughout Europe - owners and managers of manors and castles in France, the Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia and other European countries are looking for answers on how to preserve cultural heritage site and not lose or help find its identity in a changing environment in the face of global challenges. We will give an example of how to preserve the ancient breath of manor houses and castles and inspire them to find a new archetypal image that promotes community values, local patriotism and place identity.

Our development plan for the Manor Network is divided into three phases: 1. Preparatory phase, which we will implement from 2022 to 2026; 2. 2027, or the celebration year, during which we will focus on welcoming guests and events that we have developed; 3. Follow-up - starting with 2028, we will evaluate what has been done and accomplished and set the Network's objectives for the next period, as well as work towards them.

In the **preparatory phase**, we will organise refurbishment and improvement of buildings and surroundings, create seminars, knowledge and skill training activities to identify and make use of the historical potential of manors, restoration and maintenance of parks and gardens, prepare and organise cultural events, develop tourism offers etc. This will help to create high quality content and provide the basis for the part of the programme planned for 2027, which will be implemented through the course of the year in the manors and castles in the county. We will also set up a Manor Network Organisation, set up idea exchanges for the development of each site, jointly develop cultural tourism routes, organise events involving the local community, create a digital platform with virtual tours in several languages which will include information about the Manor Network, what each manor has to offer, tourist routes, etc.

During the **year of festivities**, the Manor Network will host several important Valmiera2027 events: the A capella Festival, the World Lullaby Festival, the Gardens of Light. We will organise an international conference on cultural heritage in the context of manors and castles and the future possibilities of this heritage. Here are the topics of the conference: the fate of manors in Europe, Bauhaus or building culture, digitisation of

cultural heritage. Our special offering is a range of events on manors throughout the territory of the Valmiera region.

In the **follow-up phase**, we will assess the progress and achievements of the 2022–2027 period, define the network’s future objectives and continue to carry out the activities needed to develop knowledge, skills and effective management approaches in the fields of culture and tourism. We will also create new and improve existing offerings and ensure that sites are accessible to the public. In the long term, we intend to develop a wider network in cooperation with other European manors.

CURATOR: Valmiermuiža Culture Society

LOCATION: Valmiera district manor houses and castles

PARTNERS: LOCAL - Valmiera Museum, Valmiera Integrated Library, regional manors and castles; NATIONAL - National Heritage Council, Latvian Association of Castles and Manors, Tourism Cluster "EnterGauja", Vidzeme Tourism Association; INTERNATIONAL - Les Amis de l'Esparrou (France), Garden Pearls, Green Railways, ENCOUNTER - European Network for Country House and Estate Research (Denmark), The Danish Research Centre for Manorial Studies (Denmark), Aarhus University (Denmark), TURIHAB network (Portugal), The European Route of Historic Gardens **BUDGET:** EUR 400,000

Development of the multimedia sector

Related ECoC activities: Valmiera International Multimedia Festival. Multimedia performance at the Neikenkalna Nature Concert Hall. Festival "Gardens of Light".

Everyone today is part of the digital transformation processes that the nation and its people are experiencing, but due to various factors, these processes are fraught with challenges, especially in the regional areas. Limited digital literacy, a heterogeneous quality of education, poor internet coverage and other factors hinder a successful and inclusive digital transformation. The new media arts sector has the potential to contribute to the development of a digital society.

However, it should be noted that new media art is mostly oriented towards a very narrow and specific audience with a strong connection to modern technologies in combination with an interest in contemporary art. Commonly available in Europe's major cities, which are characterised by a high level of urbanisation and development of the ICT sector, these art forms are mainly consumed by contemporary art and modern technology experts, ICT industry representatives and people who are closely involved in new media art or related industries. In the interdisciplinary context, the only regular synergy that occurs, exists between the high-tech, artistic and scientific fields, as well as in the context of the sector's educational processes. This means that most of the work is done with a ready-made audience, without contributing to the development of other segments. Many European cities, including Valmiera, face similar challenges. The answer to these challenges is the

establishment of a new tradition - the Valmiera Multimedia Festival. The resources, talents and expertise of the Valmiera School of Design and Art and the Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences will become the basis of the tradition, ensuring the possibility of a full cycle of education and scientific research in multimedia fields, from high school to doctoral studies. Both educational institutions have confirmed their readiness to be involved in the process. They also take into account the efforts that already exist to integrate multimedia art events into the cultural life of the Valmiera region. Over a short period of time, events with multimedia participation have been very well received and appreciated by the local community.

The mission of the Valmiera Multimedia Festival is to bridge the gap between people, art and technology by providing both a quality new media art experience and mediation process, as well as industry knowledge transfer and open dialogue on synergy opportunities with other industries. The festival is part of the city's long-term cultural strategy, with the goal of becoming a UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts by 2027. The first international festival with arts and education programmes for different audiences will take place in September 2022. In 2023, a major cooperation project with Norway is planned, with a separate festival with an arts and education programme for young people, accessible both physically and digitally.

Professionals in this genre, together with experienced artists from Europe and around the world, will make use of the festival to showcase achievements in multimedia fields such as light objects, installations, video and audio art forms, the possibilities of modern technologies in the world of augmented reality (XR), etc. The programme will initially focus on art forms that are easier to understand and are characterised, for example, by aesthetic pleasure, the use of everyday technologies and other elements. Gradually, by 2027, audiences will be accustomed to innovative and complex forms, the perception of which requires both prior experience of the diversity of multimedia and an understanding of technology, data or the wider context of the artwork. In 2027, an international media festival will be held to look back on the achievements of the previous five years and develop future initiatives (described in the 2027 AUTUMN cycle).

During the PROCESS period we will make Valmiera a home for professional multimedia and audiovisual art expressions from idea development to realisation by offering high quality cultural products in Latvia and abroad. The greatest focus will be on **developing the knowledge and skills of existing and future professionals** in the field through formal and non-formal education. We will improve multimedia and audiovisual education programmes in vocational and educational schools in the region, creating an environment where creative work is produced on a practical level - **students are provided with extensive internship opportunities, mentoring support and co-creation initiatives**. At the same time, we will promote the attractiveness of the Multimedia and Audiovisual Master's degree programme at Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences and increase the number of students. To achieve this,

we have attracted a wide range of cooperation partners, bringing together industry leaders at European and even global level. This will allow the emergence of new and the development of existing multimedia and audiovisual content creators who are open to technology and innovative artistic forms. Education partners: *York St John University* (UK), *Tallinn University Baltic Film and Media School, Estonian Academy of Arts, Tartu Art School* (Estonia), *Vilnius Academy of Arts* (Lithuania), *Ars Electronica Future Thinking School* (Austria), *XR stories* (Research and development for the future of immersive and interactive storytelling) (UK), *University of Salento department of Engineering for Innovation* (Italy).

By organising **knowledge, experience exchange and networking events for industry professionals**, we will ensure the linking of artistic processes with new media research in other sectors, cross-sectoral exchanges and co-creation opportunities, for example with events, entertainment, tourism, marketing, culture and other related industries. We will provide systematic support for the creative processes of media art professionals by organising **international residencies for new media artists and collaborative projects within our network of partners**.

CURATOR OF THE INITIATIVE: Ltd. “Story Hub”

LOCATION: Industrial Design and Innovation Centre, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Kurtuve Centre for Contemporary Art, Valmiera Culture Centre, Valmiera Library, Valmiera Business and Innovation Incubator

PARTNERS: LOCAL - Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Valmiera School of Design and Art, Valmiera Development Agency, Valmiera Co-creation Workshop DARE, URDA - Nature and Technology Park; NATIONAL - Faculty of New Media Art, Liepaja University, Department of Audiovisual and Media Art, Art Academy of Latvia, Riga TechGirls, association "ASTE. Art, Science, Technology, Education"; INTERNATIONAL - Braga Media Arts, Index - Art and Technology Biennial (Portugal), Košice Creative Industry Košice, Košice Art & Tech Days (Slovakia), York Mediale (United Kingdom), PIDS Enghien (International Festival of Cinema and Visual Effects) (France), Media Art festival “Seasons of Media Arts” (Germany), Ars Electronica Festival (Austria), International Festival of Digital Creativity & Electronic Music “MUTEK” (Canada), The International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA), Sapporo – UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts (Japan), Dakar Centre Socioculturel de Fann-Point E-Amitié (Senegal) **BUDGET:** EUR 250,000

Simjūds + Renaissance

Related ECoC activities: Development of a Manor Network. “Simjūds +” major event.

The origins of the Simjuds’ fair date back to the Middle Ages. It was the region's most important event for craftsmen and traders, not only economically, but also culturally and socially. The name of the fair dates back to 1283, when the foundation stone was laid for the church in Valmiera, with Saint Simon as its patron saint. Back then the market place was in front of the church and the autumn market was held on Simon's Day (which is also St Jude's Day). In the centuries to follow, the

market day was marked in the calendar, where, due to space constraints, Simon's and Jude's days were marked "Sim., Jude" – “Simjūda”.

In the course of the 20th century, the market has partly lost its unique aura associated with farming culture, becoming a place for the exchange of soulless commodities - money. We want to restore its strength and charm, allowing it to become once again the largest crafts market in the Vidzeme region. The market will celebrate local craftsmen whose skills are the origin of many modern technologies and products that are still produced using local natural resources. The main objective of the “Simjūds+ network” is to encourage closer cooperation between producers, craftsmen and traders in order to renew the spirit and philosophy of the ancient Hanseatic market - to pay more attention to the quality of goods, the sustainability of their production and delivery, including environmental and green thinking aspects, the inclusion of local traditions and culture in the life of the market, the market as a place for public consultation. A digital solution will be set up to coordinate the activities of the network. A "Simjuds +" major event will be held in autumn 2027.

“Simjūds +” will be a network of artisans and local produce markets from the Valmiera region. Over ten different craft and local produce markets are held regularly in the region, offering unique experiences at different times of the year. For example, "Gardu muti" in Valmiermuiža - this is where the *Slow Food* community has been established to defend, highlight and promote the national treasures of local flavours, biodiversity, care for the environment, authentic craftsmanship and responsible farming. Vaidava's "Mālēdiena Festival" celebrates ceramic artists and is also a market. The Ipiķi-Mōisakūla Border Market brings together Estonian and Latvian craftspeople, culinary experts, traders, amateur artists and visitors. Starting from 2025, a Valmiera2027 event zone will be integrated into the major markets of the Valmiera municipality, with at least two or three foreign twin towns or partner cities hosting home producers and craftsmen, as well as informing the public about the preparation and planned events of the ECoC programme.

CURATOR: Valmiera Museum, Union of Cities: the Hansa

Location: City of Valmiera

PARTNERS: LOCAL - Valmiera county cultural centres, folk dance groups, home producers, craftsmen; NATIONAL - dance groups and traders of the Hanseatic League cities of Riga, Limbaži, Kuldīga, Ventspils, Cēsis, Koknese, via Hanseatica; INTERNATIONAL - The Hanseatic League, cities participating in the Via Hanseatica tourist route - Klaipėda (Lithuania), Gdańsk (Poland), Lübeck (Germany), Kaunas (Lithuania), Tartu, Tallinn (Estonia), etc., HANSEartWORKS programme, European Hansemuseum (Germany), Hanseatic Museum and Schøtstuene (Norway), ERIH (European Route of Industrial Heritage), Slow Food International **BUDGET:** EUR 150,000

Do it Yourself or development of the DIY movement

Related ECoC activities: All outdoor activities. Movement “DIY Sundays”. Cross-thematic activities.

The ability to spend quality time doing things that bring joy and enrichment – spiritually, emotionally or intellectually, and provide a sense of community or support – is how individuals and societies develop a local culture. In addition, a culturally interested and engaged person is also a good partner for the ECoC. We find this very important because a happy and emotionally-charged person is more open to dialogue with the world and is a good ally for jointly bridging the cultural gap, as well as ready to do things together that cannot be done individually. That’s why, in 2021, we already started to build and strengthen the **DIY movement**, where people organise events in their neighbourhoods, villages or backyards that bring joy and enrichment to their fellow human beings, giving them a sense of community. How does it happen? By organising events to build and strengthen social capital or bridges between different DIY communities. **We are already organising events that bring together people with common and different hobbies, and will continue to maintain different platforms of interest both digitally and in person.**

By the time we submitted this proposal, we met with many interest and neighbourhood initiative groups, not only in Valmiera, but throughout the region in order to explore what our people like, care about and would like to see in the ECoC programme. We have brought together craftspeople (knitters, lace makers, weavers, etc.), singers, dancers, brain game enthusiasts, gardeners, those who enjoy sport in their leisure time, Nordic walkers, people who enjoy brain teasers in various intellectual pursuits and others.

That’s why we will support various interest and initiative groups throughout this period from 2022 onwards – giving them opportunities to meet more frequently, to receive support from professionals and experts, to exhibit their work, to go on experience exchange trips to meet like-minded groups and people with different views in the local region, Vidzeme, Latvia, Europe and other countries. We will invite them to get involved in the planning and implementation of ECoC events, and organise open calls that will provide opportunities for these micro-ideas.

In 2027, we will let these initiatives shine brightly in many **mini-celebration events** that will be included in larger ECoC events, so that they will be noticed by both local residents and visitors to the region. We have outlined three mini-festivals of interest groups below, but the number of events that will be supported will be much larger. **The Knitting Festival in Rūjiņa** will be organised in cooperation with *Mulgi Experience Centre* (Estonia), *Abja-Paluoja* (Estonia), *Steinhagen* (Germany), *Higashikawa* (Japan). The guests of the **lace-making festival** will be lace-makers from *Haapsalu* (Estonia) and *Higashikawa* (Japan). **Social dance movement “Dance with Joy!”** will be created together with the *Sports Dance Studio “Edelveiss”*, *Andris Miķelsons’ Dance School*, *Association “Dance Club Forte”*, *Tantsuklubi Fox*, *Eva Tantsykool*, *Centro de Tango* (Estonia), *Dance Club “ATŽALINAS”* (Lithuania).

CURATOR OF THE EVENT: Valmiera Culture Centre

LOCATION: City of Valmiera and region

PARTNERS: LOCAL – Valmiera’s region cultural centres, craftsmen, interest groups, Valmiera School of Design and Art; NATIONAL and INTERNATIONAL - specific to each event (named next to examples) **BUDGET:** EUR 200,000

The Creative Awakening of a Living Environment

Related EcoC activities: All outdoor activities

As an industrial city, Valmiera has to simultaneously deal with the negative consequences of poor management in the Soviet era and to respond to the main challenges of the 21st century: climate change and human impact. **Developing the city centre, balancing industrial needs with public interests, harnessing the potential of natural assets to improve the quality of life** – we are already tackling these together with local residents, urban planners, conservation organisations and local communities. Our goal is to work together to make Valmiera and the region an attractive and people-friendly outdoor space with diverse opportunities for its use.

To achieve this, we will already attract funding from the European Union and the private sector during **PROCESS** and reduce the fragmentation and car-centricity of the city centre, organise transport systems and flows, reduce traffic through the centre and increase the use of environmentally-friendly vehicles. We will also give a new look to squares and areas where cultural events are held and visitors gather. We will create a Community Dance House – a large covered dance terrace, accessible all year round. The Gauja riverside areas will experience a renaissance, driven by the growing demand for quality outdoor spaces. At present, they contrast strikingly with the natural landscape of the valley and the urban environment nearby. We will clear the banks of everything inessential and unpleasant to the eye, thus creating an outdoor space that is suitable for open-air art workshops, nature offices, active recreation and more. A construction project is being drawn up to realise the idea. The potential of the rest of the municipality will be utilised: for the preservation and improvement of natural sites and landscapes, restoration and sustainable use of cultural and historical sites.

In order to raise people’s awareness of issues affecting and improving their living environment, and to encourage them to look more closely and better see the value and potential of existing natural and environmental resources, the ECoC programme cycles will include various micro-events, which we have combined into three major events. In the spring cycle we will invite people to take part in **Nature Academy** events, in the summer – the **Industrial Culture Festival**, and in the autumn to get to know and make friends with the natural sites selected for the **River Cultural Stories** programme. We have described them in more detail in the respective cycles.

The natural sites and routes developed to reach them will be presented as a **multilingual digital solution - an interactive map, which, with the use of QR codes, will allow people to discover each place and its story either individually, with their family or friends.** Micro-routes will be created



for people with special needs, seniors and families with children, as well as multi-day routes, which will be useful for those seeking a challenge and will be a reason to stay in Valmiera and its surroundings longer than originally planned.

All attractions will be marked with signage and support tools for easy access for people with various disabilities. The routes will be supplemented with **audio and video guides, digital - 3D, virtual and augmented reality** elements that will allow participants to take part in an artistic adventure from anywhere in the world at their own convenience. The environmental transformation will be accompanied by the targeted involvement of local communities in all phases of change, including many smaller initiatives such as clean-ups, which also bring communities together, promote empathy for the environment, and encourage changes in everyday behaviour and action. Why do we think this is necessary? Because substantive change cannot be achieved by large-scale and financially intensive projects alone. We have left community initiatives, like DIY, open to proposals because people need freedom of thought and action and resources to initiate.

CURATOR: Valmiera Tourism Council

LOCATION: City of Valmiera and region outdoor spaces

PARTNERS: LOCAL – Vidzeme Tourism Association, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (Institute of Social, Economic and Humanities Research), Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences Virtual and Augmented Reality Laboratory, Krāču kakta Association "Katapulta", Ltd. "Valmieras ūdens", Valmiera Museum, regional educational institutions, Lake Burtnieks Fishermens' Association, Gauja Sustainable Development Association, Association "North Vidzeme Geoparks", local communities; NATIONAL - Baltic Environmental Forum, Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre, Latvian Rural Tourism Association "Lauku ceļotājs", Latvian Nature Tourism Association, Association "Ascendum", newspaper "Satori", project "Zaļgalvis", Latvian Ceramics Association, Porcelain Museum; INTERNATIONAL - University of Tartu (Estonia), Mome University of Art and Design (Hungary), European Green Railways Association **BUDGET:** EUR 400,000

Community cinema

Related ECoC activities: International Cycling Film Festival "Cinema Pedal".

Community art entered the Western cultural space in the 1960s, when it became a form of cultural democracy. It most often takes the form of applied theatre or visual art. Community art aims to create cultural content centred on the community – the stories, issues and interests of local people associated with their daily lives and where they live. The creative process involves professionals and community representatives. It is not only the creation of the artwork that is important, but also the participation and development of the participants – their self-awareness and their search for specific solutions to community challenges. It is essential to create a safe environment in which participants can challenge ideas, experiment, learn new skills, express their thoughts and be heard.

Audiovisual art has made comparatively less use of the community approach. Although documentary film often

represents different communities, it is largely a filmmaker's subjective interpretation of a community's story, with little or no impact on the community itself. We see great potential in this approach, both because of the diversity of the audiovisual language, the long-term impact and the unlimited possibilities for distribution. The audiovisual approach offers the opportunity to create stories in forms that reach both local and international audiences, and these shared experiences can become models for communities and artists elsewhere in the world.

The **aim of the initiative is to involve different communities in the Valmiera region in filmmaking, giving them the opportunity to become aware of their community's place and role in society**, to define their strengths and challenges and to create their own stories together with professionals. In the process of community filmmaking, interdisciplinary teams will be formed in which film professionals will work closely with social anthropologists, psychotherapists, art therapists, education specialists, historians, social workers and other creative professionals from Latvia and Europe.

The result can be creation of documentaries which capture the process, as well as short animations that tell personal experience stories, or staged retrospectives and interactive digital experiences. Animation is a way to reach communities that cannot be filmed (such as people in prison) or individuals who do not want to be in front of the camera themselves. During the production of the short films, the community will be provided with expert support or advice to solve an identified problem.

In addition to the short stories, materials will be collected to provide the audience of the produced works with a deeper insight and understanding of the issues and the situation of the community as revealed in the short films. This will include archival material, expert commentary, current research data, etc. The results will be screened at special events at Kurtuve, as well as at community gatherings, cultural and NGO centres across Latvia, each event complemented by a discussion, seminar, workshop or other thematically-related form of artistic and creative expression.

Alongside the creative process, **a methodology for working with communities will be developed with the help of audiovisual art**. The experts involved will play a key role in its development, combining knowledge and approaches from different disciplines to develop a new model of cooperation and engagement, taking into account the interests of all stakeholders and the stages and specificities of audiovisual content creation. **The target audience of the methodology are community mediators addressing problems in a specific environment and filmmakers interested in community involvement in film production both in Latvia and Europe.**

From 2023 to 2026, one short film (a documentary, an animation or a film combined with elements of fiction) will be produced about one community each year. In 2027, three communities will be worked on in parallel, making a total of seven audiovisual works. In 2027, all the stories will be screened in Kurtuve during a special forum dedicated to the communities. The event will be complemented by a presentation of the developed methodology, discussions and workshops during which participants will share their experiences on community engagement approaches and the social challenges that unite them.

The project aims to address complex and often unlikable social communities, which are at the same time socially at-risk or marginalised groups. We have identified a number

of micro-communities as potential participants in the short films, but we are aware that negotiations and their consent will be necessary, as not only human but also moral and ethical aspects will be addressed. We are looking at Valmiera prison – current and former prisoners, day centres for people with mental disabilities, the Strenči psychoneurological clinic where drug and alcohol addicts are treated. The second chosen direction is site-specific storytelling, such as the unique town called Seda with its rich cultural heritage from the Soviet period. This direction offers a wide opportunity to visualise the communities living in such places, reassessing history, traditions and values in the context of contemporary culture.

The collected materials and short films produced will be uploaded and made available in a repository – process.valmiera2027.eu. The primary distribution plan for the short films will be developed in cooperation with community-based NGOs in Latvia and Europe. The free short film series will be offered to the public media in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

CURATOR: Ltd. "Story Hub", Foundation "Iespēju tilts"

LOCATION: Valmiera region, seven communities

PARTNERS: LOCAL - associations founded by local communities (Valmiera District Volunteer Firefighters Association, Valmiera Lithuanian Association "Gintaras", Rural Women's Association "Dzine"), day-care centres for people with mental disabilities (Social Care Centre "Lode", Nursing Home "Rūja", Social Care Centre "Seda"), Valmiera Prison, VSIA "Strenči Psychoneurological Hospital", Ipiķu, Ramata and Lode parish cultural centres; NATIONAL - Society Integration Foundation, Latvian- Estonian Institute, Estonian Embassy in Latvia, foundation "Initium", Riga Stradins University "Art Therapy" study program, Latvian Art therapy association, Latvijas Mākslas terapijas asociācija, Latvian Doctors Association of Psychotherapists , Latvian Association of Anthropologists; INTERNATIONAL - Latvian National Cultural Society of Estonia, The Estonian Documentary Guild (Estonia), Baltic Applied Theatre School (BATS) (expert Nazha Harb), Helsingør Theatre, Odin Teatret (Denmark), i-Docs (expert Sandra Gaudenzi), Honig Studios (expert Jiannis Sotiropoulos) (Germany), iDrops (Belgium), Nordic Youth Film Festival **BUDGET:** EUR 160,000

2027 WINTER CYCLE – Notice and recognise us!

Is it possible to tell in one day what has been achieved in six years? No! That's why we will do it and tell it all throughout the whole year, starting the ECoC programme with the winter cycle events. Everyone will be invited to discover Valmiera's cultural values, the experience and skills acquired during the process, see the results and evaluate the achievements. **The four events of the winter cycle - Pavilions of the Four Seasons, Transformation Fixations, Opening of the Industrial Design and Innovation Centre, Opening of the Gustavs Klucis Exhibition - will be the opening events of Valmiera2027.**

Pavilions for cultural and natural diversity

Valmiera region is surrounded by nature and is nature itself. That's why we will start the Valmiera2027 programme with the

opening of the pavilions of culture and nature diversity. In a world where the preservation of cultural and natural diversity is becoming increasingly more important, green Latvia and Valmiera have something to say. The idea is to create pavilions for various events in the Valmiera region, designed and built by outstanding Latvian and international architects and artists. They will become unusual, artistically and architecturally fascinating landmarks that will promote the public's "literacy" in nature, environment and culture, aesthetic intelligence, strengthen the local people's sense of belonging and community, as well as recognition of the Valmiera Region on a global scale. The pavilions will serve as heralds of new thinking, which is so topical in the world today, yet so familiar in Latvia – sensitive, harmonious and cultural integration into nature.

Seven easily transformable pavilions will be placed in the urban environment: three in the City of Valmiera and one each in the other towns of the region. Combining Valmiera's iconic, traditional and innovative building materials (peat, hemp, wood, brick, fibreglass fabric, etc.), as well as the world's latest ideas in environmental design, the architecture of the pavilions will set an example in creating an environmentally friendly, aesthetically and conceptually high quality living environment and landscape.

They will become concert venues, camps for volunteers and travellers, nature observation and rest shelters, art, light and soundscapes, information and exchange points, care and recycling points, wind, solar and water energy collectors, permaculture gardens, urban landscaping elements and other objects cultivating natural and cultural diversity.

In 2025, a Europe-wide competition will be launched, inviting professionals to propose contemporary, sustainable cultural spaces in line with the micro-city concept, involving the local community in the process. The seven solutions selected by an international jury and the public will be materialised – built and deployed in the urban environment. The interior of the pavilions will be changed according to the seasons, thus indicating the cyclical flow of different natural processes. The curators will be Austris Mailītis, one of the leading Latvian architects, and Andris Eglītis, one of the most outstanding contemporary Latvian artists.

What will Valmiera gain? Seven high quality objects of contemporary architecture – a collection of contemporary architecture that will become an object of interest for European architects and tourists. Residents will benefit from a higher quality, more contemporary public environment. This development will be a European-level laboratory for how to address the issue of accessibility to cultural space in micro-cities with minimal investment and passive buildings made of local materials. It will be the new Bauhaus materialised!

At the end of the ECoC year, the pavilions will remain in the care of the municipality and local communities as cultural spaces to meet, be heard, see an exhibition or create a new artwork, and will become a symbolic testament to modernity, preserving in our memory the story of the great adventure of Valmiera2027.

CURATOR: Austris Mailītis, architect, and Andris Eglītis, artist

LOCATION: Valmiera Municipality

PARTNERS: LOCAL- Valmiera Municipality Development Council and Real Estate Management Council, residents and community initiative groups; NATIONAL- Latvian Association of Architects; INTERNATIONAL- architects involved in the competition **BUDGET:** EUR 900,000



Transformation fixations

Transformation fixations will serve as a retrospective look back at the Valmiera ECoC journey. Why? We want to create, preserve and share the stories of the journey and to draw inspiration for future stories. Through photography and video art we will show how we have been able to fill the cultural gap in our region, what positive changes take place in society and the environment when transformation is based on determination and community involvement. We will have stories to tell!

Our transformation journey is inspired by the photobook “Glass Strenči”, published in 2019, which showcases a contemporary perspective on archive photographs. It is the story of the town of Strenči in the Valmiera region between the two world wars. Negatives from the Latvian Museum of Photography were used in the preparation of the book. On 14 October 2021, at the anniversary session of the Assembly of the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO, this collection was included in the Latvian National Register of the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme.

Drawing inspiration from this publication, we will capture the stories of individuals, places and organisations, as well as processes and events, in photography and video over the six years of preparation, to be translated into a photo-reflection and documentary about the era. Even more, we will create a dialogue between the newly created photographic material and "Glass Strenči". In other words, we will develop a unique, alternative and surprising photo story as a permanent exhibition in Strenči using modern technologies and sustainable solutions. It will become a magnet for European photo professionals and enthusiasts, and serve as a proof to ourselves and to the world that micro-city stories can have great and lasting worldwide resonance. Local photographic and multimedia artists, cultural and historical professionals will be involved in production of the materials. The mission of photography will be to become a medium for engaging people and introducing them to contemporary art, in order to build a basis for the acceptance and recognition of more complex strands of contemporary culture.

In collaboration with film studio VFS Films, a documentary will also be made about the journey of the Valmiera region towards the ECoC, documenting people's opinions, attitudes, participation in the preparation of the programme, feelings, as well as events. What do we want the film to say? We want it to reveal the journey of transformation of the cultural ecosystem, its cracks and moments of triumph – to create a documentary retrospective that includes a visual representation of the lessons learnt. It will be a source of new ideas for continuing change.

An internet subdomain process.valmiera2027.eu – a repository linked to the Valmiera Municipality website, will be created to preserve, organise and make accessible the photographs, videos and other materials produced. We have agreed to cooperate with the ECoC Kaunas2022.

It is important for Valmierians to see the difference between where we were in 2022 and where we are at the end of PROCESS. To see how the "cultural gap has been filled", to see the face of ancient and recent heritage,

while developing the sharing of experiences and memories as a resource for constructing the identity of a place. The website will be developed as a source of knowledge and inspiration for every artist and ECoC programme developer in the region, Latvia, Europe and worldwide, where they can find information and impressions to later reflect in their artworks in different media – music, paintings, environmental objects, theatre performances and other media. After 2027, the repository will be added to the repository at the Valmiera Integrated Library, which will ensure the accessibility of the materials.

CURATOR: Valmiera2027 Office

LOCATION: Industrial Design and Innovation Centre

PARTNERS: LOCAL - Valmiera residents, photographers, multimedia artists; NATIONAL - "VFS Films", National Library of Latvia (LNB), Latvian-Estonian Institute, museums in the Vidzeme region; INTERNATIONAL - Sites of Memory, Memory Office - Kaunas2022 (Lithuania), University of Tartu (Estonia), The Estonian Documentary Guild (Estonia), Estonian National Library (Estonia), Estonian National Museum (Estonia), Tartu2024, Nova Gorica 2025 **BUDGET:** EUR 200,000

Opening of the Industrial Design and Innovation Centre

Valmiera Industrial Park, which will be the location of the Industrial Design and Innovation Centre, is already under construction. Recommendations of the European Green Deal are being taken into account in its construction. By creating a design and innovation centre and integrating it into the exosystem of the industrial park, we will show respect and gratitude to regional and national industry for its contribution to the development of the region and the nation, and we will have created an important foundation and opportunity for the development of a future economy and lifestyle that combines art, culture, environment, science and technology.

One of the ECoC kick-off events will be the opening of the Valmiera Bauhaus – Industrial Design and Innovation Centre in the 2027 winter cycle. The event will be attended by artists from the region, creative industry professionals, teachers and students from the Valmiera School of Design and Art, as well as members of other creative groups working at the centre. Invited guests will include representatives of the European Commission Representation in Latvia, Latvian Members of the European Parliament, representatives of the Ministry of Economics, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Environment and Regional Development, Foreign Investors Council, media and others.

Guests will be introduced to the permanent and changing exhibitions, take part in a technology demonstration and try out the solutions provided by the virtual environment. Technology Residencies will provide an opportunity to get acquainted with the technologies (equipment and its functionality) available at the Centre, as well as the work and achievements of PROCESS will be demonstrated by users of the residencies – experienced and start-up companies, young designers and artists, students. In the co-working space, everyone will have the opportunity to create a design object. The Future Business Lab will organise a forum on topical issues

concerning the business environment, education, research and technological development and the importance of sectoral synergies.

CURATOR: Evelīna Ozola, architect and urban planner, content curator at creative industries platform FOLD

LOCATION: Industrial Design and Innovation Centre

PARTNERS: LOCAL - Valmiera Entrepreneurs' Club, Vidzeme, Valmiera Business and Innovation Incubator, Vidzeme Design and Art Secondary School, Valmiera Technical School, Valmiera Museum, Valmiera Integrated Library; NATIONAL - Art Academy of Latvia, Riga Technical University Science and Innovation Centre, National Library of Latvia, Latvian Social Entrepreneurship Association, Latvian Association of Small and Video Entrepreneurs, Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Latvia, LIAA Valmiera Business Incubator, Vidzeme Planning Region, Latvian Designers' Union, Ltd. ÉTER, Riga TechGirls; INTERNATIONAL - EIT Climate-KIC, which brings together 450 partners, IDZ (International Design Center Berlin) (Germany), The Bauhaus-Archive (Germany), Die Neue Sammlung (Germany), World Design Organization, Aveiro 2027 **BUDGET:** EUR 60,000

Gustavs Klucis exhibition opening at the Kurtuve Centre for Contemporary Art

Gustavs Klucis, world-famous artist, pioneer of photomontage and constructivism, the most prominent representative of kinetic design and political posters, was born in 1895 in Valmiera region. The Latvian National Museum of Art holds the largest and most important collection of Gustavs Klucis' works in the world, which has been exhibited in the USA, France, Italy, Russia, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain and continues to attract international attention.

Gustavs Klucis' life and artistic career were linked to Russia. In 1917 he took part in the revolution, volunteered for the Latvian Riflemen and guarded Lenin in Smolny. In the autumn of 1918, Gustav Klucis was sent to study at the State Art and Technical Workshops (Высшие художественно-технические мастерские), where he studied briefly with Kazimir Malevich and Konstantin Korovin. From 1924 to 1930 he worked at his Alma mater. The student forge produced "artists involved in manufacturing, whose goal was a broad social and cultural impact on the mass public", who were "armed to the teeth with all the scientific and technical achievements of the day". Behind this revolutionary rhetoric was the experience of avant-garde art and the teachings of the German Bauhaus. During Stalin's repressions in 1938, Gustavs Klucis was arrested and shot. Klucis was a global luminary of graphic design who largely defined the propaganda language of the socialist revolution, and also a man with a tragic fate.

The composition Dynamic City (1919) is one of Gustavs Klucis' best-known early photomontages, using paint, canvas, glass, iron and asphalt, of which Klucis said: "The city was turning on its axis. Whichever way you turn it, it is correct, without a top and a bottom. The same shape reacted in different ways." We have chosen the world-famous artist's idea of the dynamic city as the slogan for Valmiera2027. We are certain that Gustavs Klucis is the most appropriate choice to light the fire of modernity in the newly-established Kurtuve Centre for

Contemporary Art, as the period during which his works were created has had a significant impact on the defining features and scars of Valmiera. But there are also benefits – today's industrial enterprises have springboarded, based on this legacy of the past. That is why, during the month of the EcoC launch, we will also realise the first globally significant cultural event – an exhibition of Gustavs Klucis' works in the new cultural space, highlighting his role and influence in world art history, exploring his controversial personality and inviting everyone to a discussion about the connection between art and Gustavs Klucis' chosen life path and personal ambitions. The centre will be named after Gustavs Klucis to highlight the artist's roots and belonging to Valmiera. The international exhibition of Gustavs Klucis' works will be organised with the participation and support of national and international art institutions, as well as with the involvement of the artist's family.

CURATOR: Latvian National Museum of Art

LOCATION: Kurtuve Contemporary Art Centre

PARTNERS: NATIONAL - VFS Films, Iveta Derkusova; INTERNATIONAL - Roksana Markoči (The Museum of Modern Art New York (MOMA)), International Centre of Photography, TATE Modern (UK), State Museum of Contemporary Art - Costakis Collection (Greece), Berardo Collection Museum Museum (Portugal), G.Klucis' family. **BUDGET:** EUR 100,000

Winter Dance Festival

The Winter Dance Festival will be a joint celebration of the diverse traditional and contemporary dance forms, involving professional and amateur dance groups of all dance genres from the Valmiera region in preparation and performance, as well as international dance groups. We will combine traditional with contemporary dance, wearing folk costumes and dance costumes with latest designs, everyone will be invited to dance. The planned concert programme will be a performance, including both well-known 20th and 21st century stage dances and choreographies specially created for the festival, highlighting each dance genre and weaving them into a common story. The productions will be performed as concerts by professional and amateur companies, as well as collaborative dances with residents, bringing together experienced dancers with people who have never danced before. The festival will take place in the winter season of 2027 on the Valmiera City open-air stage.

The main idea of the festival is the story of Valmiera's connection with the countries and peoples of Northern Europe, with whom we share a common cultural space, love of tradition, dance and movement. We are also united by the magnificent, diverse nature of the North. Sometimes harsh, unpredictable. Snow, frost and icicles on the window panes. Frost in tree branches. Snowflakes that melt at the touch of a warm breath. The breath of winter – in and out. We not only feel it, we can see it! All the dances included and prepared for the show will be performed in several concerts by local and visiting dance groups. Multimedia and environmental installations will be created to set the mood, allowing



you to feel the charm of Northern European nature. Bonfires will be lit and hot tea available at the venue to enhance well-being.

CURATOR: Valmiera Culture Centre, choreographer Jānis Ērglis
LOCATION: Valmiera city and county outdoor spaces
PARTNERS: LOCAL - Valmiera District dance groups; INTERNATIONAL - Latvian National Culture Centre; INTERNATIONAL - Latvian diaspora dance groups (i.e. dance group "Straumēni" (UK), "Trejdeksnītis" (Germany)), etc. in cooperation with the European Latvian Association, Norwegian traditional music and dance Association (Norway), Dans Folkedans (Denmark), Eric Sahlström Institute (Sweden), Kaustinen Folk Music Festival (Finland), Siglufjörður Folk Music Festival (Iceland)
BUDGET: EUR 100,000

Spiritual Music Festival

Historically, the development of sacred music in Latvia is closely linked to the development of sacred music in Europe, and churches still serve as meeting places for such music and its listeners, where the musical experience is enhanced by the sound of the organ. Three organs built by well-known European organ builder Friedrich Ladegast are located in churches in the Valmiera region. In 2027, to mark the 160th anniversary of the organs in churches in Burtnieki and Matīši, a Spiritual Music Festival will be organised with a special focus on organ music. The festival will be preceded by concert programmes during the PROCESS period, featuring works by popular and lesser-known composers from around the world, as well as compositions and new works written by Latvian composers from different periods. The programmes will look for combinations of different instruments, such as organ + kokle + voice, and will be complemented with contemporary expressions (dance, multimedia, lighting effects, sound effects). The concert programmes will be performed by **the best organists from Latvia and Europe**. Several other important sacred music events will also be held during the festival.

Preparations for the festival will begin in 2022 with **restoration of the Burtnieki Church organ**, which is expected to be completed in 2024. The restoration will be carried out with the support of public and private funding. In 2025 and 2026, an organ register will be created and organ building and playing masterclasses will be organised for Latvian and foreign organists and parish organists. In 2026, the preparatory process will begin and continue until the festival: a concert programme will be developed, agreements made on participation in the events with artists and participating church parishes, preparation will be underway for concerts and related events, as well as a video projection, a children's drawing open-call in which pupils from the Valmiera Region and Vidzeme Region educational institutions can submit their works, and a virtual educational game will be developed. Singers from choirs in the Valmiera Region will be involved in filming the video projection. The producer of the festival is **Māra Jēgere**. The festival will be a three-day event during which organ professionals and visitors will be able to enjoy the diverse sounds of this musical instrument. On the final day, **world-renowned Latvian organist Iveta Apkalna** will perform new works by contemporary Latvian composers.

CURATOR: Māra Jēgere (former producer of International Sacred Music Festival)
LOCATION: Burtnieki Church, Matīšu Church, Valmiera St. Simon's Church
PARTNERS: LOCAL - organist Līga Ivāne, organist of St. Simon's Church Leons Āķers; INTERNATIONAL - Viesturs Ilsums, organist Iveta Apkalna, organists Larisa Carjkova, Ilona Birgele, Aivars Kalējs, Story Hub Ltd, Contemporary Dance Department of the Latvian Academy of Culture, State Academic Choir "Latvija"; INTERNATIONAL - Conrad Scheffler and Kristian Wegscheider (Germany), Valga St. John's Church (Estonia), International Organ Music Festival (Lithuania), "Organs of the Cathedral" International Organ Music Festival (Poland), The Haarlem International Summer Academy for Organists (Netherlands), Terra Sancta Organ Festival (Israel), Spreckels Organ Society (USA), European Choral Association
BUDGET: EUR 80,000

Musical cycle "Lullabies of the World in Manor Houses and Castles"

The lullaby is one of the oldest genres of music known throughout the world. It is one of the first melodies we hear and it accompanies us throughout our lives, comforting, nurturing and protecting us. Latvians have many lullabies, and one of them, "Ai-jā žū-žū", was included by the music publisher Carus in the selection of the most beautiful lullabies *"Lullabies of the World"*.

The European Lullabies cycle will be a series of seven chamber music-format concerts to be held in the region's manor houses and castles during the ECoC winter season (January–February), thus adding an even more special atmosphere and ambience to the sound of music. The concerts will be presented by Latvian musician families and European guest artists. The main aim of the concert series is to explore the **diversity of European culture through lullabies and to highlight the tradition of family music-making**. The event will focus on the senses – the interplay of sound and light, scent, comfortable and cosy furnishings that will help the audience unwind. European lullabies will be performed in their original languages, allowing you to experience the diversity of European languages.

The events of the series are primarily aimed at families with children and folk music lovers, but everyone is welcome. **Edgars Raginskis**, a well-known musicologist in Latvia, will introduce the programme, the artists, the instruments and the stories outlining the origin of the selected pieces. The events will be accessible in person and remotely.

CURATOR: Edgars Raginskis, musicologist
LOCATION: Valmiera district manor houses and castles
PARTNERS: LOCAL – Valmiera Culture Centre, regional manor houses and castles; INTERNATIONAL - musicologist Edgars Raginskis, VSIA "Latvijas koncerti", well-known musician families in Latvia: Kristīne Kārkle-Kalniņa and Marts Kristians Kalniņš, Elīna Krastiņa and Marius Grencis, Kaspars Zemītis and family, Oskars and Raimonds Petrauskis, Vītols family, Igaunis family; INTERNATIONAL - Small World Music Festival (Canada), Rockabye Baby Music (USA), Mindful Music Association (USA), All Around this World (USA), Yerevan Perspectives International Music Festival (Armenia), Pärnu Music Festival (Estonia), Ojai Music Festival (Norway)
BUDGET: EUR 80,000

2027 SPRING CYCLE – Bridging the cultural gap!

Continuation of the Creative Awakening of the Living Environment - River Culture Stories

Valmiera is unique for the close symbiosis of its urban environment and nature; the city is closely surrounded by two protected nature areas – the Gauja National Park and the North Vidzeme Nature Reserve – giving it the responsibility to preserve these values while at the same time providing endless opportunities to be in nature. Boating, fishing, coasteering, swimming or bird-watching are just a small part of the human relationship with water and nature, entwined with a diverse collection of experiences and stories. Highlighting these values, every resident and visitor of the region will have the opportunity to hike the rivers and lakes and trails, as well as to explore the waterways. Heading along specially designed routes, hikers, boaters and cyclists will discover the cultural spaces of nature and their inherent perpetual motion, determined by the changing seasons, the changing times of day and natural phenomena. We will let you experience all this in the Cultural Stories of the Rivers.

All sites will be marked with signs and support tools for easy access for people with different disabilities, as well as multilingual digital solutions (apps) for foreign visitors. These are described in the PROCESS "Creative Awakening of the Living Environment". Planned routes and events:

#365 Valmiera goes (is there) outside. We will develop 365 natural culture experiences – one for each day of the year. This will be done by collecting stories of nature and cultural adventures from local residents, which will be transformed into routes with the help of digital solutions. These will include hikes, cycling during the warmer months or skiing in the winter, micro-tours that will start in the city neighbourhoods and wind all the way to the Estonian border. We will follow underground rivers, taste spring water, cycle to Lake Burtnieks to see the Northern Lights and walk to the largest Baltic sandstone outcrop – Sietīņezis – to experience the winter forest of candles. The hikes will be led by professional guides, nature and environmental researchers, photographers and artists.

A journey to ancient Rīņņukalns. A virtual reality journey will be created with the help of anthropologists, reconstructing everyday life in the historic settlement. Using *AutoFoley* software and perimetrial HDD sounds, playing animal and nature sounds, as well as visualising images in the sky, it will be possible to experience a tale of human life on this site 8,000 years ago. Visitors to the event will be able to watch the animation "**Water as the Beginning**" in a specially-staged sky show using 100 drones, experience an animated multimedia video projection. The event will be enriched by the musical accompaniment of the group "Auļi" and a speech by archaeologist Ilga Zagorska, PhD in History.

The Pearl of Salaca. The Salaca River is a popular water body for boating in Vidzeme. A trip on the Salaca River with around 100 boats is planned from Vecate Bridge to Mazsalaca and participants will compete in several groups: antique tribal boats, family boats, a canoe group, a kayak group, rubber boats, rafts and family rowing boats. Participants with log-boats from Scandinavia and Germany will take part in the event.

Gauja Days. Valmiera and the Gauja have a complex relationship – the marks left by the Soviet-era on its riverbanks still contrast starkly with the natural landscape of the Gauja valley. We want to rid the banks of everything inessential and unnecessary to create micro-culture spaces. Special events will be organised in Valmiera on 12 weekends to look after, clean up, tell stories about and celebrate the Gauja River.

CURATOR: Ltd. "Active Tourism Centre EŽI"
LOCATION: Valmiera region
PARTNERS: Listed in the PROCESS cycle event "Creative Awakening of the Living Environment" **BUDGET:** EUR 180,000

Travelling performance "Red Valmiera"

Red Valmiera – this term has both a **political and an architectural message**, and both reflect processes that have had a major impact on the life and development of Valmiera. Historically, the term emerged as a signifier of political affiliation during the period of Latvian democracy in the 1920s. Until the mid-1930s, the majority of Valmiera's councillors were Social Democrats, which is why the term red Valmiera was popularly used.

Red clay bricks were used extensively in building construction, as Vidzeme was and still is home to red clay mining sites, and there is also a factory in the Liepa parish, Cēsis municipality, not far from Valmiera. The colour red is firmly embedded in the city's defining features.

The series of events consists of a main event and smaller satellite events, whose common goal is to tell the red history of Valmiera and its region in a contemporary way, without trying to unravel the "historical truths" in the story. The time span covered by the series will begin 100 years ago, with historical testimonies at every turn. **Independent theatre company KVADRIFRONS** will create the travelling performance Red Valmiera.

The route of the **Red Valmiera travelling performance** will cover not only the main tourist spots of Valmiera, but also lesser-known places, known only to the locals in Valmiera, the municipality and the Vidzeme region, such as Soviet-era industrial sites, culture centres, water towers. The route with the city's stories will be created as an **interactive map available in several languages**, supplemented with an audio guide. By following QR codes, people will be able to explore different neighbourhoods, industrial sites and related historical events individually, together with family or friends.

A downloadable phone application will be created to follow the map and mark the points visited as well as an

audio guide will be designed as a small, self-contained mono-show, which will introduce the everyday life, farming, culture and society of Valmiera and its surroundings, as well as the history and possible future scenarios. Various authentic sounds of the surroundings (weather, streets, churches, birds, etc.) will be audible. The dramaturgical material of the audio guide will emphasise the diversity of content of the stories by varying the use of language, dialect and form of speech in the text, which will also be adapted to the translation of the audio material, and by allowing the characters in the stories to express themselves in poetry or song, whisper secret clues, dialogue or conflict with the audience, shout battle cries, etc.

Satellite events will include guided or individual visits to Soviet-era sites outside Valmiera.

Red Lode – the still "encapsulated" meeting hall of the Lode Brick Factory, a model of Soviet architecture, will be the place to enjoy special Soviet-style tours and a feast prepared by the best Latvian chefs, discovering for some and evoking for others favourite dishes of the Soviet era.

The Red Bike Ride to the Seda Culture Centre disco will be a bike trip back in time to the only town in the region where the issue of ethnic integration is evident. Participants will visit a peat-pressing workshop and experience everyday life in the Soviet period, visiting stops that were important for everyday life in the past, featuring an adventure game in the form of études.

In the Zilākalna workers' apartment – a historical reflection of everyday life in the previous century – will present the opportunity to visit the Red Poetry Plenary. Once a month, a Soviet-era mystery will be organised, based on the *Murder Mystery* tradition.

A social campaign #NOTHING SPECIAL will be developed to identify places and events from the Soviet period that have stories, but seemingly no cultural value in the eyes of local residents. These stories will be used both for the purposes of the travelling performances and satellite events and to enhance the regional museum collections. Students from Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences will be involved in its development.

An international conference dedicated to explaining and incorporating the Soviet period into tourism and active recreation products.

Museum specialists from Valmiera, Vidzeme and international community will be involved in researching and explaining the history of the Soviet period. During the conference there will be an opportunity to share good practice and hear foreign experiences in narrating the Soviet period. **Overall, these Red Valmiera events will be nostalgic memories of the people of that time, revelations for the present generations and completely unfamiliar, perhaps even shocking, experiences for visitors from Europe and other countries.**

CURATOR: Valmiera2027 Office
LOCATION: Valmiera region un Cēsis region
PARTNERS: LOCAL- Valmiera Museum, Valmiera Theatre Festival Team, Active Tourism Centre EŽI, Vidzeme Tourism Association, Vidzeme University College, Vidzeme Planning Region, Liepa, Seda, Strenči and Zilākalns communities; INTERNATIONAL - Independent theatre company "KVADRIFRONS", Latvian Rural Tourism Association "Lauku ceļotājs"; Latvian Nature Tourism Association; INTERNATIONAL - University of Tartu (Estonia), Lviv Cultural Centre, "Territory of Terror" Memorial museum (Ukraine), Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES), Innovative Red Brick Cities, Novi Sad 2022, Bad Ischl 2024, Oulu 2026 *(all ECoC cities mentioned will share their know-how on incorporating places with seemingly no cultural value in their cultural offers. Novi Sad – as ECoC with Soviet heritage, Bad Ischl – as ECoC that's already a tourist attraction in Central Europe, Oulu – as ECoC that can reflect on our common yet divided Baltic/Scandinavian/Soviet relationship throughout history).* **BUDGET:** EUR 190,000

Garden for a Friend

There is a credible legend about a recent suggestion by Swiss art curator **Hans Ulrich Obrist** that many artists and designers, instead of creating new objects and works that travel thousands of kilometres around the globe, would rather turn to gardening, thus reducing the damage and harm to the earth.

"Garden for a Friend" is an **art project** in which eight Latvian, European and international artists **exchange the usual format of a visual artist's work for soil and plants**, creating an artwork that takes the format of a garden bed or group of garden beds in one of Valmiera's municipal associations (administrative territories). The sites will be selected with the involvement of local residents and organisations as well the values, traditions, ideas and common desires of the particular community will be taken into account. The venue could be a courtyard of an apartment building, a lawn of a retirement home, a city park or any other place of importance for the local community. Each of the eight selected sites will become a temporary residency and home for the artwork, where it will continue to grow, change and evolve. It should be noted that gardens and caring for plants are intuitively close to many people in Latvia, which can be seen in the flowers on balconies, small self-initiated beds outside apartment buildings, urban gardens, allotments, as well as in the simple desire to capture colourful and memorable flower arrangements.

Several of the invited artists have exchanged professional art careers for urban gardening or life outside urban centres, or have worked with plants before (**Project EATS, Fritz Haeg and Salmon Creek Farm, Sandra Kosorotova**), others have never used elements of the natural world in their work, but their work and interests reflect on the environment and the spaces we live in (**Judith Kakon, Laura Kaminskaite, Hera Büyüктаşıyan, Camille Henrot, Luize Rukšāne & Estere Betija Grāvere**).

Each participating artist will create an idea for one specific place. In the next stage, the artist will create

and implement an idea that will be "translated" into a landscape architectural drawing and into concrete plants and compositions in collaboration with professional landscape architects, thinking about the history of the site and the plants, their values and character, their visual contribution – spatiality, colour, scent and ability to attract different members of the ecosystem, as well as other plant characteristics.

"Garden for a Friend" is based on conversation, observation and appreciation of the surroundings, trust and new relationships building, and highlighting the importance and versatility of art. The project uses recognisable sign – plant language which, however abstract, can be appreciated by all of us. **The garden and garden bed is an opportunity to get closer to the resident** and, through a familiar format and a process based on sincerity, to open up a discussion on other related topics: the relationship between man and nature, the environment as a mirror of society, the broad formats and motivations of contemporary art, the interests and concerns of professionals in the field, the importance of each citizen's involvement in shaping his or her environment. "Garden for a Friend" can be translated in two ways. It signals the care we take to bring joy to ourselves and our fellow human beings, and it transforms cooperation into friendship through shared adventure. At the same time, it contemplates the garden as a possible friend – nature as a living organism and an element of life that helps to find peace, relaxation and joy and allows us to explore and develop ourselves. The process will start in 2023 with a public programme that will include raising awareness of the themes and meetings with community members. This will be followed by artists travelling to the Valmiera region in 2025 for short residencies to learn about the site and its history and to select a location for their artwork. In 2025 and 2026, the artists will return to the region to work with landscape architects, gardeners and residents to produce sketches and drawings, coordinate with the relevant authorities and carry out the first installation works for the project. In 2027, the works will bloom for the first time and will be visible to all, accompanied by a magnificent accompanying programme of conversation and moments of togetherness by the garden beds.

CURATOR: Artillery Gardens Association (initiator and organiser of the project "Sport Palace Gardens" in Riga)
LOCATION: Valmiera region, 8 selected public outdoor spaces
PARTNERS: LOCAL - Valmiera Summer Theatre Festival organisers, Valmiera School of Design and Art; NATIONAL: Landscape Architecture Studio "ALPS", Nursery "Pukulauki"; INTERNATIONAL: Camille Henrot (France), Judith Kakon (Switzerland), Laura Kaminskaite (Lithuania), Sandra Kosorotova (Estonia), Hera Büyüktaşçıyan (Turkey), Project EATS team (USA), Fritz Haeg and Salmon Creek Farm (USA)
BUDGET: EUR 280,000

Humour in Contemporary Art. Māris Bišofs

The event includes an exhibition and series of urban art events dedicated to the history of humour in Latvia. Its

parallel lines being comics, cartoons and humour in contemporary art. Art as social commentary. Irony, the unusual and the provocative. A joke that has gone down in art history. Illustration as a social commentary recording contemporary society.

Māris Bišofs is a Latvian artist and illustrator born in Rūjiena, Latvia who in the 1970s emigrated abroad with his family. He gained recognition in Israel, where books of his drawings, titled The Exhibition, Encounters and Sexercises were published in France, where he worked at the *Cité Internationale des Arts*, and later lived in the USA. His drawings have been published in *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Boston Globe*, *Jediot Achronot*, *Ha Aretz*, *Rolling Stone*, etc. Several books of Bišofs' work have been published and he has had solo exhibitions in Israel, Germany, Belgium, USA and Latvia.

In spring 2027, **an exhibition of Bišofs' drawings** will open in Valmiera and various locations in the region. It will not be a classic retrospective, but a revitalisation of the artist's work in the cultural landscape of the city and the region. His small-scale drawings will be exhibited on an unprecedented scale – both transferred onto the walls of apartment buildings and brought to life in three-dimensional art objects and animations. The urban exhibition will be complemented by a contemporary art parade dedicated to the history of humour, featuring works by cartoonists popular in Latvia during the Soviet period, as well as insights into the history of the comic genre and contemporary socially and politically critical works by illustrators of an intellectual and philosophical bent. An international basketball residency and training centre is being built at Virķēni Manor (48 km from Valmiera) on a private initiative, where it will be possible to visit the **micro-centre of Bišofs' art**, where basketball-related works by the artist will be exhibited (currently 6!), as well as possibly demonstrate one's sports skills on a basketball court designed in the style of the artist. The initiative is proposed by the owner of the estate, **Mārtiņš Bērziņš**, and will be developed with private funding. With the participation of international curators and leading Latvian researchers on the subject of humour, research will be conducted on the history of Latvian cartooning and where works by artists from the Baltic region can be placed in the broader history of art. An international contemporary art exhibition on humour will be developed, featuring comics, illustrations, cartoons and other genres of art that have not been widely studied and whose place in contemporary art has not yet been established, alongside works of avant-garde art. Alongside works by local artists, there will be works by international artists that will reveal the peculiarities of Latvian humour, outline the differences and similarities, and educate the viewer. Through this initiative, everyone will have the opportunity to look into the subject of humour and get closer to understanding contemporary art. The exhibition will highlight the importance of freedom of expression, the liberation of art from censorship and the possibility to live in a free environment. A digital exhibition of these

works will be created alongside the in-person exhibition. The spark of humour that is ignited in Kurtuve and throughout the region will become a space for global art experiences and synergies between European countries. **The international exhibition will be developed** with the participation and support of national and international art institutions.

CURATOR: Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art
LOCATION: Kurtuve Centre of Contemporary Art
PARTNERS: PARTNERS: LOCAL - regional exhibition halls, artists, Valmiera Regional Museum, Naukšēni Human Museum, Rūjiena Museum; INTERNATIONAL - Latvian National Library, Museum of Literature and Music, researchers Guntis Pakalns, Toms Kencis, Sanita Reinsone, Janīna Kursīte, Evija Zača, Ilmārs Šlāpins, association "Grafiskie stāsti"; INTERNATIONAL - Hahaha. The Humour of Art - KANAL-Centre Pompidou - Centre Pompidou (France), KNOCK KNOCK: HUMOUR IN CONTEMPORARY ART - South London Gallery (UK), Architecture - Karikaturmuseum (Austria), Cartoonmuseum Basel (Switzerland), Caricature - Art Term | Tate (UK), International Eskişehir Cartoon Festival (Turkey)
BUDGET: EUR 80,000

International Cycling Film Festival "Cinema Pedal"

Cycling Film Festival "Kino Pedālis" is **a short film and green lifestyle festival** that, since 2016, combines the love of cycling and cinema. Over the past years, the festival has managed to establish a solid brand and value offering – an event that provides families, friends or work teams with the joy of being together, combining sporting activities with the enjoyment of quality cinema in various locations such as industrial sites, sports grounds, parks, car parks and more. In 2018, the festival was recognised as the best in the Baltic Sea Region and received the Baltic Event Award. The festival has only one entry requirement – you must ride a bike! This philosophy is important in terms of environmental sustainability – festival participants express their loyalty to environmentally friendly transport solutions in the most direct way possible. Given the response and interest of residents and visitors, we are committed to transforming the festival into an international event, adding a **European dimension** to its content, and creating a **platform for cooperation and growth** that fuels the debate on green, smart and sustainable urban development, and promotes a change in people's habits. A **digital programme of the festival** will be published, making it accessible from anywhere in the world. In addition, pop-up events to activate the festival brand, such as bike repair workshops, are planned before the festival. Around 70 urban and territorial development experts, residents and representatives of non-governmental organisations will take part in **prototyping workshops on urban solutions**. Involving people from different generations and social groups, one or more prototypes will be developed that directly improve cycling infrastructure or address an environmental accessibility issue of public interest. It is intended to include at least one of the developed solutions as a fundable initiative in the 2028 municipal budget.

The **Sustainable Thinking Skills Workshops** will connect around 350 representatives from the public, municipal and NGO sectors from Latvia and Europe with internationally renowned urban experts to learn sustainable urban planning skills and methods to promote sustainable thinking and lifestyles in the community. Participants will learn from different experiences, build cooperation and receive expert support in the context of current sustainability challenges. Part of the workshop programme will be available online. Anthropologist and urban planner **Viesturs Celmiņš** will be involved in the preparation and running of the workshops.

The **"Cinema Pedal" Festival** will be a two-day event taking place in May 2027. It will kick off with an opening event in the centre of Valmiera and will include a festival of discussions on sustainability, green living and urban development, involving Latvian and international experts and thought leaders; an accompanying cultural programme in the urban environment in collaboration with artists who follow sustainability principles in their work; a film programme with at least 21 films screened in at least seven venues across the county; as well as three cycling routes of different lengths, suitable for different audiences, complemented by a digital game. The digital programme will include an online film programme, mobile games for the 10 km and 25 km routes that can be adapted to any location in the world, and live streaming from the main festival stage. The international dimension of the 2027 Festival will be reinforced in cooperation with the association "Kinopunkts" (Latvia) and the Europa Cinemas network by organising screenings of the best Festival films in different locations in Latvia and the Baltic Sea region, thus including green-themed films in cinema repertoires in many European countries.

CURATOR: Ltd. "Active Tourism Centre EŽI"
LOCATION: Valmiera City and county outdoor spaces
PARTNERS: LOCAL- Valmiera region entrepreneurs, culture NGOs; Valmiera School of Design and Art, Valmiera Development Agency, Valmiera Co-creation Workshop DARE, URDA - Nature and Technology Park; NATIONAL- Goethe Institute Riga, French Cultural Institute, Latvian Sports Federations Council (LSFP), International Short Film Festival "2ANNAS", Viesturs Celmiņš, urban planner and head of "VEFRESH", Institute of Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility (expert Dace Helmane) and "Green Freedom" (expert Jānis Brizga), NGO "City for People", "Splendid Palace" and "Bize" cinemas, "Kinopunkts" association; INTERNATIONAL: European Outdoor Film Tour (E.O.F.T.), Bicycle Film Festival, Cyclist Film Festival (France), Greenmotion Film Festival (Germany), Connect4Climate, Green Film Network, Europa Cinemas (The Network of Cinema Theaters For The Circulation of European Films) **BUDGET:** EUR 210,000



Latvian Voices A cappella Festival

Valmiera is home to the a cappella festival of the internationally renowned vocal group Latvian Voices, therefore, under the leadership of Latvian Voices, we will organise an a cappella festival in the spring of 2027, which will last five days and include concerts, masterclasses and an international competition. **Several concerts** will feature the best Latvian and European performers who are able to show the diversity of this genre of music, performing classical, jazz, rock, comedy, country and other genres. We have invited *The Kings Singers* (UK), *Sjaella* (Germany), *The Real Group* (Sweden), *Rajaton* (Finland), *Estonian Voices* (Estonia), *ONAIR* (Germany) and other international a cappella musicians. Special concerts will be organised for families and children. Latvian and international musicians *The Real Group Academy*, *RAMA Vocal Center*, etc. will conduct **masterclasses**, which will be run as an educational programme on various vocal techniques, vocal improvisation, beatboxing, elocution, stage movement. The masterclasses will be attended by Latvian and international vocal ensembles, music teachers, conductors, arrangers and individuals. Invitations to musically gifted young people from low-income families will be a priority, and we will seek them out with the help of schools. **An international a cappella competition** is envisaged in two

categories: vocal groups with amplification and vocal groups without amplification. The performances will be judged by an international jury: *Katarina Henryson* (Sweden), *Kadri Voorand* (Estonia), *Jussi Chydenius* (Finland), *Chris Bruerton* (UK), *Tine Fris-Ronsfeld* (Denmark), *Laura Jēkabsons* (Latvia). Participants will perform concerts in various cultural venues in Valmiera (churches, cultural centres, industrial spaces, etc.). In addition to live events, the festival will be accessible remotely: the concerts and the competition will be streamed, as well as masterclasses, which will allow to attract a wider range of speakers and participants from all over the world.

CURATOR: A cappella group “Latvian Voices”
LOCATION: Valmiera Region manor houses and castles, cultural centres, churches, Kurtuve Centre for Contemporary Art, etc.
PARTNERS: LOCAL - Valmiera Culture Centre, Valmiera Regional Music Schools; NATIONAL - State Academic Choir “Latvija” and conductor Māris Sirmāis; INTERNATIONAL - Rajaton (Finland), Sjaella (Germany), The King’s Singers (UK), The Real Group Academy (Sweden), Estonian Voices (Estonia), Daniel Barke (Germany), Hacker Music Management (Germany), RAMA Vocal Center (Denmark), CASA - The Contemporary A Cappella society, International Festival for Vocal music - a cappella (Germany), A Capella Festival (Spain), VivaVoce International A Capella Festival (Italy) **BUDGET:** EUR 200,000

Creativity forge "Light up and show enthusiasm!"

One of the main goals of the Kurtuve Centre for Contemporary Art is to encourage and **promote the development of talent in visual arts** alongside world-renowned and established artists. We will do this through the Creativity Forge – sparking creativity, establishing and maintaining an active residency programme for the development of professional contemporary art, as well as creating interdisciplinary works in industrial environments and businesses in the region.

We will create space and breath for creativity and exchange of ideas between manufacturers, engineers, scientists and creative minds, opening the doors of the region’s companies to art and artists, starting a **tradition of art residencies unique to Latvia**, building bridges between industry – culture – people.

We will host the first interdisciplinary contemporary art residencies unique to Latvia, where young artists will be able to learn new skills and develop their artistry with the support of European and Latvian contemporary art professionals. Using the experience and opportunities offered by local production heavyweights, such as the Valmiera Glass Group,

international artists will have the opportunity to gain unique knowledge and experience. By providing paid short and long-term residencies in one of the region’s companies, artists will create works about the long history of these companies and industries, and, using the stories of the people who work there, create research-based artworks in different fields about the industry and the related social and cultural life of the past and present. For example, the theme of the future will be addressed in reference to fibreglass: what materials will the world be made of in the future? Who are the people who produce these materials? Is the future in the hands of a team of builders and engineers or artists and philosophers? What are the questions and possibilities from the perspectives of globalisation, immigration, engineering and art? The 2027 Creativity Forge programme consists of art project screenings, masterclasses, summer schools, creative workshops, meetings between artists and professionals, idea generation and experience exchange events with the participation of European and Latvian contemporary art greats. The results of the residencies will be displayed in Kurtuve, art stations and urban spaces. The accompanying programme of exhibitions – events, will be available both in person and digitally. An audio guide for the visually impaired, as well as descriptions of the works in

plain language and for the hearing impaired will be developed. With special groups in mind, a residency will be created for artists to create inclusive artworks and cultural events and a summer school in professional contemporary art education for children and young people with special needs. In collaboration with the Riga Technical University Children and Youth University, we will create a design and technology centre for children and youth – a research, art and education programme where science meets art.

CURATOR: Valmiera Culture Centre, Māra Žeikare
LOCATION: Kurtuve Contemporary Art Centre, Valmiera Glass, Valpro, Rūjiena Ice Cream Factory, Valmiermuiža Craft Brewery , etc.
PARTNERS: LOCAL- Valmiera Regional art and comprehensive schools, regional industrial enterprises; NATIONAL- Riga Technical University, Art Academy of Latvia, Latvian Academy of Culture, RUCKA, Serde, Rīga Circus Residence; INTERNATIONAL- Narva Artist Residency and Centre for Art and Social Practice MoKS (Estonia), Baltic Art Center, Kultivator and Baltic Art Centre (Sweden), Wysing Arts Center (UK), Nordic Artists' Centre Dalsåsen and Pikene på Broen (Norway), Art Matters Ukraine, Ukrainian Institute (Ukraine) Skafftell Center for Visual Art and Nes Artist Residency (Iceland), AIR Laboratory Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle (Poland), Aveiro 2027 **BUDGET:** EUR 250,000

Contemporary Circus and Street Art Festival "Human" - the place where strength is born!

Contemporary circus is an art without language or age barriers, it connects people of all ages and encourages them to push the limits of their abilities. By organising contemporary circus events, we will raise public awareness of contemporary circus and street movement art as an art form, involving circus and extreme sports professionals in the creation of performances, as well as highlighting and presenting with creative stories themes related to the inner world of human feelings and the development of physical strength, physical and emotional abilities.

Based on the diverse sports infrastructure in Valmiera and the fact that many professional athletes have grown up in Valmiera – BMX champion **Māris Štrombergs**, race walker **Jānis Daliņš**, award-winning basketball players the **Bertāni brothers**, etc. In 2027, contemporary circus performances and extreme street sports – parkour, skateboarding, rollerblading, BMX – will be held for two weeks at various sports facilities in the region. The programme will include European-level artists, but we will also involve local communities in learning contemporary circus skills, such as the Valmiera Athletics Club and Valmiera BMX club "Valmieras puikas", as well as local dancers of contemporary dance.

From 2023 onwards, we will organise a children's circus school and workshops, contemporary circus workshops and extreme sports camps, where participants will have the

opportunity to take part in one of the festival's performances. Alongside these events, we will develop and run **a place for emotional conversations and content**, discussions on the theme of "HUMAN", led by experts and professionals in their niche, entrepreneurs, psychologists or simply people who inspire others with their own stories, insights and experiences, who can captivate, make you think and permeate the "HUMAN" theme. The festival could be launched as early as 2023, with themes such as "VISION", "SPIRIT", "JOY", "EMOTION", "MOVEMENT", "COURAGE", providing emotional support in this way and strengthening the mental health of society. The themes will be reflected in the discussions and in the festival main event – contemporary circus and street movement art performances in various sports infrastructures.

CURATOR: Rīga Circus, Rīga Circus School, Extreme Sports Centre "The Spot"
LOCATION: Vidzeme Olympic Centre, Jānis Daliņš Stadium, Sports and Active Recreation Park "Mežs", Māris Štrombergs BMX track in Valmiera, Virķēni Sports Centre
PARTNERS: LOCAL- regional educational institutions, Valmiera BMX club "Valmieras puikas", Youth centre "VINDA", athletics club, Valmiera Gauja Riverbank Secondary School, Ltd. "Burtnieku Zirgaudzētava", Ltd. "Zirgaudzētava Kocēni"; NATIONAL- Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, Latvian New Theatre Institute, "Ugunsskola" (Laura Dennler), Association"Pievilcīgas pilsētvides biedrība"; INTERNATIONAL- "Redbull pumptrack, Big Wolf Company, Cirkus Sabok, Estonian Contemporary Circus Development Center (Estonia), Kanta company and Taigi cirkas (Lithuania), Contemporary Norwegian circus "Circus Xanti - The Rising Wave", Baltic Nordic Circus Network **BUDGET:** EUR 120,000

2027 SUMMER CYCLE – CREATING A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT!

Strenči trajectory

Creative ideas are based on the myth of the good old days in the local community – it is assumed that the city of Strenči is a small model of the world, which in the inter-war period of the 20th century, managed to reproduce itself well, to develop in all sectors – from medicine to industry, to grow and be a part of the international community, but after the Second World War, this world model disintegrated. This historically ideal world is now gone. Distancing ourselves from nostalgia and avoiding erecting monuments to history, we want to explore what exists and is happening in Strenči today, and to highlight what is current and contemporary, via a regular programme of creative and artistic activities. In this way we want to demonstrate, prove and confirm the great potential of small places – the ability and possibility to keep alive the cultural and economic spirit, the preservation and strengthening of which is a necessity in many cities in Europe in the early 21st century.

The **Strenči Environmental Sonification Station** is a creative programme that will include shorter and longer residencies for musicians, authors and artists. A small studio will be set up for environmentally determined sound performances. From the outside, the Strenči Sonification Station will look like a small environmental research station. During the short residencies, guest artists will be regularly invited to the Strenči sonification station to perform chamber concerts using the technical equipment and local environmental signal resources available. The result will be a conceptual chamber music series with its own distinctive/recognisable presentation. The concerts will be open to the public in person, as well as virtually – via streaming and video archive. For longer residencies, representatives from different fields from Latvia and abroad will be invited to carry out creative research, then leave, to develop the creative concept of an event and return to Strenči to implement it.

Photographic workshop and residency programme.

Many years after its closure, the photographic workshop will reopen in Strenči, equipped with the most advanced retro and contemporary photography equipment. The town's photographic workshop was once the setting for the photographs included in the book "Glass Strenči". It will be open every Saturday from May to September to anyone who would like to have their portrait photograph taken using the glass plate technique used in the olden days. Applying the techniques of photographers Spunde and Krauklis, the newly-opened photographic workshop will become a place where decorative and formal photographs are created, as well as a place for documentation and research. Once a month, the photographic workshop will host a specially-invited artist who will take photographs of visitors using his own technique. After 3–4 hours of work, the workshop will turn into a meeting place with the artist, where the artist will

present his/her artistic approach. Every year, the Photography Workshop Residency Programme will offer three experienced photography artists the opportunity to live and work in residence in Strenči, creating their own mini-exhibition in the Display Cabinet and Virtual Display Cabinet. Each resident will lead a workshop or participate in an artist's talk. During the residency there will be an opportunity to work with the Latvian Museum of Photography collections in Strenči. As a final event of the photography workshop in 2027, an exhibition will be created in which the budding artists will update the archival works of the Strenči workshop masters in a contemporary context.

The display cabinet of the Strenči photography studio used to be a gathering place – local people would come to see portraits of themselves and their neighbours, which were put on display every Saturday. By reviving this tradition, a miniature exhibition space will be created in Strenči. Both local residents and international artists will be able to contribute to the content of the exhibition. The materials on display and detailed information about the works will be compiled on the Virtual Display Cabinet (website) and on the Virtual Display Cabinet social network account in Latvian and English, where it will also be possible to follow the exhibition preparation process. The main themes and directions: the cultural heritage of Strenči today, understanding and comprehending our contemporary photographic heritage, possibilities and tools for recording history.

Creative programme "Glass. Light. Ideas." The Strenči glass plate photography collection is a compelling testament to the ability of a fragile medium – glass – to interact with light and become an important medium of information, passing it on to future generations. There is a long tradition of working with glass in Latvia, but it is mainly perceived as a decorative element. But what are the other possibilities of glass as a medium for information, how can text be embodied in glass, how can light become a messenger in its interaction with glass? We will look for answers to these questions in a process that will involve writers, glass artists, experts in glass casting and working with light. The results of the programme will be available in person and virtually in an exhibition of specially-created objects.

A **multimedia production** will be a colourful multi-media show with projections, sound, voice, text, costumes and set design, based on a libretto written by the authors from the "Orbīta" association. It will be made up of daily news about Strenči and its surroundings published in the interwar period, as well as newly-created texts with reference to historical events – a fictional extension of the genre of documentary journalism, the story of interwar Strenči as a "model of the world" myth, its verbalisation, modernisation, detailing, fantasisation, creation of a detective story, romanticisation and re-formatting. The Orbīta poets, as well as invited artists, performers, directors, composers and the local amateur theatre will participate in the preparation and performance of the production. It will be performed on the stage of the Seda Culture Centre.



CURATOR: Association “Orbīta”
LOCATION: Town of Strenči and surrounds
PARTNERS: LOCAL- Residents of Strenči, Strenči Library, VSIA "Strenči Psychoneurological Hospital", Seda Culture Centre; NATIONAL- Latvian Museum of Photography, Latvian National Library, Baltic Analog Lab, platform "Latvian Literature", Erica Synths; INTERNATIONAL- Pictographica (USA), Kaunas Photography Gallery (Lithuania), Temnikova&Kasela Gallery (Estonia), The Rodchenko Art School, Pennlab Gallery (Russia), The Wet Hole Group (Ukraine), Buchkunst Berlin (Germany), Polka Gallery, Delpire&Co (France) **BUDGET:** EUR 360,000

Valmiera Summer Theatre Festival for Children and Youth

The International Summer Theatre Festival, based on the tradition and experience of the Valmiera Summer Theatre Festival, will offer productions created especially for the festival by experienced Latvian and foreign directors, as well as budding new directors. The festival's approach is based on the desire to put issues that are relevant to the audience at the centre of the creative idea and to develop them, thus assuming social responsibility and promoting social cohesion, tolerance and proactive reflection on what is happening in the family, community, country and worldwide. The children's and youth programme of the Festival is based on the work of the Children's and Youth Theatre Institute and the expertise of theatre professionals. The Institute has been operating for two years and during this time, theatre professionals have deepened their knowledge of children and adolescents as an audience. Between 2022 and 2026 the Institute will continue its activities by training new theatre professionals and developing the competences of existing professionals. The initiatives launched – the Festival and the Institute – have attracted the interest of international theatre professionals. Therefore, starting in 2022, **international theatre professionals' residencies will be held every year, with a further education programme** to improve the knowledge of theatre professionals about the children and youth audience, its needs and developmental peculiarities, as well as to jointly create new productions. This section will be implemented together with Norwegian partners **Panta Rei Danseteatre and Showbox Festival**, as well as other interested partners who will provide knowledge on the involvement of children and young audiences in theatre processes.

The 2027 festival is planned as the result of several years of work, with a number of new co-productions, as well as a revival of one of the previous year's productions, involving artists from Latvia and other European countries. The centre will be focused on children and youth, involving them not only in the enjoyment of art, but also in the creation of full-fledged theatre artworks – all planned new works will be created by listening to children and youth, exploring themes that are relevant to them, thus creating a new type and format of festival with socially responsible performing arts. In cooperation with the Latvian Academy of Culture, Latvian performing arts students will perform their productions in the Student Barn, as well as a parallel programme of concerts, games,

film screenings, etc., in cooperation with the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art and other partners. In order to gradually make the festival known on an international scale and to turn it into a residency centre for children's and youth theatre professionals, we will increase the number of participants of the Children's and Youth Theatre Institute and the proportion of international projects in the programme, stipulating that these projects should be realised in collaboration with Latvian theatre professionals.

CURATOR: Valmiera Drama Theatre
LOCATION: City of Valmiera and county outdoor spaces
PARTNERS: LOCAL: Valmiera Amateur Theatres, educational institutions; NATIONAL- Latvian Academy of Culture, Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, psychology specialists Diana Zande, Nils Saks Konstantinovs, Assitej Latvia National Centre; INTERNATIONAL: Panta Rei Danseteatre and Showbox Festival (Norway), Assitej International, COMEDIA Theater (Germany) **BUDGET:** EUR 350,000

“no BORDERS in sight” and Art Viewing School

The art space "no BORDERS in sight" will be created as a unique space within the Kurtuve Contemporary Art Centre. Visitors will have the opportunity to encounter world art experiences at the ECoC – to see works by well-known artists from the modernist period, such as Monet, Pollock, Rothko, Marinetti, Miro and Klucis. These six "heavyweights" of art each represent their own unique way of looking at art, and in their time broke the boundaries of traditional perceptions of art, introducing new principles and breaking new ground in the history of world art. Through a unique educational programme, the modernist classics will be rejuvenated in the context of today's world. The programme will be developed by experts from the **Latvian National Museum of Art**.

The exhibition concept is based on the principle of non-exaggeration. We are not planning a collections exhibition, but rather one to two works that, when brilliantly displayed and complemented with valuable accompanying information, will generate interest and response among the public and resonate at least in the cultural space of the Baltic region. The exhibition will have outstanding set design and tell the story of each artistic movement, with additional reproductions, videos, projections, etc. The selected works will be on view for 2–3 months. The minimalist concept will simultaneously raise the issue of the correlation of art with climate change, and will seek ways to draw public attention to these important issues through real action. Together with the curators, visitors will have the opportunity to seek answers to various questions: how should art be perceived? What are the genres and those who introduce them trying to say: Pollock's expressionism or action painting, Monet and impressionism, Rothko and abstract expressionism, Marinetti and futurism, Miró as a representative of surrealism and dadaism, and constructivism executed by Gustavs Klucis? To bring contemporary art programmes to life, a **programme for mediators - contemporary culture ambassadors** – will be created. Through mediators, contemporary art will achieve what

is most essential – broadening people's understanding and promoting engagement in discourse on issues of public concern. An **active community** will be created – to develop and maintain a dialogue and feedback with the audience – people interested in visual art, who will be given the opportunity to participate in online lectures by internationally renowned art lecturers. A unique **pilot project for continuing art education in Latvia - Art Viewing School** – will be developed.

CURATOR: Valmiera2027 team in collaboration with a curator (negotiations with MoMA (USA) for a curator have started)
LOCATION: Kurtuve Contemporary Art Centre and online
PARTNERS: LOCAL - Valmiera Regional School Network, art enthusiasts in the region and throughout Latvia; NATIONAL - Latvian National Museum of Art, ZUZEUM Art Centre, other private collections; INTERNATIONAL - MoMA (USA), Fundació Joan Miró (Spain), Tate Modern (UK), National Art Museum of Ukraine (Ukraine), Parkhomivka Museum of History and Arts (Ukraine), The European Cultural Centre Network **BUDGET:** EUR 480,000

Global Camp for Kokle Players

Kokle is a traditional Latvian string instrument, belonging to the Baltic psaltery together with the Lithuanian kanklės, the Livonian kändla, the Estonian kanneli, the Finnish and Karelian kantele, as well as the north-western Russian winged gusli. The first archaeological discovery of a kokle-like instrument in Latvia dates back to the 13th century, while the earliest evidence of kokle-making dates back to the early 17th century. The Latvian cultural canon includes the kokle and kokle-making as a traditional cultural value. The Global Camp for Kokle Players will provide an opportunity for both professionals and amateurs to come together over several days to enjoy sound of the traditional kokle, the most regarded and admired Latvian musical instrument, while some will learn to play the instrument from the very basics and others will improve their skills. Participants from all over Europe will improve their skills, share experiences, discuss the nuances of playing the kokle, play tunes from different nations and enjoy being together. The camp will be led by **Laima Jansone**, the first Latvian musician to perform at the World Music Expo, the most influential fair for contemporary folk music.

In 2027, a four-day **Global Camp for Kokle Players** will be held in Valmiera. On the first day, participants will play and share the evening meal on the Kokmuiža promenade. On the following two days, the enthusiasts will take part in masterclasses led by professional teachers, kokle-making workshops and a concert at Zilaiskalns. The masterclasses will also be available for viewing online. On the final day, visitors will have the opportunity to enjoy a formal concert at the Neikenkalns Nature Concert Hall in Dikļi, where they will be able to enjoy melodies from different nations performed by both professional kokle players and camp participants. To prepare for the camp, from 2024 onwards, each year, **Kokle Days will be organised in Valmiera**, with masterclasses, demonstrations, concerts in the city, kokle-making workshops and exhibitions.

CURATOR: Dikļu Culture Centre, Laima Jansone, kokle player
LOCATION: Valmiera District Neikenkalns Nature Concert Hall, Zilaiskalns, Kokmuiža and online
PARTNERS: LOCAL- Valmiera Culture Centre Ethnokokle group, kokle groups at Valmiera and Mazsalaca Music Schools; NATIONAL- Latvian National Culture Centre (kokle music expert Dainis Vuškāns), kokle teachers - Inese Mičule, Zane Sņikere, Latvīte Cirse, Ilze Ozola, Drustu Folk School and kokle master Rihards Valters, festival "PORTA" (Ilze Apsīņa); INTERNATIONAL- Kokle pedagogue Arja Kastinen (Finland), Wieland Folk Music Centre, Leanne Barbo (Estonia), European Network of Cultural Centres, Sibelius Academy "SIBA" (Finland), Kankula musicians Žemyna Trinkūnaitė and Agota Ago (Lithuania), Akiko Mizoguchi (Japan), Nori Tsuruta (Japan) **BUDGET:** EUR 60,000

Industrial a cappella “360°”

Industrial a cappella concerts "360°" are a way for us to "open up" Valmiera's industrial enterprises. The a cappella concert series will be held on the production premises of companies in the region. Four to six different a cappella or chamber groups, performing music typical of their genre, will improvise together and separately, making use of the acoustics and other facilities in the space. While one particular group performs, the others continue to move around the room in a continuous, fluid motion, reinforcing the effect of the 360° concert idea. The concert is designed as one continuous musical flow, moving from piece to piece. Each concert will be divided into several sessions, giving special emphasis to the interplay of sound and light, vocal improvisation or audience involvement. The light installations will react to the sound, creating an intangible atmosphere that is unique to this concert format. One of the biggest positives of the concert concept is its simple stage design, which only requires a large space with good acoustics. The seating is always in the centre of the space and varies from chairs and benches to wooden blocks and cushions. Each concert will be preceded by a masterclass for the performers by **Katarina Henryson (Sweden)**, the **pioneer of the 360° concept**, on vocal improvisation and the use of acoustics. Latvian Voices' masterclasses will play an important role in preparing local amateur artists such as the youth choir “Škan” and the vocal group “Ēra” for the concert, which will raise awareness of the concept and vocal improvisation. The event will be delivered both live and digitally, using sound technology that transforms the 360° effect when listening to the concert remotely.

CURATOR: A cappella group “Latvian Voices”
LOCATION: Valmiera district industrial premises and online
PARTNERS: LOCAL- NATIONAL- vocal group "Putni", folklore group "Saucējas", Laima Jansone (kokle), Kaspars Zemītis (guitar), Raimonds Petrauskis (saxophone); INTERNATIONAL- The Real Group Academy (Sweden), Imorivisationsgruppen Format (Sweden), Balcanes (Bulgaria, France), Tuuletar (Finland), Nordic Voices (Norway) **BUDGET:** EUR 140,000

Contemporary Dance Performance “The Age of Man”

The performance "The Age of Man" will bring together people of different generations, both as participants and as spectators, expressing their life experiences and world views through dance. The content of the performance will be developed over several years, based on the participants' experiences, what they have seen, what they have heard and their own ideas, with a creative team of contemporary dance enthusiasts, professional dance choreographers, dramaturgs, musicians, designers and multimedia artists. Contemporary dance groups from collaborating countries will be invited to the festival, as well as choreographers from abroad.

Production of the play will begin in 2022 with regular, sustained and dedicated collaboration between LAUKKU and the local communities that will participate in the production of the play. Building human connections and getting to know each other is essential to working together successfully. The first phase will be a series of "tit-for-tat" introductions. During this phase, LAUKKU artists will introduce their practice and work, give everyone the opportunity to participate in a creative dance workshop, and bring in an existing Latvian contemporary dance work for a guest performance. In turn, residents will be invited to present their village/town, be trained by LAUKKU artists in a rural activity relevant and specific to their community, and enjoy a concert by local artistic groups.

In 2023 and 2024, a slow and thorough familiarisation process and showing of mutual interest in each other is planned in order to identify topics that people really care about, the people who are willing and able to bridge the cultural gap, and the themes through which this could be done. Meetings will be organised in selected locations with presentations by LAUKKU and village groups and dance classes. In 2025 we will fill the cultural gap by organising two-part concerts in four selected locations, the first part featuring guest performances of contemporary dance – works nominated for the Dance Prize, the Baltic Dance Platform, and the second part featuring concerts or performances by local arts groups, bringing together people from the participating parishes. The choreographic, dramaturgical, visual and musical material of the performance will be created in 2026, influenced by the events, conversations, experiences, issues identified by the residents and the moods they want to share.

2027 – The end result - the play "The Age of Man" will be performed at the geographical meeting point of four villages/parishes - Rencēni - and the territorial power centre of Valmiera. The production will be staged during day and at a time that will allow as many people as possible to attend it. If the local or world situation does not allow for a face-to-face meeting, it will be possible to see a video version of the event – a summary of several years of activity, as well as a video recording of the choreographic performance created over the course of the process, with subtitles so that people with hearing impairments can watch it.

CURATOR: Association “LAUKKU”

LOCATION: Valmiera County

PARTNERS: LOCAL - four municipalities in Valmiera which will be selected in 2022; NATIONAL - Association “LAUKKU”; INTERNATIONAL - Jaana Koko (Finland), Ana Rita Seirôco

(Portugal), Gintarė Masteikaitė (Lithuania), Sõltumatu Tantsu Lava (Estonia), Nicole des Bouvrie (Netherlands), Alan Stone (UK), Carla Peterson (USA), The Work Room (Scotland), Boys and Girls Clubs of Wales (UK), Lithuanian Dance Information Centre (Lithuania) and Sõltumatu Tantsu Lava (Estonia), Jaana Koko (Finland) **BUDGET:** EUR 80,000

Inclusive International Contemporary Art Programme and Contemplative Sound Art Exhibition

Because the language of contemporary art is universal it can be used to start conversations and broader discussions on a wide range of socially relevant topics. With the participation of international curators, an exhibition will be created that will broaden the view of contemporary art as a socially inclusive field. The exhibition will focus on art as an agent of social change and on drawing attention to fellow human beings, marginalised groups and uncomfortable topics: exclusion, indifference, inequality, cultural inacces-



ibility, social confusion. A paradigm shift and change of perspective from us and them to we – all of us.

Addressing professional artists and researchers working internationally in the field of perceptual studies of people with special needs, the focus will be on ways to make art exhibitions inclusive and will feature works created by people with visual, hearing, motor or intellectual disabilities. Through the artworks, the ways in which people with disabilities perceive contemporary art differently will be revealed, myths and stereotypes about their inability to perceive or enjoy art will be debunked, and instead the possibilities will be highlighted, with particular emphasis on the importance of imagination. With this exhibition, we want to broaden the accessibility of contemporary art content to the public by inviting everyone to the exhibitions. To prepare for the programme and the exhibition, in 2024 we will develop and launch an educational programme for cultural professionals, volunteers, mediators and producers on communication and communicating with people with disabilities and their inclusion in cultural events. Group discussions, lectures and workshops will introduce visitors to cultural practices around themes of inclusion. Specific

accessibility measures will be implemented until 2027 and beyond to involve people with disabilities and ensure accessibility of contemporary art content throughout the county. A contemplative sound art exhibition will take place in 2027 in the Burtņieku Lake area. It will feature installations, trails, a park of silence, a retreat and other activities created by sound artists.

CURATOR: Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, Liba Berzina (society COLORIZE), Amanda Cachia (USA)

LOCATION: City of Valmiera and county

PARTNERS: LOCAL - educational institutions of Valmiera Municipality, special needs organisations in Valmiera Municipality; NATIONAL - Viestarts Gailītis, Association "Skanu mežs", Maksims Šenteļevs, Tourism Cluster "EnterGauja", Vidzeme Tourism Association; INTERNATIONAL - Camille Norment Studio (Norway), Samson Young (China), Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller (Canada), Christine Sun Kim (USA), Hannah Wallis (UK), Q-O2 workspace (Belgium), CTM festival (Germany), Association OUTRA (Portugal), Shape Arts (UK), Lydgalleriet (Norway), MARFA (USA), Soundcities network. **BUDGET:** EUR 180,000

The forest has ears, and the river has eyes

Nature loves to hide. We are not alone. The forest has ears, and the river has eyes...

Contemporary dance performances "The forest has ears and the river has eyes" will bring together local and international contemporary dance artists and young people who will lead participants and viewers into nature and invite them to look at it not only through a practical or aesthetic prism, but to see it as a changing, moving ecosystem with humans as just one of the elements.

Inspired by conversations with local youth and dance artists, we have chosen two strands of research and creative work: one will look at nature through the symbolic and mythical experience that our ancestors knew and that is likely still stored in the cells in our bodies. The other will focus on ecology and climate change, an issue of particular concern to young people. Each of these strands will be handled by its own group of experienced dance artists and students. Performances will be developed through theoretical and practical research and a series of workshops, gaining experience out in nature and in the studio, which will help to develop the performance. At the end of the process, the audience will have the opportunity to watch the contemporary dance performance that has been developed, which will most certainly take place in nature. The performance will be filmed.

The creative team will consist of dance artists **Laura Gorodko**, **Linda Mīļā**, **Beāta Ozoliņa**, **Lelde Feldmane**, **Kristīne Brīniņa**, playwright **Laura Stašāne**. Experts in the folklore genre, as well as environmental specialists will be involved in the process. The production of the performances will be a collaboration with musicians who will work with recordings and their own compositions to create special scores for the event and visual artists who have demonstrated in their practice an ethical approach to working with the environment and natural elements. For example, **Andris Eglītis**, **Krišjānis Salmanis**, **Anna Salmane**, **Ieva Kraule-Kūna**, etc. Latvian artists, students and youth will work together with international choreographers **Maija Hirvanen** (Helsinki), **Kristine Helgebustad** (Oslo) and **Vera Mantero** (Lisbon), whose experience and creative practice is closely related to physics, nature, ecology and what they call the "more than human world".

CURATOR: Valmiera Culture Centre, Agnese Lutce
LOCATION: outdoor spaces in the City of Valmiera and region

PARTNERS: LOCAL- Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Valmiera Secondary School of Design and Art, regional educational institutions; NATIONAL: Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art at the University of Latvia, Nature Conservation Agency, Society "Homo Ecos", Latvian Academy of Culture; INTERNATIONAL: Maija Hirvanen (Finland), Kristine Helgebustad (Norway), Vera Mantero (Portugal)
BUDGET: EUR 90,000

Multimedia performance at Neikenkalna Nature Concert Hall

"That evening, people came from Valmiera along all the highways, deep in thought and exultant. Then the darkness was no longer so dark, for there was light in every heart. It was as if people were prepared for a better and more joyful life." /Pāvils Rozītis "The Boys of Valmiera" (1936)/

Neikenkalns is a place in Valmiera Municipality where one of the most admired Latvian folk traditions – the Song Festival – began in 1864. Since then, 26 Latvian Song Festivals have been held; over time, song has been joined by dance, and today around 40,000 participants take part in the festival. In 2003, this tradition was recognised as a UNESCO Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. A multimedia performance will be staged at the Neikenkalns Nature Concert Hall as the culminating event of the ECoC summer series – a concert of 2000 participants on two stages, featuring professional artists and amateurs of various genres: mixed, women's and men's choirs; sacred music performers; an international group of traditional music performers; the ancient music ensemble "Ludus"; electronic music performers; actors, dancers. The performance will be a free journey through time, getting to know different personalities, creatively touching upon important historical, cultural and sporting achievements of Valmiera in the global space. The main stops: the period of the Livonian Order and the origin of the Hanseatic League, the cultural influence of the Hernhutian (Brethren) movement, Jānis Cimze's teachers' seminar and its direct link to the First Song Festival in Dikļi and the Song Festival phenomenon up to the present day, the impact of the two world wars in the 20th century, the Song Festival processes after the Second World War and the emergence of theatrical folk dances, sports stars of the Valmiera region, legends of Valmiera Drama Theatre, in linguistics and music. The concert will begin with specially-created electronic allusions on medieval and renaissance themes, featuring church chants, romantic love ballads, brutal pub songs and dances, folk music and dance expressions. European music will be performed by church choirs and the early music ensemble Ludus. Traditional Hernhutian songs will be performed by various choirs using newly created paraphrases. The grand impact will be enhanced by video projections of J.K. Broce's drawings and light installations.

CURATOR: Valmiera Culture Centre, Ivars Cinkuss
LOCATION: Neikenkalna Nature Concert Hall in the Valmiera Municipality
PARTNERS: LOCAL- Valmiera District Culture Centres, all kinds of choirs and dance groups, Valmiera Drama Theatre actors; NATIONAL- Latvian National Culture Centre, Vidzeme region choirs and dance groups, Ancient Music Ensemble "LUDUS", director Inga Tropa Fišere, scenographer Aigars Ozoliņš, lighting director Egils Kupčs, sound director Tālis Timrots, multimedia projection director; INTERNATIONAL - IFCH - International Federation for Choral Music, The European Choral Association - Europe Cantat, ACDA - American Choral Directors' Association, TENSO - The European Network for Professional Chamber Choirs, European Latvian Association (ELA), World Federation of Free Latvians (PBLA), Estonian Latvian Association (Estonia), Swedish Latvian Association (Sweden), Japan - Latvian Music Association (Japan), Latvian Association of France (France)
BUDGET: EUR 100,000

Continuation of the Creative Awakening of the Living Environment - Nature Office

Our goal is to become a micro-city that can live in symbiosis with nature and the environment. We will therefore honestly share with the European public our stories of a transformation process that is bound to be full of successes, challenges, achievements and diverse experiences. During the PROCESS, the created outdoor cultural environment will be filled with diverse, independent yet complementary events. All attractions will be marked with signage and support tools for easy access for people with different disabilities, as well as multilingual digital solutions (apps) to ensure the accessibility of the sites for international visitors. These are described in the PROCESS event "Creative Awakening of the Living Environment". Planned itineraries and events:

Environmental Intelligence Space "Nature Office". Paying special attention to the impact of human economic activity and consumption on nature, "nature offices" – environmental intelligence spaces for creative, sustainable and innovative nature storytelling will be created in the Gauja riverbank area in Valmiera, which consists of undergrowth, parks and nature trails.
Nature Experience Laboratory. We will go into nature in search of inspiration that can be turned into art – poetry, photography or short film. Urban micro-adventures will be created in workshops, with excursions to grandmas' cellars, the orangeries of Hruščovka balconies and Valmiera allotments, in order to learn about alternative forms of housekeeping and consumption. Several pop-up offices will be set up to work, study, hold creative meetings or simply enjoy the scenic view without interruption.

Water research station. Every year on 22 March, which is known as World Water Day, we will set up two water quality monitoring stations where the Gauja River flows in and out of Valmiera to compare the data and tell the story of Valmiera's impact on the water in the Gauja. Underwater filming will be undertaken in the Gauja and other bodies of water. Virtual reality tools will be developed with the help of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences to creatively tell the story of water pollution and how each of us, through our farming and consumption choices, affects water quality and can get involved in improving it.

Satori lectures and workshops. The association "Ascendum", publication "Satori" and the environmental project "Zaļgalvis", in cooperation with other environmental organisations will arrange educational lectures, masterclasses and recreational events, as well as stand-up performances, which will address environmental issues in a satirical way.

CURATOR: Valmiera Tourism Council
LOCATION: outdoor spaces in the City of Valmiera and surrounding region
PARTNERS: Listed in the PROCESS cycle "The Creative Awakening of a Living Environment"
BUDGET: EUR 350,000

2027 AUTUMN CYCLE – REFLECTION

Niklāvs Strunke's Exhibition

Niklāvs Strunke embodies the goals and ambitions of a cosmopolitan, his travel experiences, impressions and charismatic personality are reflected in his works, making him one of the most prominent modernists in 20th century Latvian art. His childhood years are connected with Valmiera, but later (in the 1920s) he travelled to Europe: Germany, Italy and Sweden, where many years spent there stimulated his original artistic expression, leaving a magnificent legacy in the context of modernism. Incidentally, his contemporaries credit Strunke with introducing the Italian greeting "ciao" to Rīga. The exhibition of works by Niklāvs Strunke at the Kurtuve Centre for Contemporary Art will retrospectively depict the artist's journey from Valmiera to the world's metropolises, alongside works by his contemporaries and his son Laris Strunke.

Since the 1st bid book, locals and local institutions from Vaidava parish (where N.Strunke lived in his teenage years) have taken part in the process. The rich history of the place as well as the broad interest of the locals have already led to thematic workshops, field trips to his former house and strong involvement and support from the local community in preparation of the upcoming exhibition as well as celebration of Strunke's 130th birthday in 2024

In 2027, the locals will work closely with the the curators of the Latvian National Museum of Art and National Library of Latvia – to select works by the artist from various fields of art to highlight the personality and works of the outstanding Latvian artist, emphasising his importance in the national and international context and reflecting the artist's travels, quick temperament and romantic outlook.

Strunkes granddaughter Laila Strunke will be invited to the opening event and asked to share their memories of the artist. Participants of the opening event will have the opportunity to take part in art talks led by the curators. The exhibition will be developed with the participation of the Royal Swedish Academy of Arts.

CURATOR: Latvian National Museum of Art
VENUE: Kurtuve Centre for Contemporary Art
PARTNERS: LOCAL - Valmiera Library, Vaidava Library, Valmiera Museum, Strunke's relatives in Latvia; NATIONAL - Latvian Museum of Decorative Arts and Design, Art Academy of Latvia, Latvian National Library, Bank of Latvia, Embassy of Sweden in Latvia, World Latvian Art Centre; Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia, Swedish Institute; INTERNATIONAL - Royal Swedish Academy of Fine Arts (Sweden), Strunke family in Sweden (architect Laila Strünke), Tate Modern (UK), Modern Art Museum in Stockholm, Tensta konsthall, The Gothenburg Museum of Art, Malmö Art Museum, Västerås Art Museum (Sweden), The Museum of Fine Arts Budapest (Hungary)
BUDGET: EUR 100,000

Simjūds + event

The "Simjūds +" event will take place in autumn 2027, concluding the activities launched during PROCESS and bringing together pragmatic producers and traders with creative collectives in an exciting performance. The market will be divided into creative quarters and located in different parts of the city. Each Creative Quarter will cover a specific period of economic development, from the oldest to the newest, providing relevant content, visuals and musical performances by both local and international groups. The goods and food offered will correspond to the specific historical period. For example, in the 12th-13th centuries, potatoes, black tea and coffee were unknown in Latvia. However, cereals, peas and mead were widely used, so visitors will be able to enjoy products that correspond to this period. We will also combine the tradition-based event with a different kind of "market" – the “Simjūds+” Network Development Experience Forum, during which we will share with Latvian and foreign partners our accomplishments, the experience and lessons learned, as well as exchange ideas on the further development of the network: experiences and opinions of Latvian and foreign representatives of cultural industries and creative industries, experts from the cooperating municipalities and other interested parties. Also "Culture Market" dance event will be performed in towns and parishes of Valmiera and the region, dancing on small open-air stages, squares and meadows in Vidzeme and the surrounding region. The story will be based on the economic sector: trade, market, making the dance multinational – showing the folk traditions of both Latvian and Hanseatic twin towns, allowing participants and spectators to learn about the cultural influence of other European nations on the development of the region.

CURATOR: Valmiera Museum, Union of Cities: The Hansa, Jānis Ērglis, Chief Choreographer, Latvian Nationwide Song and Dance Celebration
LOCATION: City of Valmiera
PARTNERS: LOCAL - Valmiera county cultural centres, folk dance groups, home growers, craftsmen; NATIONAL - dance groups and traders of the Hanseatic League cities - Rīga, Limbaži, Kuldīga, Ventspils, Cēsis, Koknese, Vidzeme Planning Region, Rīga Planning Region, Latvian National Cultural Centre, Latvian Traders' Association. INTERNATIONAL - The Hanseatic League, Via Hanseatica cities - Klaipėda (Lithuania), Gdańsk (Poland), Lübeck (Germany), Kaunas (Lithuania), Tartu, Tallinn (Estonia), etc., HANSEartWORKS programme, European Hansemuseum (Germany), Hanseatic Museum and Schøtstuene (Norway), ERIH (European Route of Industrial Heritage), Slow Food International. **BUDGET:** EUR 80,000

Continuing the Creative Awakening of the Living Environment - Celebration of Industrial Culture

A series of events will be dedicated to the economic history of Valmiera and its surroundings and will include places and events that have traditionally been closely

linked to industry, which has historically had a complex relationship with nature, dictated by consumer trends and the improvement of human quality of life. In some places, industrial activity is still thriving today, while in others, only abandoned buildings, legends and historic photographs bear witness. These places are associated with products such as the peat of Seda, the red clay bricks of Lode or Staicele paper. These places and the people who once lived there and still live there will be the focus of our attention.

Movement, which was vital for the supply of raw materials and the shipment of goods in the heyday of industry, will play an important role in this process. Historically, this was provided by the Gauja and Salaca rivers, and later by the railways. That is why participants will experience the stories and events of industrial culture on the move, using former industrial routes: the historic post roads, the waterways of the Gauja, the river Salaca and Lake Burtnieks, as well as the network of Green Railways, which have been transformed into cycling routes. The proposed events will create a space for conversation about sustainable future movements, farming and consumption through artistic expression.

All sites will be marked with signage and support tools for easy access for people with different disabilities, and multilingual digital solutions (apps) will make the sites accessible to international visitors. Described in the PROCESS "Creative Awakening of the Living Environment". Planned itineraries and events:

Boat trip on the river Salaca dedicated to Staicele paper. In 2027, a boat trip will take place along the Salaca River, at the end of which participants will have the opportunity to visit the Staicele Paper Mill, built at the end of the 19th century, which, together with its historic residential buildings, was included in the list of state-protected cultural monuments in 2011. During the tour, you will be able to see an exhibition dedicated to paper – exhibits made of used paper, created by students from Staicele educational institutions in collaboration with artists from various fields.

Clay - the salt of the earth. Liepa. Liepa parish in Cēsis municipality, was where the largest ceramic building materials factory in the Baltic States – Lode brick factory – was located until the 1980s. Clay Days will be organised at the factory, involving representatives of Latvian and foreign traditional and contemporary ceramics, painting, textiles and other fields of art. Visitors will have the opportunity to visit clay quarries, watch the brick-making process and take part in clay workshops. There will be a symposium on clay and exhibitions by ceramic artists and collectors.

Event "In the Peat". Residents and visitors to the municipality will be invited to meet at the Zilākalna Cultural and Historical Visitor Centre "Tornis" to hear stories about the past and recent history of Zilaiskalns and the village, followed by a bicycle ride on the former peat railway line with interactive tasks.

Everyday life in a Valmiermuiža feed-lot. The projection "Everyday life in a feed-lot" will depict the daily rhythm of workers working with horses, highlighting various sustainability and green lifestyle themes. Sustainable and responsible farming then and now, permaculture, green living, horse breeding, preservation and restoration of cultural heritage, and other processes.

CURATOR: Valmiera Tourism Council
LOCATION: Valmiera region and Cēsis region
PARTNERS: Listed in the PROCESS cycle event "Creative Awakening of the Living Environment"
BUDGET: EUR 350,000

Valmiera Multimedia Festival

In 2027, the Valmiera Multimedia Festival is planned as an ambitious European event with a strong live and digital programme, revealing the wide variety of multimedia art forms, including interactive solutions, video and audio installations, the possibilities offered by modern technologies in the world of augmented reality (XR), computer art forms, robotics, light objects and other forms of media art. We have discussed the content and formats of the festival with international partners such as ISEA International Forum and Ars Electronica Festival, as well as UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts such as Braga, Enghien-les-Bains, Košice and York. The festival will be a two-week long event with the participation of regional, national and international multimedia artists, experts, researchers, various stakeholders, and will take place in different locations in the region. For example, multimedia events in the outdoor space of Valmiera, artist residencies in the network of manors, educational programmes in the art space "Kurtuve", etc. Projects will be developed for people with autism spectrum disorders i.e. cultural content of reduced stress and dynamics in physical or digital environments, as well as content that can be understood by people with visual or hearing impairments. The festival consists of several blocks of events:

A high quality media arts programme consisting of creative, co-creative and collaborative projects, guest projects from partner festivals, open calls, artist residencies, artist discussions, the creation of a festival artistic council and an internationally renowned curator.

Mediation and accessibility of the arts programme adapted to different target groups (e.g. children, seniors, people with special needs, groups at risk of social exclusion and poverty, etc.), diverse content of arts and education programmes in terms of complexity, message and form, as well as decentralisation of the festival's activities.

Knowledge, experience exchange and networking activities for professionals in the sector and knowledge transfer through educational programmes, e.g. support for the development of digital strategies and digital skills for organisations and professionals from different sectors in the fields of culture, education, youth, communication, creative industries, public administration, and other fields.

Cross-sectoral initiatives through linking new media arts and research processes with other sectors.

We will adapt the festival to different formats: face-to-face, hybrid and digital, as well as to different locations. Special emphasis will be placed on the development of high-quality digital platforms and channels (website, app, social media accounts) that will provide access to the artworks, as well as streaming, archiving, educational programmes and other related content. The international network will facilitate the two-way circulation of artworks, i.e. the screening of newly created projects at other festivals and the inclusion of partner projects in the festival programme. In 2027, Valmiera will be a candidate for ISEA (The International Symposium on Electronic Art). The travelling symposium is open to any city in the world and consists of a diverse programme. Another major partner planned in the programme is MUTEK (International Festival of Digital Creativity & Electronic Music). If approved, we will integrate both events into the Festival's programming to ensure a greater international reach and maximum audience to get the Festival's name out not only in Europe, but also more globally.

EVENT CURATOR: Ltd. “Story Hub”
LOCATION: Industrial Design and Innovation Centre, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Kurtuve Centre for Contemporary Art, Valmiera Culture Centre, Valmiera Library, Valmiera Business and Innovation Incubator, Valmiera Concert Hall
PARTNERS: Listed in PROCESS cycle event “Development of Multimedia Sector” **BUDGET:** EUR 250,000

International Festival “Gardens of Light”

The International Festival "Gardens of Light" will be a celebration of light and sound – a month-long series of events taking place during the darkest time of the year, when light objects are especially welcome and can be fully enjoyed. The festival will take place in December, when during each week of Advent, Christmas and the New Year, a variety of light and sound objects – specially created installations, light performances and projections on the facades of historic buildings (mappings) – will shine in various manor houses and castles in the Valmiera region. Light object and projection artists in Latvia have experience in creating multimedia works of large scale and quality, and by attracting artists from European countries, will make a significant contribution to the qualitative development of the level of light festivals and to the collaboration of European professionals and discourse on the development of the art form.

The festival aims to reflect the context of **cultural heritage in contemporary time and space, highlighting the beauty of castles and manor houses, gardens and parks**, while at the same time giving a glimpse into the special stories of each place and the people who inhabit it. Prior to the festival, an open call for projects will be launched, inviting local and European light and multimedia artists to submit their interpretation of newly created stories in the language of light, sound and environmental design.



The cultural programme accompanying the festival will include various art forms, focusing on live chamber music and literary events. The culmination of the festivities will be light and sound installations in Valmiera's urban environment over several days and a New Year's light show – an alternative to the traditional fireworks display. Partners from the closest Baltic States will be involved in the creation of Valmiera's urban objects to implement international cooperation projects to close the European Capital of Culture year. All light objects will be digitally accessible. A high quality web platform will be developed for the festival, where the objects can be viewed remotely in an online environment, using the possibilities offered by 360° video and 3D environments. Visitors will be able to evaluate both the light objects and the overall programme offer during the festival, which will provide feedback for them. In cooperation with partners and festival project promoters, a plan for the independent lighting of castles, manors, parks and gardens will be developed as one of the long-term investments in the development of the castle and manor network.

CURATOR: Ltd. "Story Hub"
LOCATION: Valmiera region manor houses and castles, Valmiera city parks
PARTNERS: LOCAL- participating regional manors and castles, Valmiera Regional Foundation, Valmiermuiža Culture Society, regional libraries and cultural centres, Valmiera Museum, Vidzeme Tourism Association; NATIONAL- Latvian light and multimedia artists and technical companies, as well as professional writers, Latvian Association of Castles and Manors, Culture and Independent Thought online magazine "Satori", media "Delfi", Latvian Association of Landscape Architects; INTERNATIONAL- International Light Festivals Organisation, Architectural Lighting and Light Art Festival in Tartu - TAVA, Festival of Lights in Nõo, Wandering Lights Festival Tallinn (Estonia), Vilnius Light Festival, Kaunas Light Festival, Klaipeda Lights Festival (Lithuania), Lumo Light Festival Oulu and Oulu 2026 (Finland), collaboration platform "Garden Pearls" **BUDGET:** EUR 600,000

Performance “Industrial currents”

"Industrial Currents" is a tribute to the people of Valmiera and the region whose working life is connected with industrial or manufacturing professions and who are otherwise not connected with dance or other arts in their everyday life. The movements and gestures typical of industrial professions will become the raw material for miniature productions, highlighting the uniqueness and beauty of the flow of movement. The starting point is the idea that dance and its elements: rhythm, repetition, structure and movement in space are skills that are familiar to virtually everyone and are the thing that unites everyone.

10–12 local and international choreographers will go on "industrial research expeditions" to different companies, workplaces or collectives in the region to learn about the everyday gestures and movements of people working in specific professions, as well as their working envi-

ronment. The insights and inspirations gained during the research will be used to create microperformances – events. Movements that people do not even think about or find uninteresting will take on a new value and the performance will not only depict everyday life, but also tell about people's lives, dreams and aspirations.

During the research and preparation process, photographers and/or illustrators will capture moments, gestures and details, which will be used to create a **catalogue of photographs of industrial or productive occupational movements in the Valmiera region, as well as micro-exhibitions**. The performances will take place in the participating companies, but will be public – the audience will be able to attend them, in addition to getting a glimpse behind the scenes of the different companies and professions. Each participating workplace will host a micro-exhibition – a photographic record of the process, capturing both the artists and the people working in the companies. It will be accessible to the employees and, during the performance, to the audience. Later, a joint publication will be produced using the photographs and illustrations – a **catalogue of industrial gestures**, which will be included in the repository of the Centre for Industrial Design and Innovation.

The productions will be staged in 10–12 specific locations where art events do not normally take place and the public is not allowed to enter. The events will be accessible to people with reduced mobility as far as practicable. In addition, the production will be staged in outdoor spaces in the county. Internet streaming and a video recording of the events will be available for later viewing.

CURATOR: Laura Stašāne, playwright, Elīna Gediņa, choreographer
LOCATION: Valmiera Glass, Grasbergs, Valmiermuiža beer brewery, R Chocolate, Ar sevi mierā, Daiļrade koks, VLT, Liepkalni, Valpro
PARTNERI: LOCAL: creative industries companies in the region, Valmiera School of Design and Art; NATIONAL- Choreographers' Association, Latvian Academy of Culture, Patriarch Autumn Festival, Ģertrūdes Street Theatre, LAUKKU Association, Latvian Dance Information Centre, online magazine dance. lv, International Summer Dance School "Rīga ON"; INTERNATIONAL- Virgilio Sieni National Performance Centre (Italy), Laban Dance Centre (UK); **BUDGET:** EUR 80,000

Rooftop Culturespace

Sustainability involves society's will and ability to make responsible use of every place that is provided by nature or created by human action – forests and their flora and fauna, bodies of water or their banks, streets, buildings and the environment around them. When we think about the urban environment in Latvia and Valmiera, we often look at the horizontal perspective, forgetting the space above buildings and streets, although many cities around the world have been creating and implementing solutions for a long time, allowing the roofs of buildings, decommissioned viaducts or bridges to be used for culture, recreation and other needs in life. To seek and find solutions for the **vertical extension of**

public open spaces making use of rooftops, we will launch a public discussion with experts from different fields and the public during the ECoC. Alongside the discussion, we will gradually bring to life several rooftops in Valmiera. The first rooftop to be inhabited will be the "Kurtuve" rooftop, for which the development of solutions has already begun. We envisage that the rooftop will serve as another stage – an event platform with an urban garden and possibly beehives. If successful, we will encourage the Municipal Development Council and the Construction Council to continue this initiative by focusing on the use of roofs of other buildings as a public outdoor space or as a platform for micro-events. In autumn 2027, we will organise a **Rooftop Festival**, where we will "inhabit" rooftops in different locations of the municipality together with guests from Latvia and abroad. They will host discussions, seminars, plenaries, film evenings, creative performances, etc. Every town or village in the county and the region will be able to propose its own project and venue – a rooftop. Of course, subject to safety precautions and appropriate approvals from the relevant authorities.

We have discussed the idea with the **European Creative Rooftop Network**, a network of nine European cities working together on rooftop issues. We have reached an agreement to involve the cities in the network in our events, to transfer their experience to Valmiera, to support the preparation and organisation of the festival as well as the possibility for Valmiera to become a part of the network.

CURATOR: Valmiera2027 Office in collaboration with Bruno Inácio (Portugal)
LOCATION: City of Valmiera and region
PARTNERS: LOCAL - Valmiera Development Agency, cultural centres, companies, building owners; NATIONAL - European Outdoor Film Festival; INTERNATIONAL - European Creative Rooftop Network, XIFRES Rooftop: "Floating Wild Garden (New European Bauhaus 2021 Award Winners) (Spain), former FARO2027 team (Portugal), Istanbul Rooftop Festival (Turkey), Top RoofTop (Czech Republic), Rooftop Revolution (Netherlands), Urban Gorillas (Cyprus), ROEF Amsterdam (Netherlands) **BUDGET:** EUR 200,000

2027 PROGRAMME CROSS-THEMATIC EVENTS

The main events will be complemented by a series of "spin-off" events – cyclical events that will serve as a prelude or highlight to one of the main events. Or, on the contrary, cultural events that have been begun will be continued in order to "revitalise" the public's understanding of culture and its diverse forms as an integral part of the micro-city and the practice of culture as an integral part of personal life. We would like to add that the range of events will certainly expand as we continue to receive proposals from local residents and professionals. Space and resources will be made available for new developments.

Sunday Events of the DIY Movement

Every Sunday, specific interest events will be organised in a Valmiera neighbourhood and in the region, allowing people to practise "cultural leisure" – participate in creative masterclasses or skills workshops, literary readings, listen to practical advice in an area of interest, go for a hike, play sports, etc. A calendar of events will be created and published on the ECoC, and the municipality's website, social networks and elsewhere. The venues will be chosen so that the events "meet" people in their Sunday routine. People will not always have to search for venues and worry about belonging to a group – they will meet unconditionally for fun, enriching experiences and a sense of community. During preparation of the ECoC submission, we met and talked to local people. Think-tanks, surveys and informal conversations have given us an insight into people's wishes and interests. The wider events included in the ECoC programme will answer a number of them, such as the "Dance House" and the "Kurtuve" as a response to the complaint of young people about the lack of contemporary cultural events, while the exhibitions, the art spectator school, the "Creative Awakening of Lifestyle" events are our response to the demand of several groups in society, in particular seniors and people with special needs. However, we cannot include everything that is suggested in the basic ECoC programme, which is why the DIY movement has been created. Below we have listed the developments that people in the district have already identified as interests, but we have also allocated resources to other, as yet unknown, micro-initiatives initiated and led by local people. **Activities planned by the DIY movement:** educational activities, especially language (including Latvian for people of other nationalities) and computer skills training; dance, art, music classes and workshops, including for seniors and people with special needs; meetings and discussions with cultural professionals etc. The events will start in 2022 and will permeate the programme until, during and beyond 2027. Our plan is to make the DIY movement a current of inexhaustible activities, with many small events taking place, all of which together have an invaluable positive impact on the mood and spirit of the local community.

EVENT CURATOR: Valmiera Culture Centre
LOCATION: City of Valmiera and region
PARTNERS: LOCAL – Regional cultural centres, craftsmen, NGO's, interest groups, Valmiera Secondary School of Design and Art; NATIONAL – Artillery Gardens Association, Līgatne Craftsmen house, Ltd. Language learning centre, Ballroom Dance Academy, Goethe-Institut Rīga, British Council, French Institute in Latvia; INTERNATIONAL: Kaunas2022, Trencin2026, Nova Gorica **BUDGET:** EUR 150,000



Art Charging Stations - Art Happens Here and Now

The Art Charging Stations will be a resident parading platform for actively working artists and professional art initiatives, providing an opportunity for every resident and visitor of the region to be closer to art being created today, breaking down boundaries and assumptions about art being only in museums and galleries and giving an opportunity to get acquainted with a contemporary artwork, medium or movement that is specific to today. The stations will be created in close collaboration with Latvian professional contemporary culture institutions and artists. Unusual places will be transformed into stations – spaces that have so far been unexplored in cities, villages, industrial sites, etc., turning them into targeted and surprising destinations for cultural tourists. For example, public transport stops where people, especially young people, usually congregate. Throughout the year, 12 selected "station patrons" – artists (one object each) – will take care of the exhibition, its changes and the accompanying programme of events. The accompanying events

programme will include an opening event for each station – a meeting with the creative team, artists and authors, as well as workshops and talks with the artists, involving local residents and visitors. A **digital map of the "art charging stations"** will be created, making the objects and exhibitions easy to find. Several venues will be equipped with LED screens, available 24/7, where visitors will be able to see descriptions of the works on display and a map with other places to visit. Each station will have an audio guide with texts in plain language. The content of the stations will be able to be viewed and listened to remotely. The choice of sites will take into account environmental accessibility.

CURATOR: Valmiera2027 team in collaboration with NOVI SAD 2022 "Cultural Stations" team
LOCATION: Valmiera municipality institutions, private companies, public transport stops and private properties such as Strenči Primary School, Seda Culture Centre, Arakste Manor, Valmiera Aerodrome, etc.
PARTNERS: VENUES - Arakste Manor, Oleri Manor, Valmiera Hospital, etc.; NATIONAL - Riga Art Galleries: 427, Low, Riga Smallest Gallery, NOASS, Punctum, Satori, ISSP Gallery, Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, "Art Needs

young people, adults and seniors;
- Workshops – discussions led by artists and actors;
- Meetings of artists, actors and directors with residents;
- Joint summer schools for creative professions and residents;
- Conversations between mediators and visitors in the exhibition halls;
- Lectures on a specific genre or artist.
The discussions will be streamed online, making them accessible to a wider audience. For a more detailed description of the planned events, please see the descriptions of the art and theatre events and the description of the Audience Development Programme!

CURATOR: Art genre - Valmiera Culture Council, theatre genre - Valmiera Drama Theatre
LOCATION: Valmiera region and online
PARTNERS: LOCAL- residents of the county and Vidzeme region; NATIONAL - Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, Latvian Academy of Culture, Kvadrifrons Independent Theatre; INTERNATIONAL - Tate Research Centre (UK), Arts Council of Wales (UK), MO museum (Lithuania), The Arts Society (UK), Kumu kunstimuseum (Estonia), Options Theatre Company (Australia) **BUDGET:** EUR 200,000

Open programme

Local people and organisations, partners from Latvia, Europe and other countries are involved in the preparation and implementation of our programme. We have created a grand plan and a huge network, while being aware that there are many more artistic ideas – for ourselves, for our partners and for those who are yet to become partners. We also have other municipalities in the Vidzeme region in our sights – Alūksne, Cēsis, Gulbene, Limbaži, Madona, Ogre, Saulkrasti, Smiltene, Valka and Varakļāni – which have confirmed their support for the programme. We will support their cultural organisations and events with a special programme.

That is why we have planned an open programme with sub-programmes. We will organise open calls for cultural projects, allowing the ECoC programme to introduce new events that we expect from local and foreign artists and creative industries. Planned sub-programmes:

- Culture and Creative Industries Project Programme for foreign participants, including pilot initiatives
- Programme of regional cultural and creative industries initiatives, including pilot initiatives
- Programme to support youth creative initiatives
- Support programme for cultural projects in the Vidzeme region for municipalities in the Vidzeme region, to be implemented in cooperation with the Vidzeme Planning Region
- Open call for the development of ideas generated during the preparation of the ECoC application – we have chosen to implement a number of ideas initially proposed by ourselves through an open call, thus leaving room for creativity and new ideas. For example, a festival of street culture and alternative music. Artistic proposals will be welcomed from both local and international creative groups.

Space" Foundation, "Skaņu mežs" Association, New Media Culture Centre "RIX-C", "GolfClayderman" Artists Association, "Maboca" Art Festival, "Savā valā" Association, Riga Sculpture Quadrennial, LMA Exhibition Space "PILOT" ; INTERNATIONAL: Creative Europe Desk (UK), Art on the Underground (UK), Fotografiska Tallinn (Estonia), Novi Sad 2022 **BUDGET:** EUR 150,000

Contemporary Art and Theatre Spectator School

Educational programmes and events will be developed and implemented to bring contemporary art programmes to life and to educate visitors in contemporary art and theatre genres. Volunteers willing to act as art mediators will be involved in specific training sessions to learn how to explain contemporary culture to an audience. Through mediators, contemporary art will achieve what is essential – broadening people's understanding and promoting engagement in discourse on issues of public concern. There will be a variety of approaches chosen, which will be decided on taking into account the audience and the genre.

For example:

- Art/Theatre Viewing and Conversation School – a series of lectures for different age groups: children,

Q7

How will the cultural programme combine local cultural heritage and traditional art forms with new, innovative and experimental cultural expressions?

The synergy of traditional and contemporary cultural genres is at the heart of the Valmiera ECoC programme. We are already creating new cultural forms and expressions, celebrating and at the same time strengthening local cultural heritage and traditional cultural forms, which are reflected in many Valmiera2027 events.

The development of contemporary dance in the region is based on traditional dance. The interaction between the two dance genres will be evident in several events of the programme, such as the Winter Dance Festival, the "Simjūds +" major event and others. Traditional dance and multimedia will work together to create a brilliant performance at the Culture Market, while the multimedia performance at the Neikenkalna Nature Concert Hall will feature traditional dances accompanied by electronic allusions. The musical events will include a variety of genres, combining traditional and contemporary music. The Festival of Sacred Music will feature medieval and contemporary organ music, chamber music will be performed in the concert series "Lullabies of the World in Manor Houses and Castles", and vocal performances of various genres will be heard in the concert "Industrial a cappella 360". The Valmiera Summer Children and Youth Theatre Festival will be a symbiosis of different theatre genres, enriching and inspiring new creative expressions through mutual interaction. In the visual arts, a symbiosis will be created between the most well-known genres of fine arts and contemporary genres such as landscape, still life, etc., bringing this approach to the Kurtuve Centre for Contemporary and other planned art events – to remain a permanent feature. At the same time, educational activities will be set up to develop the public's ability to understand the messages conveyed by works of different genres. The preparation and implementation of several important

events is unthinkable without photo and video solutions, for example, in the creation of the art photography album "Transformation Fixations", the preparation of a film about the ECoC process, the events implemented by "Orbīta" in Strenči, the events planned for the Creative Awakening of the Living Environment.

We have considered and planned the use of multiple digital solutions. They have been integrated into the programme both as important components of the events, such as the digital exhibition at the Industrial Design and Innovation Centre, and as various solutions for multimedia events and virtual tools, such as the Creative Awakening of Life and Red Valmiera events. Digital technologies will be used for live streaming of concerts, performances and other events.

Multimedia will be a visual and acoustic element of many cultural events, thus enriching and enhancing the content and form of the events. The most concentrated multimedia presence will be seen in the annual Valmiera Multimedia Festival and its culminating event in 2027.

The Valmiera2027 programme is enriched by new and experimental cultural expressions. For example, the creation of the Strenči Environmental Sonification Station, a contemplative sound art exhibition, community gardens created by internationally renowned artists, and more. What's more, we have planned an Open Programme (please see description) that will allow artists from the region, Latvia and Europe to propose and implement further experimental art projects.

groups of different cultural genres, consultations on ideas and other events. The ideas included in the ECoC programme have been discussed with civil society organisations and businesses, as well as with the specific people we have listed as both curators and partners in the event descriptions. The artistic director of the programme, Reinis Suhanovs, director and stage designer of Valmiera Drama Theatre, has been entrusted with bringing all the events together (please see CV in Q30–31). We believe that the presence of a artistic director from the very beginning of the Valmiera2027 programme is an important precondition for its high artistic and cultural quality. When preparing the submission, we had to face both great interest and support, and sometimes a lack

of understanding and even denial on the part of citizens and cultural organisations. The support, criticism and different attitudes allowed us to crystallise the intentions of Valmiera2027 and their scale, as well as to understand which initiatives we will be able to realise and which might have yet to be realised within the Open Programme or in other ways. For this we say a big thank you to everyone involved!

We have involved more than 100 local partners in preparation of the application (we have listed a few in the list below, but a more comprehensive list is available at the description of each event).

- cultural groups and initiatives of different genres (dance groups, music groups, crafts, etc.);
- educational institutions (Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Valmiera School of Design and Art, Valmiera School of Music and other regional music education institutions, city and regional general education institutions, etc.)
- church congregations (Burtņieki Church, Matīši Church, Valmiera St. Simon's Church, etc.);
- owners, managers and organisations of manors and castles (Mūrmuiža, Jērcēnmuiža, Kokmuiža, etc.);
- associations (Katapulta, Valmiera County Foundation, Valmiermuiža Culture Association, etc.);
- public and private sports and active recreation organisations (Vidzeme Olympic Centre, Active Tourism Centre EŽI, BMX track in Valmiera, Virķēni Sports Complex, etc.);
- industrial companies (Valmiera Glass, Valmiermuižas alus darītava, R Chocolate, Liepkalni, etc.);
- creative industries companies and support institutions (Valmiera Development Agency, co-creation workshop DARE);
- artists (Agnese Lutce, Agnese Vajņiece, Karīna Vītiņa, Andra Zelčāne, Līga Ivāne, Leons Āķers, etc.);
- communities in different places of the city, the region and Vidzeme
- public cultural institutions (Valmiera Culture Centre and the network of cultural institutions in the region, Valmiera Museum, etc.).

The local organisations and artists mentioned in the previous chapter and in the descriptions have confirmed their intention to participate in the implementation of Valmiera2027. Their involvement is a wonderful opportunity for the programme, as everyone involved has the necessary knowledge, skills and enthusiasm. At the same time, it will also be an opportunity for cultural organisations, businesses, communities, etc. to grow in their skills through the process of creating and making. Below are some examples of the involvement of local organisations and artists.

- Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences will lead the creation of the Future of Entrepreneurship Lab at the Industrial Design and Innovation Centre, participate in the development of the Multimedia sector as content creators, developers of educational offerings, and will develop virtual tools for the Creative Awakening of the Living Environment and involve students in developing creative solutions for the events included in the programme.
- Vidzeme Secondary School of Design and Art and Valmiera Technical School will participate in the development of age-appropriate content for students at the Industrial Design and Innovation Centre, in filling the Kurtuve Contemporary Art Centre with events, and in the development and delivery of content and events for DIY events.
- General education institutions and pupils in the region will

participate in numerous dance and music productions and festivals, such as the Creativity Forge "Light Up and Show Enthusiasm!", the Winter Dance Festival, create and maintain demand, attend the Contemporary Art and Theatre Spectator School, participate in the creation and delivery of DIY and Lifestyle Creative Awakening events. A Youth Agency will be set up to engage young people, and they will be involved in the Participation School and the Audience Development Academy (please see section Q17).

- Valmiera Culture Centre will coordinate the creation and development of the Dance House and four other events: the Winter Dance Festival, the Creativity Forge "Light up and Show Enthusiasm!", "The forest has ears and the river has eyes", Multimedia performance at the Neikenkalns Nature Concert Hall.
- Valmiera Development Agency will be responsible for the development of the content of the Industrial Design and Innovation Centre.
- Valmiermuiža Culture Association will lead the creation and development of the Manor Network, while at least 20 manor houses and castles in the region will host the events planned in the Valmiera2027 programme, such as the concerts of the musical series "Lullabies of the World in Manor Houses and Castles", will create and implement the accompanying events.
- Active Tourism Centre EŽI Ltd. will manage the preparation and organisation of the International Cycling Film Festival "KINO PEDĀLIS".
- Regional cultural centres, folk dance groups, folk music groups, home producers, craftsmen will be involved in the preparation of programmes for the events. "The forest has ears and the river has eyes", Multimedia performance at the Neikenkalna Nature Concert Hall.
- Regional churches will take part in the preparation and organisation of the Spiritual Music Festival.
- The region's industrial companies Valmiera Glass, Valpro, Rūjienas saldējums, Valmiermuižas alus, etc. will be involved in the creation of the Industrial Design and Innovation Centre's exhibitions, the preparation of several cultural events, such as the Creativity Forge "Light up and Show Enthusiasm!", the Industrial a cappella "360".
- Communities in the territory of the region and in the municipalities of Liepa, Seda, Strenči and Zilaiskalns will participate as content creators, storytellers, historians and event organisers in the Creative Awakening of the Living Environment.
- Local artists will create events, e.g. handicrafts artist Agnese Vajņiece will lead lace-making workshops, organist Līga Ivāne will develop an organ music programme and organist Leons Āķers will create and lead stories about the Burtņieki organ.

In addition to the initiatives created specifically for the ECoC, the Valmiera2027 programme also involves traditional cultural and educational institutions – Valmiera Drama Theatre (VDT), all regional cultural centres, Valmiera Museum (VM), Valmiera Music School, Valmiera School of Design and Art. In addition to the creativity (festivals and special events) already included in the application, their permanent offering and repertoire will be transformed, improved and supplemented with new content and art forms specially created for the ECoC, closely linking contemporary and traditional cultural genres. The specific field and contribution of each institution, such as VDT's contribution to the development of theatre content and audiences, the achievements of VM in the field of cultural history research, will be used as a basis and springboard for the development of their related fields.



Q11

Elaborate on the scope and quality of the activities:

- a) promoting the cultural diversity of Europe, intercultural dialogue and greater mutual understanding between European citizens;
- b) highlighting the common aspects of European cultures, heritage and history, as well as European integration and current European themes;
- c) featuring European artists, cooperation with operators and cities in different countries, and transnational partnerships, naming European and international artists, operators, cities with which cooperation is envisaged.

"... Cultural and creative industries are important European assets and are essential for Europe's sustainable recovery, for the resilience of European societies and, more generally, for our European way of life." Margaritis Schinas, Vice-President of the European Commission, 29 June 2021.

The European dimension is firmly woven into our strategy, its presence being encoded in important messages, partnerships and international developments. We have worked diligently to identify and highlight themes that are of vital importance to the Valmiera region and which are relevant in the context of the shared values and challenges of the whole European Union.

Valmiera2027 goal **Notice and Recognise Us** includes a number of important aspects that have their origins in past and present socio-political developments, as well as in global phenomena that have affected Valmiera, Latvia and many European countries.

One of these aspects is the post-Soviet stigmas that Latvia experienced when we were incorporated into the USSR against our will, and which, as a common legacy of historical events, continue to live on in the consciousness of people in Latvia and in many Eastern European bloc member states, **often as a denial of our individuality, belonging and place**, forcing us to ask ourselves **whether we feel we belong and fit into the European cultural space, how we see ourselves and express ourselves?** The postulates and practices of the falsified socialism of the Soviet period made people lose the courage to speak up and express their opinions freely, afraid to be different and not be ashamed of it or to be participatory and believe that their voice mattered. This is vividly

illustrated by the May 2021 Eurobarometer survey: 80% of Latvians believe that their voice does not matter in European Union processes and 71% believe that their voice does not matter in national processes, ranking second to last and last respectively among EU Member States.

Another of the most striking manifestations of past experiences is the **denial and non-acceptance of diversity**. Although without huge cultural clashes, it still exists alongside us and manifests itself in the form of a wisecrack on the street to a foreign student, an unfriendly comment about people of different races or nationalities or otherwise. This denial, this non-recognition, also manifests itself for some people in terms of culture, protesting against what is alien and incomprehensible. The situations described initiate and sustain slow-burning but long-lasting conflicts of ideas and words between different groups in society, not only in Latvia but in many parts of Europe. Their early detection and prevention is a challenge and a task for all European countries. Especially now, when in several European countries populist forces are creating and maintaining conflicts between groups with different opinions or social groups. Brigid Laffan, Director of the Robert Schuman Centre, has underlined this point: **"The challenge of integrating diversity in the European Union is high on the EU agenda** as the EU strives to forge a post-crisis future, reach out to European citizens and counter-balance the anti-EU populist discourse".

The third important aspect that we address in Valmiera2027 is the **alienation, individualisation and diminishing civic initiative among people, which has a negative impact on European integration and mutual understanding among citizens**.

Our programme is designed as a commission from the local community, while recognising that many people are still sceptical, in denial or inert. And this is not just a challenge for us – for Valmiera! Issues of public participation and mutual understanding are on the European Union agenda.

Through culture projects we want to give not only Valmierians, but also other citizens of Europe, the chance to

express themselves. To be recognized and to show them that their voice, their actions can have an impact on building the better Europe. When our proposal was almost finished the unimaginable happened – Russia started an invasion of Ukraine. Over the course of this time, thousands of individuals from all around Europe are helping Ukraine and its citizens. Such a solidarity has been seen in Europe the last time during the WWII. These peoples' actions are creating a new future for Europe – one that speaks less and has more action, one that supports collective thinking and creates supportive and inclusive communities. **By becoming an ECoC we'll give a hope to all war-damaged cities, showing it's possible to rebuild, reconnect and rediscover our cultural selves thanks to actions of individual citizens.**

Our partners in raising and responding to these challenges are artists, cultural and other organisations in Europe and around the world. Below are examples of events and partners.

We will address the challenges described in the events organised in the framework of the **European Academy:** conferences, seminars, debates (please see detailed description at the end of this chapter). For example, at the "Feast of Strangers", an event to be organised by the **European Latvian Association**, dedicated to the concept of values, by **eminent British historian and philosopher, professor at Oxford, Theodore Zeldin.**

An inclusive international contemporary art programme and a contemplative sound art exhibition will be used to start a conversation and wider discussion focusing on art as an agent of social change and on the focus on fellow human beings, "invisible" groups and uncomfortable topics: exclusion, inequality, cultural inaccessibility. Curated by Amanda Cachia (Australia), Hannah Wallis (UK), Camille Norment Studio (Norway), Christine Sun Kim (USA/Germany), How to Put On an Accessible Exhibition Shape Arts (UK) – will give advice on developing exhibitions and working with people with disabilities.

The Contemporary Circus and Street Art Festival "Human" will initiate and maintain discussions on the theme of being human and human wellbeing. Redbull pumptrack, Big Wolf Company, Cirkus Sabok, Estonian Contemporary Circus Development Center (all from Estonia), Kanta company and Taigi cirkas (Lithuania), Circus Xanti (Norway), Baltic Nordic Circus Network are involved in the concept and creative solutions.

The Valmiera Summer Theatre Festival will offer new productions by foreign directors, which will raise topical issues of social responsibility, social cohesion, tolerance and proactive reflection on what is happening in the community, the country and globally. Partners Panta Rei Danseteatre and Showbox Festival (Norway), Assitej International, COMEDIA Theater (Germany) will participate in concept development, production and staging of the festival.

Contemporary dance performance "The Age of Man" will give people the opportunity to jointly experience topical, sometimes painful and uncomfortable themes about the relationships between people and communities, wider and contextual societal processes. Partners Jaana Koko (Finland), Ana Rita Seirôco (Portugal), Gintarė Masteikaitė (Lithuania), Sõltumatu Tantsu Lava (Estonia), Nicole des Bouvrie (Netherlands), Alan Stoune (UK), Carla Peterson (USA), The Work Room (Scotland),

Boys and Girls Clubs of Wales (UK) will contribute to concept development, preparation and staging of the festival.

Culture Market, "Simjūds +” and the Winter Dance Festival will be a manifesto of the economic and cultural traditions and national costume identities of different European nationalities, enhancing the pride of the participants of each Member State in their own sense of belonging and cultural values. International dance groups will participate in the development and performance of the events. For example, Norwegian traditional music and dance Association (Norway), Dans Folkedans (Denmark), Eric Sahlström Institute (Sweden), Kaustinen Folk Music Festival (Finland), Siglufjörður Folk Music Festival (Iceland). Valmiera2027's goal – **Bridging the Culture Gap** – is not only a story about creating and providing a diverse cultural offering, but also a **response to concerns in Europe and around the world about the ongoing globalisation of culture**, which, alongside positive benefits, also has negative tendencies: the growing dominance of subculture over traditional culture, exposing local traditions to extinction, and over a quality cultural offering, which requires immersion and self-development. By creating new and developing existing cultural developments, **we will build a cultural environment where historical, national, international traditions and contemporary cultural expressions coexist and interact harmoniously, highlighting the diversity of European cultures, their common heritage and history, by sharing experiences and learning from each other, with partners in Europe and other countries worldwide.** Joint cultural and co-creative activities will explore **Europe's cultural diversity and promote intercultural dialogue.**

Another major challenge and opportunity is to **expand cultural and creative opportunities and unleash creativity.** Over the last decade, more than a hundred studies have been carried out in Europe on the impact of culture and creativity on the sustainability and development of places, and the results show that **culture and creativity play an important role in the broadest socio-economic dimensions:** in the development of new products and services, job creation, identity awareness and consolidation, and participation. Despite the significant investment

of EU funds in regional development in the 2014–2020 EU period, cultural industries and creative industries have developed mainly in cities, drawing people from creative industries to them and thus negatively affecting the development of many of Europe's more remote cities and adjacent areas. **We will build a model in which the cultural and creative industries, as they grow in content and scale, have a positive impact on other socio-economic spheres.** We will do this together with our European partners by strengthening our own capacities while giving our European partners the opportunity to learn from us.

We will fill the cultural gap with a wide range of creative activities and the close involvement of European and international partners. The limited length of the application does not allow us to outline everything, so here are just a few examples.

Many artists and organisations are involved in establishing and the development of the Valmiera County Dance House: Arts Printing House (Lithuania), STL (Estonia), Zodiak Dance Centre (Finland), Notafe Summer Dance School and Festival (Estonia), tanzhaus.nrw (Germany), Tanzhaus Zurich (Switzerland), Manuel Pelmus (Norway), Alexandra Pirici (Romania), Boris Charmatz (France). The partners will run residencies for dance artists, workshops, summer schools, prepare and perform dance productions together with the dancers. **Partners involved in the activities of the Centre for Contemporary Art "Kurtuve":** Dumu Fabrikas (Lithuania), Menų fabrikas – Loftas (Lithuania), MO Museum (Lithuania), Esch2022 Massenoire program (Esch2022, Luxembourg), KULTUURKATEL Creative Hub and Tallinn 2011 team (Estonia), UCSB Dance company (USA), TEH – Trans Europe Halles will participate in ideation and co-creation, preparation and running of residency programmes, preparation of art exhibitions and Contemporary Art Spectator School events. **Creativity Forge "Light up and Show Enthusiasm!"** will be developed with numerous partners: Narva Artist Residency and Centre for Art and Social Practice MoKS (Estonia), Baltic Art Center, Kultivator and Baltic Art Centre (Sweden), Wysing Arts Centre (UK), Nordic Artists' Centre Dalsåsen and Pikene på Broen (Norway), Center for Visual Art Skaftfell and Nes Artist Residency (Iceland), AIR Laboratory Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle (Poland). The partners will run masterclasses, summer schools, workshops and ideation sessions.

Development of Strenči Trajectory will include input from Pictographica (USA), Kaunas Photography Gallery (Lithuania), Temnikova&Kasela Gallery (Estonia), The Rodchenko Art School (Russia), The Wet Hole Group (Ukraine), Buchkunst Berlin (Germany), Polka Gallery, Delpire&Co (France). Guest artists will create and perform chamber concerts, participate in the creative programme "Glass. Light. Ideas" and development of the concept of the multimedia performance, in preparation for and implementation of the events. **The Latvian Voices A cappella Festival** will include Rajaton (Finland), Sjaella (Germany), The King's Singers (UK), The Real Group Academy (Sweden), Estonian Voices (Estonia), Daniel Barke (Germany), Hacker Music Management (Germany), RAMA Vocal Center (Denmark) in the preparation process and the concert programme.

The Spiritual Music Festival will have input from Conrad Scheffler and Kristian Wegscheider (Germany) in preparation

of the programme and in the concerts as artists.

Input in the multimedia sector development process and contribution to preparation for and implementation of the International Multimedia and Audiovisual Culture Festival will be made by Index – Art and Technology Biennial (Portugal), Košice Art & Tech Days (Slovakia), York Mediale (UK), Media art festival "Seasons of Media Arts" (Germany), International Festival of Digital Creativity & Electronic Music "MUTEK", SEA International Forum (Netherlands/UK).

We will prepare and implement the **International Festival "Gardens of Light"** in conjunction with International Light Festivals Organisation, Architectural Lighting and Light Art Festival in Tartu TAVA, Festival of Lights in Nõo, Wandering Lights Festival Tallinn (Estonia), Vilnius Light Festival, Kaunas Light Festival, Klaipeda Lights Festival (Lithuania), Lumo Light Festival Oulu and Oulu 2026 team (Finland). Our partners will contribute to preparation of the event concept, venue development and festival organisation. All of the above will be complemented by new creative activities, which will be implemented through the **Open Programme.** We are planning a call for cultural and creative industries projects for foreign participants, including pilot initiatives (please see Q6).

The goal of Valmiera2027 – **Creating a Sustainable Environment** – covers issues such as the considerate and efficient use of natural resources for economic and social purposes, limiting the impact of climate change, balancing the interests and needs of the urban environment and rural areas. Sustainability as a horizontal priority is gradually being integrated into all spheres of life in Valmiera, and the **issues it covers are not only on the agenda of Valmiera and Latvia, but of the whole European Union - every region, city and village.**

One of the challenges for the sustainability of the region is to reconcile the needs and interests of the industrial city and the surrounding areas – the industrial city is surrounded by the Gauja National Park, the North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve and rural areas with a unique cultural heritage – 28 manor houses. In this unique form, the micro-city must be able to interact deeply and genuinely with nature.



There are thousands of cities across the European Union which, like Valmiera, fit the concept of micro-cities. These places attract people not only with a vibrant economy, but also with quality-of-life benefits that large cities cannot offer. For example, mobility without wasting time in traffic jams, social cohesion and community spirit, access to natural areas. In addition, a new and progressive trend has emerged in Europe and globally as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic: professionals, especially creative professionals, are moving from cities to micro-cities and the countryside. This brings both benefits (attracting skilled professionals) and challenges (newcomers want an attractive living environment). **By making Valmiera a model micropolitan municipality - a municipality that includes an industrial environment, European protected natural sites and rural areas and is able to successfully address the challenges that coexist in different dimensions of society** - we will certainly learn from our European and global partners, as well as allow our partners and the wider European public to learn of our experience and lessons learnt. **Sustainability and environmental sustainability are mainstreamed in many of the creative activities we have developed with international partners.**

Garden for a Friend will be implemented with the participation of several internationally renowned artists: Fritz Haeg and Salmon Creek Farm (USA), Judith Kakon (Switzerland), Laura Kaminskaite (Lithuania), Camille Henrot (France), Sandra Kosorotova (Estonia), Hera Büyüктаşçıyan (Turkey). Each participating artist will create an idea for one specific site, translate the landscape into an architectural drawing in collaboration with professional landscape architects and build it together with residents from the community, as well as engage in an accompanying programme of talks, discussions.

The forest has ears and the river has eyes will be choreographed by Maya Hirvanen (Finland), Christine Helgebustad (Norway) and Vera Mantero (Portugal), who will develop and give performances in conjunction with Latvian artists, students and youth.

The International Cycling Film Festival "KINO PEDĀLIS" will be co-produced by the European Outdoor Film Tour (E.O.F.T.), Bicycle Film Festival, Cyclist Film Festival (France), Greenmotion Film Festival (Germany), Green Film Network, Europa Cinemas (The Network of Cinema Theaters For The Circulation of European Films). They will participate in the preparation of the festival programme and will also take part in sustainability thinking skills workshops.

The Rooftop Cultural Festival will be curated by Bruno Inácio (Portugal). The festival's creative events will be curated by former candidate city FARO2027 (Portugal), XIFRES Rooftop: "Floating" Wild Garden (Spain), Istanbul Rooftop Festival (Turkey), Top RoofTop (Czech Republic), Rooftop Revolution "and ROEF" (The Netherlands).

In several events, collaborations have already commenced or will commence in 2022-2023, becoming annual or long-term creative collaborations, for example contemporary dance and visual arts. See more creative events in the descriptions (Q6).

In addition to the above, we will strengthen the European dimension with a special series of events - the European Academy, whose events, independently or in synergy with the creative process, will shape and sustain the conversa-

tion between the Valmiera region, Latvia, Europe and the world. The European Academy aims to stimulate a discourse in the local community on European values, important issues and challenges, addressing them together with partners and experts from European countries. It consists of three sub-programmes: **the European Values Programme, the Green and Sustainable Europe Programme and the European Ambassadors Programme.**

We have already identified a number of key events and partners, but we want to keep the agenda open - allowing new topics of public interest to be proposed during the ECoC programme, some of which may not yet be on the European agenda.

The European Values Programme includes conferences, seminars, lectures, discussions at Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (VUAA), regional educational institutions, libraries, museums and elsewhere, reaching students, pupils, academic and teaching staff, cultural professionals, business people and citizens. Events: each year, the international scientific conference organised by VUAA will include an event on a pre-selected topic relevant to the ECoC programme. For example, the 2022 conference includes a panel discussion on the culture of scientificity in society and in educational institutions. From 2022 onwards, at least four events will be held each year. A TEDx Youth event (Q17) is planned for 2027. Valmiera2027 will include at least one dedicated international conference on European values, as well as a dedicated cultural conference on "Cultural Europe" involving Latvian MEPs. The programme is designed and managed by Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences in cooperation with the European University Alliance EUDRES.

We would like to highlight one of the programme events in particular. **Eminent British historian and philosopher, Oxford Professor Theodore Zeldin and the Oxford Muse Foundation** he founded have confirmed that Valmiera will host one of the "Feast of Strangers", which has been held in 15 countries so far, including Latvia, Riga back in 2019. During the event, participants will experience a fruitful exchange of ideas with an interlocutor who is a stranger - in a conversation lasting about two hours, using the art of conversation, and will gain the experience of talking face-to-face about topics of impor-

tance to themselves and society in an age of social isolation. For example, participation or human relations.

The Green and Sustainable Europe programme includes plenaries, seminars, discussions on conservation and protection of nature and the environment, sustainable use of natural resources for socio-economic purposes, climate change, reconciling the interests and needs of urban and rural areas, etc. Starting in 2022, events will be held on "Surface water quality and decentralised sanitation" and "Sustainable food". In 2022 and 2023, we will organise meetings with residents with the aim of developing an "Environmental Awareness Movement" on topics related to the impact of individual actions on climate change mitigation, sustainable consumption and the conservation of natural diversity. At least one international conference dedicated to sustainability issues will be organised as part of Valmiera2027. The programme will be designed and managed by the Valmiera Regional Development Council (Territorial and Urban Planning Division) and the Valmiera Regional Real Estate Management Council (Natural Resources Management Division) in cooperation with Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Valmiera Development Agency and Valmiera Library.

We will develop the **European Ambassadors programme** to create a dialogue on European values with the wider local community. We will do this starting from 2023 by creating study courses that will be integrated into several study programmes of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences. The courses will be attended by students (up to 90 students over the duration of the course) and will also be open to residents of the region. At the same time, a European Ambassadors' movement will be created and maintained with the expertise of the European Union House and the Europe Direct Information Centre in Valmiera. Both the study programmes and the movement will prepare people to conduct knowledgeable but unpretentious conversations with their peers in their schools, workplaces, neighbourhoods and elsewhere to explain the different aspects of European values, the deeper meaning and significance of Valmiera2027, thus achieving increased public awareness, support and participation. We have agreed with

the European Union House to participate in creating the content of various materials and events related to the European dimension. It brings together institutions providing information on European Union issues in Latvia.

The European Latvian Association (ELA), which unites representatives of the Latvian diaspora, has confirmed its intention to participate in the European Academy by inviting researchers and practitioners in the fields of sustainability, regional innovation and territorial development, creative industries, socio-economic and European issues as speakers at the events. One event proposed by ELA will focus on the concept of values and sustainable leadership, with a particular focus on entrepreneurial culture.

The Youth Agency will play an important role in addressing common European issues, while working to attract and develop school-age audiences. We have described this in more detail in section Q17, without distinguishing between the two different roles in the application.

Q12

The strategy to attract the interest of a broad European and international public.

Our ECoC programme is a promise of diverse cultural experiences and accessibility for a wide audience. It will be presented as a range of diverse events, encompassing a symbiosis of different genres of cultural events with nature, active leisure, tourism or sport, allowing visitors to choose the most appropriate time, the most engaging activities and the most attractive forms of attendance. Our tactic is the same: to **offer a grand range of sensations in the harmonious environment of a micro-city.**

We will attract the attention of the European and international community by involving Valmiera2027

partners. The 13 ECoC title and candidate cities (Q13), at least 8 twin cities and more than 200 partners (Q6) will not only contribute to the content and offering, but will also become Valmiera2027 ambassadors in their city and country, bringing participants and event guests to Valmiera. They will share information about the programme and events through their own channels and networks. Coverage of the events in the media of other countries and regions will be a driver of interest for international audiences.

We have requested and received confirmation from the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia that "In the event of a positive outcome of the competition, **the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is ready to provide information support to the Valmiera Municipality for the success of the cultural programme events, involving also Latvian diplomatic missions worldwide**". Latvia has 47 diplomatic and consular missions around the world, while there are 63 diplomatic and consular missions in Latvia.

The European Latvian Association (ELA) has confirmed its readiness to become an information partner of Valmiera2027, promoting the programme and events in the Latvian diaspora (approximately 350 000 people) and among the international contacts of the organisation's members **ELA brings together 30 Latvian and Latvian friendship organisations in 19 countries in Europe and neighbouring regions**.

We have asked the region's internationally active business people and sportspeople to take on the mission of Valmiera2027 ambassadors abroad. We will prepare digital and printed messages about the ECoC programme and its events in different languages (English, German, French, Spanish, and distribute them through our various media channels.)

We have reached out to **Latvian MEPs. The Vice President of the Parliament, Roberts Zile** confirmed the support and readiness of Latvian parliamentarians to be ambassadors of the ECoC programme in European Union institutions. We are

considering the possibility of organising a Valmiera2027 launch event in one of the European institutions in Brussels as early as 2024 or 2025.

Around 40 national and local **education partners** – universities, technical colleges, vocational and general education institutions – have **international partnerships and extensive networks in more than 50 countries around the world**. For example Erasmus+ partnerships, the EUDRES network, etc. Through these channels, we will reach out to students and pupils, teachers and university lecturers in Europe and around the world.

Reaching out to the wider European and international public will also be a **task of the Valmiera2027 Communication Strategy**. This includes a wide range of events (Q34 –Q38).

ECoC2022 Kaunas (Lithuania).

Focus on documentation of cultural processes and materials, environmental accessibility. With the participation and support of the Kaunas2022 office and experts, we will create an ECoC repository in the framework of "Transformation Fixations", based on the experience of the Kaunas Memory Office. We have agreed to use the environmental accessibility guidelines developed for Kaunas2022 – with the support of the partner we will transform them into a methodology appropriate to the situation in Valmiera. Kaunas2022 was a mentor of Valmiera2027 during the preparation of this proposal.

ECoC2023 Veszprém (Hungary).

Focus on outdoor events and community involvement. We will learn the best practice from the partner in preparation of the "Creative Awakening of the Living Environment" events: local community involvement, storytelling, preparation of the offering. The partner will be closely involved from 2023 onwards and throughout the implementation period of the ECoC programme.

ECoC2024 Tartu (Estonia). Focus on Sustainability. Sustainability expert Triin Pikk will help us to prepare sustainability guidelines for cultural events, which will include recommendations and guidance on how to organise and implement cultural events respecting the environment and nature. The partner will participate in "Transformation Fixations" events – with the support and participation of Tartu2024 we will record the impact of Estonian border currents on border communities and life in Valmiera County. Tartu2024 has been a mentor for Valmiera2027 during the preparation of this proposal.

ECoC2024 Bad Ischl (Austria).

Focus on sustainable living, coexistence and interaction between industrial cities and rural areas. The partner will provide experience-based knowledge and support in the creation and development of a network of estates, the creation of cultural places recognised by local communities in rural areas. In addition, we will gain experience in developing a culture of philanthropy. With the support of this partner, the Bad Ischl Mobile Opera will make a guest appearance in Valmiera.

ECoC2024 Bodø (Norway) Focus on multimedia and contemporary dance. The partner will be involved in multimedia related activities – industry development events, festival preparation and realisation, Dance House development processes and dance festival preparation. With the support of this partner, Norwegian contemporary dance artists will participate in residencies, a summer school in Valmiera, while dance artists from the county will go on residencies to Norway.

ECoC2025 Nova Gorica (Slovenia).

Focus on documenting cultural processes and materials and contemporary dance. This partner will engage in dance and multimedia performances and share experiences in documenting cultural processes.

ECoC2026 Oulu (Finland).

Focus on multimedia. The partner will be involved in the development of the multimedia sector as well as in multimedia performances and festivals.

ECoC2026 Trenčín (Slovakia)

Focus on local community participation in the creation of cultural events. We will learn and transfer experience of working with different groups in the community to bring to life the DIY initiative and other developments. DIY groups from both cities will have the opportunity to get involved in thematically-relevant events in the partner country.

ECoC2027 Candidate City Aveiro (Portugal).

Focus on synergies between cultural and creative industries, harnessing the potential to develop solutions that matter to society. We will take over Aveiro's experience in organising art-engineering residencies where artists work in teams with engineers and designers, as well as in content development of the Industrial Design and Innovation Centre. The theatre cooperation will start in summer 2022 (an agreement has been reached between Josse Pina and Valmiera2027 artistic director Reinis Suhanovs).

ECoC2027 former candidate city Faro (Portugal).

Focus on urban living. With the support of the partner city, we will launch an initiative on roofs as cultural space. Bruno Inácio will be the curator of the Rooftop Cultural Space.

ECoC2027 candidate city Braga (Portugal).

Focus on multimedia. Exchange programmes will already be held in 2022 and the Valmiera delegation will participate in the Braga Multimedia Biennial – BoCA:

<https://bocabienal.org/en/the-biennial/>. Cooperation will continue in all developments involving multimedia.

In addition to the above, we have agreed with all cities **on short and long term mobility of artists, cultural professionals, volunteers and young people**, which will allow them to acquire competences, skills and knowledge relevant for the preparation and running of the ECoC. They will be funded by EU programmes and other donors, as well as using our own resources.

Q13
Describe the links developed or to be developed between your cultural programme and the cultural programme of other cities holding the European Capital of Culture title.

Collaboration is the focus of the Valmiera ECoC programme!

Due to the pandemic, we were not able to meet all 13 ECoC partner cities in person, but digital technologies gave us the opportunity to get acquainted, gain knowledge and experience, find new ideas and inspiration for more creative and successful implementation of our ideas. And, of course, to highlight common interests that will result in many joint initiatives. **Our partners are currently ten cities that have been awarded the ECoC title, as well as three 2027 candidate cities from Portugal. The focus of the cooperation: creative initiatives, learning from partners' experiences, adopting best approaches and methodologies.**

ECoC2022 Novi Sad (Serbia). Focus on visual arts. We will learn from our partner's experience in setting up art stations and audience development. The head of the Novi Sad art programme will be the curator of the Valmiera Art Charging Stations. We have agreed to cooperate in organising artist residencies, already hosting Serbian artists in 2023 and beyond. Their work will be exhibited in Kurtuve and in the Art Stations.



The success of Valmiera2027 depends on how deeply and genuinely the public is involved. How included and involved will the people of the region feel? **Belonging and participation is the programme's overarching priority, while the tactic is a community-driven and community-created content offering and a deep and broad involvement of the population of the entire district.**

Encouraging public participation and self-initiative as part of the life of residents will remain one of the biggest and most important challenges after the ECoC. Many people in Valmiera rarely consume culture and often shy away from more contemporary formats that people find unfamiliar. Through the activities and projects of the ECoC programme, we will encourage and build confidence, courage and openness in the population. Through the viewing of art at school and communal environmental design actions, community development projects and other activities, we will offer residents the tools to think and question culture, encouraging them to see that culture is not about static observation, but about asking questions and seeking answers. To achieve this, public trust is essential, so the existing cultural communities - folk dance groups, choirs, amateur and leisure groups - that already make up the county's cultural environment, and through whose involvement we will be able to reach a wider population, will play an important role.

A supportive, encouraging and continuous involvement of residents will foster more critical thinking, conversation and openness to culture and its immense range of themes and possibilities. We believe that everyone appreciates the enjoyment and intellectual stimulation that culture provides, but we need to create the conditions in which they feel safe and welcome. We will therefore offer a balanced and well-considered symbiosis between traditional, contemporary and entertainment culture, whose synergies and dynamics will help everyone discover something new and meaningful, which will also encourage more creative and open-minded actions and decisions in other areas and life situations.

In a dynamic city, we will take a dynamic approach to transform inability into ability, ignorance into knowledge, denial into acceptance and recognition, and passivity into activity. There will be a lot of work to be done, but we will act in accordance with the Latvian folk proverb "Work maketh the man".

Q15

Explain in detail how the local population and your civil society have been involved in the preparation of the application and will participate in the implementation of the year.

Our approach is clear and our actions are focused - we continue to reach out and engage with the people of the region in all earnestness and with great passion!

From June 2021 until the launch of the bid, we have met with over 30 interest and neighbourhood initiative groups in Valmiera and across the county to find out in depth what our people like, care about and would like to see and experience in the ECoC programme. Around 500 people gathered for the talks - **local and national government employees, entrepreneurs, schoolchildren, students, members of NGOs, singer-songwriters, dancers, craftspeople, brain game players, gardeners, amateur athletes, etc.** To implement this, we cooperated with the Valmiera County Foundation, the municipal social affairs administration, and community initiative groups. In October-November 2021, during five online events that brought together around 300 private and non-governmental sector participants, we explained the creative concept of Valmiera2027, its events, received feedback and inspiration for further work. Discussions with several interest groups continued

in a narrower circle to turn ideas into creative developments. The interests and wishes of NGOs and community initiative groups have been transformed into the content of various Valmiera2027 events, such as **Do it Yourself or DIY movement events, Lifestyle Creative Awakening cycles, Art Charging Stations.**

In autumn 2021, we addressed schools and students in the Valmiera region. Around 500 pupils responded to the invitation to give their views on cultural events, youth expectations and participation in the district. We have transformed their interests into the content of the **Dance House, the Contemporary Circus and Street Art Festival, and the Youth Agency.** We know from talking to young people that there will be a response to the volunteer agent movement. Vocational art and music schools are involved in the preparation and implementation of various creative events.

The 16 working groups that made up the first ECoC proposal gathered again at the end of the summer of 2021 to further develop the creative programme and make each event a special occasion. The number of hours spent in creative and pragmatic meetings is immeasurable. We are pleased and proud to say that **our proposal is the result of the joint work of citizens, NGOs, professionals and amateurs from different cultural fields.**

The preparation of the programme would not have been possible without the county's non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which we had the pleasure of meeting several times. They actively participated in the development of the proposal to become curators or participants when the preparatory cycle of PROCESS was in full swing. To name a few examples: the Valmiermuiža Cultural Association will lead the creation and development of the Manor Network, while at least 20 manor houses and castles in the region will host the events planned in the Valmiera2027 programme. Several associations – the Katapulta Association of Krāču kakts, the Burtnieki Lake Fishermen's Association, the Gauja Sustainable Development Association, the North Vidzeme Geoparks Association – have been working on the Creative Awakening of the Living Environment and will have much work to do to transform their ideas into events. We are convinced that civic engagement should not end

with the preparation of an application, so we will continue our work through the Community Participation and Audience Development Programme (Q17) and meet as organisers and participants in the diverse programme events.

We will reach out to the 26% of the population who would like to volunteer for the ECoC (2021 survey results) and build the **ECoC volunteer movement**. We will improve the knowledge and skills of the people involved, which are vital for welcoming guest artists and visitors. This active and participative part of the community, which we have already counted at around 5,000 people in the county, will take part in cultural performances and help to ensure that events take place in 2027. The Valmiera County Foundation and the Latvian Civic Alliance, the umbrella organisation of the Latvian NGO sector, will work with us in civic engagement work.

part as a participant or spectator. To encourage people to experience cultural diversity, we have taken on board the recommendations of local social institutions and NGOs, so **we will offer a variety of special programmes**, such as cultural season tickets for children from low-income families; "bridging generations" events (young people meeting seniors, etc.); concerts in care centres, etc.

Children and youth under the age of 25 make up about one fifth of the total population of the municipality. We will involve them, with the support of the county's educational institutions and social networks, not only as spectators but also as active participants and volunteers. We will let them experience culture by organising outdoor events at popular youth gathering places across the county, such as **open classes at the Dance House** and creative activities at the **Kurtuve and the Industrial Design and Innovation Centre, age-appropriate activities at the Art and Theatre Spectator and Conversation School.**

The principle of the ECoC Valmiera2027 programme is to be accessible and not to become elitist. For us, this means reaching out to, involving and working together with the local community at all stages of the ECoC, **with a particular focus on social risk groups**, namely children and youth, seniors, ethnic minorities and people with special needs and disadvantaged groups – people at risk of poverty, children and young people from families at social risk, single parents, etc. Discrimination will not be tolerated!

How will we do this? Many of the events will take place outdoors and will not require invitations or tickets. **The entry code is the desire to experience culture** and take

Seniors are valued as our silver – their life's work is part of Valmiera's economic success. One fifth of the region's population is over 65: some of them are open to public life, participate in cultural and social processes, while others have become deniers and critics of everything new and unfamiliar. Active seniors will take part in the preparation and implementation of cultural events, such as the **album "Valmiera's Route to the European Capital of Culture" and the Industrial Design exhibition.** We will involve seniors with the knowledge of foreign languages as volunteer helpers in the ECoC. For passive seniors, we will offer a variety of cultural experiences, taking them into neighbourhood courtyards, on walking paths and more. We will invite them to attend events featuring their favourite artists – their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, such as the **Winter Dance Festival.** We will organise special events for seniors to introduce them to contemporary culture, such as **creative workshops for seniors at the Design and Innovation Centre**, a lecture series for seniors at the **Art and Theatre Spectator and Conversation School**, or bringing culture closer to seniors with **concerts and performances at social welfare centres.**

Minorities. Although Valmiera Municipality has a relatively small proportion of people of other nationalities (14%), and many have integrated into society, for each of them it is a special story with knowledge and memories of the culture of their own people. We will invite minority groups to prepare cultural performances in dance, music, artworks in different styles and techniques to reflect their individuality in the cultural environment of the Valmiera region during the ECoC events of the year, in this way also inspiring the public to a cultural dialogue. For example, by participating in the **musical series "Lullabies of the World in Manor Houses and Castles"**, creating their own special offering for the event **"Red Valmiera".**

Disadvantaged groups people at risk of poverty, children and young people from families at social risk, etc. – will be involved with the support of the Valmiera Municipality Social Affairs Office, educational institutions and 31 NGOs from the social sphere. We will make sure that people from these groups, especially children and youth, learn about the opportunities on offer and are involved, for example in the **social dancing movement "Dance with Joy!", the DIY movement, open creative workshops.**

For people with disabilities, one of the most important aspects is *de facto* accessibility of the environment. We will create a development plan for the accessibility of cultural venues in the municipality and continue to improve the accessibility of venues by involving municipal specialists and external experts. For example, we have approached the association of people with disabilities and their friends "Apeirons" (environmental accessibility expertise). We will draw on the experience of other municipalities and organisations, such as the **Latvian New Theatre Institute's series "An Extended Approach to Contemporary Performing Arts" guidelines for promoting accessibility in performing arts and culture, as well as Kaunas2022 (Lithuania) and Tartu2024 (Estonia)**, by adopting their best practices.

The content of many events will be prepared in formats that will enable the full participation of people with visual and

hearing impairments and people with intellectual disabilities. For example, **sign language interpreters** will be arranged for people with hearing impairments for events involving verbal performance. Visitors will be able to choose their own way of perceiving the information (aural, visual, tactile, combined) in the **industrial design exhibition.** The **Creative Awakening Routes** will be provided with material in Braille, audio, video, etc. An audio guide with texts in plain language will be available at the **art charging stations.** We have invited the Latvian Association of the Deaf, the Latvian Association of the Blind as consultants.

Several special events are planned for people with special needs. For example, the **Creativity Forge "Light up and Show Enthusiasm!" summer school** for children and young people with special needs. The **Valmiera Multimedia Festival** will feature projects for people with autism spectrum disorders, while the **Art Viewing School** will be accessible both in person and digitally, involving people who are physically unable to attend the event at the venue.

An inclusive international contemporary art programme and a contemplative sound art exhibition will focus on art as an agent of social change and on drawing attention to fellow human beings, marginalised groups and uncomfortable topics: exclusion, indifference, inequality, cultural inaccessibility. The focus will be on ways to make art exhibitions as inclusive as possible and **will include artworks by people with visual, hearing, motor or intellectual disabilities.**

Q17

Explain in detail your strategy for audience development, and in particular the link with education and the participation of schools.

During the **PROCESS** phase of the **ECoC** programme cycle (2021-2026), we implement an ambitious set of activities that will create conditions for the best possible preparation of audiences for 2027, for each type and genre of culture, as well as for broad public participation.

We want to open up the county's residents to a better quality of culture, especially contemporary culture, to Europe and participation. We will achieve this through a broad and long-term **Public Participation and Cultural Audience Development Programme**, comprising three sub-programmes:

- the **Audience Development Academy**;
- the **Youth Agency**;
- the **Participatory School or Voluntary Agent Movement**.

Together, these will be our tools for success. Preparation will involve the Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Latvian Academy of Culture, Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, Art Academy of Latvia, Valmiera Drama Theatre, RIBOCA, European Union House, European Movement in Latvia and other institutions. The three above-mentioned programmes will be complemented by one of the year-round creative events, **the Do it Yourself or the DIY Movement** and audience development events integrated into other creative events (Q6).

Within the framework of the **Cultural Ambassadors programme**, with the support of the above-mentioned organisations, we will train and prepare artistic events staff of art, music and other cultural organisations, and older pupils at vocational education institutions as well as the older pupils and teachers at general education schools to become **spokespersons of the Audience Development Academy** – storytellers and interpreters of cultural genres, processes, messages for society in general, as well as specifically for different target groups: children and young people, seniors, etc. Any culture enthusiast can become an ambassador! Other ambassadors will be students from national universities of culture and arts who will have internships in Valmiera, and the internships will also include managing audience development activities. A Memorandum of Cooperation between Valmiera Municipality and the Art Academy of Latvia will be signed soon, which will also include this task.

The Audience Development Academy will design and implement cyclical educational activities, events, lectures, discussions, etc. on different cultural genres, developments and messages conveyed by art, such as tolerance or acceptance. For wider attendance, participation will be possible in person and remotely. The events will be linked to the activities of social welfare centres and educational institutions in the county. For example, during school project weeks, senior thematic events, minority associations, day centres, etc. Special, pre-announced events will be organised, e.g. meetings with artists, for anyone interested in the county, in libraries, museums, exhibition halls, etc. The cultural ambassadors will be national cultural professionals as well as specially-trained teachers and cultural professionals, pupils and students from vocational and comprehensive schools in the county (described above). A special micro-programme will be created for audience development – **the Contemporary Art and Theatre Audience School (Q6). The first audience development events in the field of art and dance will already be held in 2022: the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art Summer School with an open part of the programme to the general public and the Latvian Academy of Culture's contemporary dance performances - talks.** The events will be implemented with the close participation of school cultural micro-embassies.

The Youth Agency will be designed to create a deeper understanding of European values and to encourage youth to become active cultural practitioners and to become actively involved in the events taking place in the county, Latvia and Europe. This will be achieved by developing their capacity and skills to identify and evaluate issues of importance to society and best approaches for addressing them in other European countries, to propose new programmes and actions, and to take responsibility for leading change processes. In order to achieve this goal, we have planned **a number of important events that will be implemented with the participation of young people, educational institutions, Latvian and European partners:**

1) discussion cycles on Europe and participation in cooperation with the European Union House, the European Movement in Latvia, etc. 2) twice a year Conversation Schools on Europe and Participation in the educational institutions of the county, led by UN Youth House lecturers; 3) youth exchange programmes between ECOC cities during the preparation and implementation of their cultural programmes – we have come to an agreement with Kaunas and Tartu, and we are in talks with other cities. The aim is to learn how to cooperate, get to know the diversity of different cultures, find the initiative for new events in their own region; 4) development of youth competences through Erasmus+ project exchanges and initiatives; 5) an Ideas Lab, where young people will learn new skills and knowledge in a cultural or creative industry genre or other topical field – there will be an opportunity to receive small grants. In 2027 we plan to apply for the TEDx Youth event, which will be a great opportunity to showcase the work and achievements of the previous years in an international environment. The Youth Agency will be one of the activities of the Community Engagement Unit of the Valmiera2027 Office.

Cultural micro-embassies will be established in schools in the region, based on school councils and will be staffed by trained ambassadors. They will regularly inform pupils and teachers about the most important events, opportunities for participation by involving artists, organise meetings, organise talks about various cultural processes. For example, a school for young people to talk about art or theatre over a longer period. The pupils who initially participate will eventually become ambassadors in their own school, peer group or neighbourhood. Periodic training camps will be organised where all the future ambassadors will work together, gaining knowledge and skills, as well as a community spirit and a sense of support.

The European Latvian Association (ELA), through its membership and network, will involve experienced professionals, researchers and young and emerging professionals from the Latvian diaspora in youth activities. For example, members of the Cambridge University Latvian Students and Alumni Association. This will help to bring together different layers of identity, different perspectives. For example, plein airs, hackathons.

A participatory school or volunteer agent movement will give local people the opportunity to feel a greater sense of belonging to the ECOC process and programme. Under this strand, we will train: 1) **volunteer agents for the preparation and running of events** who will participate in the preparation and running of events (e.g. setting up of venues, assigning places, accompanying groups, etc.); 2) **volunteer agents for the hosting of foreign cultural partners**, who will be fluent in languages and able to communicate amicably with guests – they will be the tongue and eyes of the guests, helping them to navigate around the area and the event schedules. The British Council in Latvia will help the volunteers, as well as staff in the service sector to learn English. We are looking forward to welcoming students from Vidzeme University College and other Latvian universities, students from vocational education institutions, retired people and other residents – everyone who enjoys being together and taking part.

In 2024, we will create and launch an **educational programme for cultural professionals, volunteers, mediators and producers on communication and communicating with people with disabilities and their inclusion in cultural events.** Group discussions, lectures and workshops will introduce visitors to cultural practices around themes of inclusion.

Within the DIY movement, we will organise educational activities, especially language (including Latvian for people of other nationalities) and computer skills training; dance, art, music classes and workshops, including for seniors and people with disabilities; meetings and discussions with cultural professionals; handicraft groups, including knitting, lace-making, sewing, etc. Healthy nutrition classes and workshops; gardening and horticulture classes and workshops; indoor and outdoor active lifestyle and sports activities; team sports games, including for seniors; nature and cultural trips to the region's natural attractions and cultural sites; community evening events to simply meet, chat and have fun.



Q18

Have the City, Region, State public finance authorities already voted on or made financial commitments to cover operating expenditure? If not, when will they do so?

The budget includes funds for the preparatory phase (2022–2026), the year of the event (2027), the year after the project (2028): evaluation, cultural events to be organised as ECoC kick-off events, and developments with long-term impact. The budget for the programme remains unchanged compared to the first round application.

Total operating budget - funds that are specifically set aside to cover the programme expenditure:

Budget for covering programme expenditure, TOTAL in EUR	From the public sector EUR	From the public sector %	From the private sector EUR	From the private sector %
21 500 000	20 000 000	93%	1 500 000	7%

Public-sector funding to cover programme expenditure:

Public-sector funding to cover programme expenditure	EUR	%
State budget funds	9 500 000	47.5%
Local government funding	9 500 000	47.5%
EU funding (excluding the Melina Mercouri Prize)	1 000 000	5%
TOTAL in EUR	20 000 000	100

On March 31st, 2022 Valmiera Municipality Council adopted a decision on the submission of the Valmiera2027 application for the second round of the competition. A concrete decision on the necessary funding will be made by the municipal council if Valmiera is selected as the ECoC.

The new draft law "On Local Authorities" (pending before the Latvian Parliament) includes a proposal for participatory budgeting, which will enable local communities to propose projects in various spheres, including the cultural one. This funding will be ring-fenced in the municipal budget and only allowed to be used for purposes chosen by the communities. Its implementation will provide support for the initiatives of community members of the municipality, which are planned for Valmiera2027 events – such as "Do it Yourself" or the formation of the DIY movement, the Creative Awakening of the Living Environment, the creation of a Manor Network, etc.

At the national level no decision has yet been made on the public financial contribution to the preparation and management of the ECoC. The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia plans to request the necessary funding within the medium-term state budget as co-financing (letter signed by State Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, D.Vilsone, received by Valmiera Municipality on 03.11.2021). This will constitute up to 50% of the ECoC programme budget, up to a maximum of EUR 10 million for the period during which the activities of the programme are planned, including the launch events in 2025 or 2026. In 2022, however, after having received confirmation of the ECoC competition results, the Ministry of Culture intends to submit an information report to the

Cabinet of Ministers regarding the provision of state co-financing for the implementation of the ECoC programme. Under Latvian law, regional institutions do not finance initiatives (cultural sphere included) implemented by local authorities. However, there is one instrument of support – cultural organisations in the Vidzeme planning region can apply for funding under the Regional Culture Programme each year (approximately EUR 150 000 in total). The support directions are determined by the Vidzeme Planning Region, with whom we have discussed the possibility of redirecting part of this funding to ECoC initiatives in the future and have agreed that a special sub-programme could be created for cultural projects of the seven other municipalities of the Vidzeme Region, which would in 2024–2026 allocate approximately EUR 20,000 or 15% to ECoC initiatives and in 2027 – around EUR 50,000 per year, or 30% of the total amount. The total amount is EUR 110,000. The supported initiatives will be a significant contribution to the ECoC programme in terms of coverage (the whole Vidzeme region) and impact (more cultural organisations and artists involved).

Q19

What is your fund raising strategy to seek financial support from Union programmes/funds to cover operating expenditure?

A fundraising strategy has been developed for the implementation of Valmiera2027 creative activities, which will be carried out by the Valmiera Municipality Development Council until the creation of Valmiera2027 Office, which will then carry out aforementioned activities instead of Valmiera Municipality Development Council. The following is a concise summary of the strategic plan.

STRATEGIC ACTION	TIME OF COMMENCEMENT	REGULARITY
Calculations of costs needed to prepare and implement each ECoC action	2022 (until submission of application)	2x per year 2022-2027
Identification of available funding programmes, exploration of opportunities (areas to be supported, timing of applications, applicants, etc.)	2022(until submission of application)	4x per year 2022-2027
Preparation, fundraising plan update	Summer 2022	Once a year, 2023-2027
Project peparation according to timetable	2022 onwards	Ongoing
Monitoring of funding programmes	2022 onwards	Ongoing
Development of project preparation skills for ECoC Office, public, private organisations and initiative groups from all sectors via training and seminars	2022 onwards	At least 2x per year, 2023- 2026
Ongoing advisory support to project drafters of the ECoC programme, including expert input	2022 onwards	Ongoing
Explanation of the ECoC to project promoters and applicants to enable clear communication in ECoC-related projects	Autumn 2022	As required
Consultation with EU managing authorities and other donor-funded programmes and funds	2022 onwards	As required
Consultancy for foreign partners on fundraising for international cooperation projects	2022 onwards	As required

Throughout the development of the Valmiera2027 application, EU programmes and funds for financing ECoC creative activities and other potential donors have been identified and their thematic focus has been assessed (please see the table below). This information will be continuously updated. The task will be carried out by the Valmiera2027 Office, but until its establishment – by the Valmiera Regional Development Council.

	Creative events and initiatives	Creative industries incl. media	Public involvement and participation	Environment, sustainability, including infrastructure	Education, including digital skills	European dimension and values
Financing programmes and sub-programmes						
European Union programmes						
1. EU programme “Creative Europe” (2021–2027)						
1.1. Cultural events sub-programme	X		X	X	X	X
1.2. Media sub-programme	X	X				X
1.3. Intersectoral sub-programme	X	X		X		X

2. EU programme “Horizon Europe” (2021-2027)						
2.1. Culture, creativity and inclusive society	X	X	X	X	X	X
2.2. Digital, industry and space		X	X	X	X	X
2.3 Climate, energy and mobility			X	X		X
3. EU Erasmus+ programme (2021–2027)						
3.1. European Youth Together (Small)			X		X	X
3.2. Partnership for Cooperation of Youth, European NGOs					X	X
3.3. Capacity building in the field of youth			X		X	X
4. EU programme “Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values”	X		X	X	X	X
5. Sub-programmes of the EU INTERREG 2021-2027 programme.*	X		X	X	X	X
6. EU funds administered by Latvian institutions						
6.1. European Social Fund	X		X	X	X	
6.2. European Regional Development Fund		X		X		
6.3. Recovery Fund				X	X	
6.4. European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development – LEADER Initiative	X		X		X	
7. Other donor-funded programmes**	X	X	X		X	X

* Estonia-Latvia Programme; Central Baltic Sea Region Programme; Baltic Sea Region Programme; URBACT IV Programme; INTERREG EUROPE Programme.

** Baltic Culture Programme; US Embassy Small Grants Programme "Person to Person"; EEA and Norway Grants; Prince Claus Small Cultural Projects Programme; Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme "Culture"; TelepArt Mobility Support Programme; Latvian Foundation (USA); Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

We have evaluated the possibilities offered by each programme for Valmiera2027. Several projects are in the pipeline and some have been already submitted to, for example, the EEA and Norway Grants competition for the development of contemporary art genres. We are also applying for funding from national institutional support programmes which include the State Culture Capital Foundation (for creative activities) and the National Heritage Council (for conservation and restoration of cultural monuments, e.g. organ restoration). **We have already secured funding for ECoC-related activities by the time this proposal was submitted.**

By 2022 the **municipality and local partners have raised more than EUR 413,000 from various financial sources for creative activities related to implementation of the ECoC**, which are to be carried out by the end of 2022. The most significant funding: the Valmiera Culture Council – for masterclasses and a concert programme by the UCSB Dance Company from California (USA) (EUR 5,700); Valmiera Drama

Theatre – for new productions and a festival (EUR 183,000); Valmiera Culture Centre – for concert performances (EUR 5000); Valmiera Library – for European initiatives "Europe Direct Information Centre in Valmiera", "European Challenge 2021" (EUR 60,000); Valmiermuiža Culture Society – for festivals, workshops (EUR 108,000), etc.

In 2022 **the municipality and local ECoC partners** have been able to raise EUR 115,600 thousand from targeted programmes at the State Culture Capital Foundation and Joint Stock Company “Latvia’s State Forests” (LVM): 1) the municipality – for development of the Valmiera second round application (EUR 20,000); 2) Valmiera Drama Theatre – for the Summer Theatre Festival (EUR 60,000) 3) association "LAUKKU" – LAUKKU activities 2022–2024 (EUR 9,000); 4) Valmiermuiža Culture Society – for organising of live music events and festivals (EUR 20,000); 5) for the support of activities of the association “Oleru muiža” (EUR 6600,00).

Q20

According to what timetable should the income to cover operating expenditure be received by the city for preparing and implementing the ECoC project if the city receives the title of European Capital of Culture?

Source of funding for programme expenditure	2022.	2023.	2024.	2025.	2026.	2027.	2028.	TOTAL
EU funding	-	-	100 000	200 000	300 000	300 000	100 000	1 000 000
State budget funds	-	-	-	1 000 000	4 250 000	4 250 000	-	9 500 000
Municipal funding	100 000	700 000	900 000	1 000 000	2 000 000	4 100 000	700 000	9 500 000
Sponsors	-	-	-	100 000	600 000	800 000	-	1 500 000
Total, in EUR	100 000	700 000	1 000 000	2 300 000	7 150 000	9 450 000	800 000	21 500 000

Q21

Income from the private sector - the fund-raising strategy to seek support from private sponsors. The plan for involving sponsors in the event.

The Valmiera2027 programme team has and will continue to reach out to entrepreneurs, corporations, potential individual donors and philanthropists, establishing cooperation for the implementation of various events in cash or in kind. Our goal is to attract **private sponsorship totalling EUR 1,500,000**. We are confident in our ability to reach it.

The Valmiera2027 team and the municipality's staff are building personal relationships with each identified potential sponsors, explaining the objectives of the ECoC programme and building cultural cooperation with the business community. The municipality has met with businesses and their representative organisations, such as the **Valmiera Entrepreneurs' Club** (cooperation agreement signed in 2021) and received positive support and encouragement to implement the ECoC ambition, as well as support from the

We have conducted careful budget planning for the programme, including an assessment of our own financing options and the likely timing of the state budget share. We have included funds in the budget for 2028 for the Valmiera2027 closing events: an evaluation, a conference and a grand concert as part of the Latvian EU Presidency. We have received an additional EUR 20,000 from the state budget in 2022. This amount was used for preparation of the application and is not included in the programme funding.

Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI). Businesses understand the importance of culture for sustainable development of the territory. VALMIERA GLASS UK Ltd, Valmiermuižas Alus Ltd, BYKO-LAT Ltd, VALPRO Ltd, Dižozols Ltd, Food Union Holding, Cooperative VAKS have already confirmed they will make a contribution.

The Valmiera2027 **strategy offers businesses the opportunity to engage in cultural changes** on several levels and ways:

Main cooperation partners. Two to three partners of national importance with the most financial support - companies from the financial services, information and communication sectors, food and other industries. Planned funding: approx. EUR 980,000.

Co-creation partners. National, regional and local companies directly involved in the implementation of specific Valmiera2027 projects, either financially, in-kind or using their own

resources. These will be companies from the construction, industry, information and communication, forestry, agriculture, food processing and, service sectors (e.g. accommodation providers, transport providers, restaurants and cafés, printing, advertising, marketing, etc.). Planned funding: approximately EUR 320,000. Several companies have already agreed to become co-creation partners in the ECoC programme. For example, Active Tourism Centre EŽI Ltd. will be involved in the preparation and organisation of the International Cycling Film Festival "KINO PEDĀLIS" and "Continuation of the Creative Awakening - River Culture Stories". Burtnieku Zirgaudzētava Ltd. and Zirgaudzētava Kocēni Ltd. will participate in the preparation and implementation of the "Contemporary Circus and Street Art Festival". Valmiermuižas Alus Ltd. is financing the creative activities of the Valmiermuiža Culture Society, including support for the creation of a network of manors. Several companies, such as ZAAO Ltd, in the municipality have confirmed their willingness to support artist residencies. Valmiera Entrepreneurs' Club member companies will be involved in the creation of the Industrial Design and Innovation Centre.

Communication partners. Companies that will choose to make use of the opportunities offered by the communication and marketing strategy, thus strengthening their corporate image. We will offer Valmiera2027 branding to strengthen the corporate social responsibility policy of companies, tailor-made programmes and special events, cooperation with cultural experts, artists, advertising and marketing activities, etc. Planned funding: EUR 200,000.

We see a **collective funding approach** as an opportunity and are learning from other ECoC cities which have successfully used this method of fundraising. At local level, we will

cooperate with the Valmiera County Foundation, which has extensive experience in **raising donations** through various forms of fundraising, such as the "Donors' Circle" and the "Donors' Club". We have also started discussions with companies to set up a socially responsible cultural support programme which would cover the cost of theatre tickets for children from low-income families.

We have **agreed with the European Latvian Association** to organise an international event dedicated to business culture, including philanthropy as a part of a responsible business culture, co-responsibility as a business value and sustainable leadership.

As part of the administrative and territorial reform the municipality has established a new unit, **the Capital Management and Business Development Unit**, whose tasks include promoting cooperation with businesses. At the national level, the interests of the municipality are represented by the **Valmiera City Representation Office in Riga**, which ensures direct communication with business institutions, as well as Latvian and foreign entrepreneurs.

Q22 - Q23

Breakdown of the operating expenditure. Planned timetable for spending operating expenditure

Breakdown of programme expenditure:

Programme expenses (EUR)	Programme expenses (%)	Advertising and marketing costs (EUR)	Advertising and marketing costs (%)	Labour, indirect costs and administrative expenses (EUR)	Labour, indirect costs and administrative expenses (%)	Total programme expenses (EUR)
13 330 000	62%	3 695 000	17%	4 475 000	21%	21 500 000

Planned timetable for programme expenditure:

Timetable of expenditure	Total programme expenses (EUR)	Total programme expenses (%)	Programme expenses (EUR)	Programme expenses (%)	Advertising and marketing costs (EUR)	Advertising and marketing costs (%)	Labour, indirect costs and administrative expenses (EUR)	Labour, indirect costs and administrative expenses (%)
	21 500 000	100%	13 330 000		3 695 000		4 475 000	
2022.	100 000	0,50%	35 000	0,26%	20 000	0,54%	45 000	1,01%
2023.	700 000	3,30%	240 000	1,80%	140 000	3,79%	320 000	7,15%
2024.	1 000 000	4,70%	450 000	3,38%	180 000	4,87%	370 000	8,27%
2025.	2 800 000	13,00%	1 600 000	12,00%	300 000	8,12%	900 000	20,11%
2026.	5 400 000	25,10%	2 600 000	19,51%	1 800 000	48,71%	1 000 000	22,35%
2027.	10 700 000	49,80%	7 925 000	59,45%	1 095 000	29,64%	1 680 000	37,54%
2028.	800 000	3,60%	480 000	3,60%	160 000	4,33%	160 000	3,57%

Q24 - Q26

Budget for capital expenditure - breakdown of the income to be received from the public sector to cover capital expenditure in connection with the ECoC. Have the public finance authorities already voted on or made financial commitments to cover capital expenditure? Fund raising strategy to seek financial support from EU programmes/ funds to cover capital expenditure

The required capital expenditure of EUR 12,000,000 for the four sites is formed by the development of infrastructure relevant to the ECoC programme (see list of sites in the table below). **All of them are included in the Investment Plan of the Valmiera Municipality, which is a binding document and is monitored by the Municipal Council.**

Public-sector funding for investments	EUR	%
State budget funds	3 100 000	25.83
Local government funding	1 250 000	10.42
EU funding (excluding the Melina Mercouri Prize)	7 650 000	63.75
TOTAL	12 000 000	100

The municipality has **undertaken and is carrying out the financial obligations** for reconstruction of one of the cultural facilities included in the 12 million investment - reconstruction of the Valmiera Drama Theatre in 2021 has been financed by European Union funds, reconstruction works commenced in the same year will be completed in 2023 (total cost – EUR

7,000,000). The municipality is co-financing the project. **Financing of the three other facilities, amounting to EUR 5,000,000, is included in the investment plan of the Valmiera Municipality.** Investment required:

Site	Source of funding	Main associated ECoC events	Budget, EUR
1. Establishment of Contemporary Art Centre "Kurtuve" in the former boiler house of the city of Valmiera, Rīgas iela 25C, Valmiera.	Cosmetic repairs for an approximate amount of EUR 35,000 (2022) – municipal financial resources (approved). Reconstruction (2024–2025) – ERDF SAM 5.1.1.7 – Development of regional cultural infrastructure to improve access to cultural services. Direction: development of new services, expanding the content of regional cultural infrastructure.	Gustavs Klucis exhibition. Niklavs Strunke exhibition. "Humour in Contemporary Art. Māris Bišofs". Art space "no BORDERS in sight". Creativity forge "Light up and show enthusiasm!". Establishment and development of a dance house.	1 000 000
2. Establishment of an industrial design and innovation centre in the revitalised industrial area at Rūpniecības iela 1, Valmiera.	Building adaptation for the Industrial Design and Innovation Centre (2023–2024) – EU Recovery Fund 1.2.1.3.i. – Climate change. Direction: Improvementt of municipal buildings by promoting the transition to renewable energy technologies and improving energy efficiency.	Establishment and launch of the Industrial Design and Innovation Centre. Development of the multimedia sector. Valmiera Multimedia Festival. "Industrial Currents". Industrial a cappella "360°".	1 000 000
3. Revitalisation of the banks of the River Gauja, creating a promenade and a nature office for outdoor cultural events.	Construction and redevelopment works (2024–2026). ERDF SAM 2.1.3.1 – Adaptation of municipalities to climate change. Direction: Investment in existing natural and green spaces, which are an important element of the green and infrastructure network.	The creative awakening of a living environment. Do it Yourself or development of a DIY movement.	3 000 000
TOTAL, EUR			5 000 000

Capital expenditure strategy: identification of appropriate financial instruments (completed, listed in table), timely familiarisation with tender requirements, preparation of technical documentation, preparation and submission of project applications.

The decision on co-financing for each specific project will be taken before preparation of each project and is linked to the readiness of the responsible line ministries to launch calls for proposals. The time required to carry out the tasks is in accordance with the publicly available indicative timetable regarding calls for proposals. The Valmiera Regional Development Council is responsible for attracting funding. Valmiera Municipality will provide the necessary co-funding.

Q27

According to what timetable should the income to cover capital expenditure be received by the city, if the city receives the title of European Capital of Culture?

Source of financing for capital expenditure	2022.	2023.	2024.	2025.
EU funding	0	0	2 125 000	2 125 000
State budget funds	0	0	250 000	250 000
Local government funding	35 000	0	125 000	125 000
TOTAL, EUR	35 000	0	2 500 000	2 500 000

EU funds will be received in 2024 and 2025, reconstruction and construction of facilities will be completed in 2025-2026. No investments are planned in 2027.

* Additional funding for furnace renovation in 2022, which is not accounted for in the overall investment budget.

Q28 - Q29

What kind of governance and delivery structure is envisaged for the implementation of the European Capital of Culture year? How will this structure be organised at management level? The persons having the final responsibility for global leadership of the project.

Our management approach is based on principles that we consider to be the most important - **COMPETENCE, EFFICIENCY, OPENNESS and TRANSPARENCY OF CREATIVE PROCESSES.** Valmiera Municipality will establish an **independent legal structure** for implementation of the ECoC programme - **an association with a Council and Management Council.** The chosen structure is based on the idea of close cooperation between the public and private sectors, as well as the representation of cultural and public interests at all stages of the ECoC programme. **The association will be named Valmiera2027 Office and its activities will be financed by Valmiera Municipality.** The Council will be approved (by the City Council) by the end of 2022 at the latest and its members will work without remuneration.

The Office will be established in 2023, the Management Council and Heads of Units selected and recruited by the end of 2023 at the latest. Employment contracts of members of the Management Council will be concluded with the established association to avoid the risk of political influence (contracts will be signed by the Council). Other staff will be recruited by the Council. The main tasks of the **Council** will be to consider and approve strategic issues and related decisions, as well as to select and approve members of the Management Council. A number of criteria will be taken into account in selection of the members of the Council: professional and managerial competences in the cultural/creative industries, local and international experience and gender equality. The Council will be composed of seven people, two of whom will come from **Valmiera Municipality (at least one of them will represent the Culture Council), one representative from the Ministry of Culture, Vidzeme Planning Region, the municipality's cultural sector, the business sector and non-governmental organisations.** The Council will not have the right to influence the content of the cultural programme. There will be two Management Executives, the Executive Director and the Artistic Director, both will work in close cooperation, but each of them will have separate responsibilities, rights and functions. The Council, together with the four departments, will form the Valmiera2027 Office (please see the governance structure diagram). **The Council will take ultimate responsibility for the overall management and implementation of the ECoC programme.**

Key areas, responsibilities and duties:

- The **Artistic Director** will lead the process of preparation and implementation of the creative programme and will oversee the work of the Creative Unit and the Public Engagement Unit, having the final say on creative issues and

solutions for the cultural programme. **The Artistic Director (who has been selected and has already led the development of the creative part of the application) will be confirmed by the Council.** He will report periodically to the Council on the work and progress achieved.

- The **Executive Director** will be responsible for risk management, administrative and financial matters and will oversee the work of the Finance and General Management Unit and the Communications and Marketing Unit. **The Executive Director will be selected through an open competition,** and decision based on the information given by the candidate in the application form (qualifications and professional experience) and Curriculum Vitae (CV), as well as interviews with a selection committee (to be established by the Municipality). The Executive Director will report periodically to the Council on the work carried out and submit an action plan for the next period for approval.

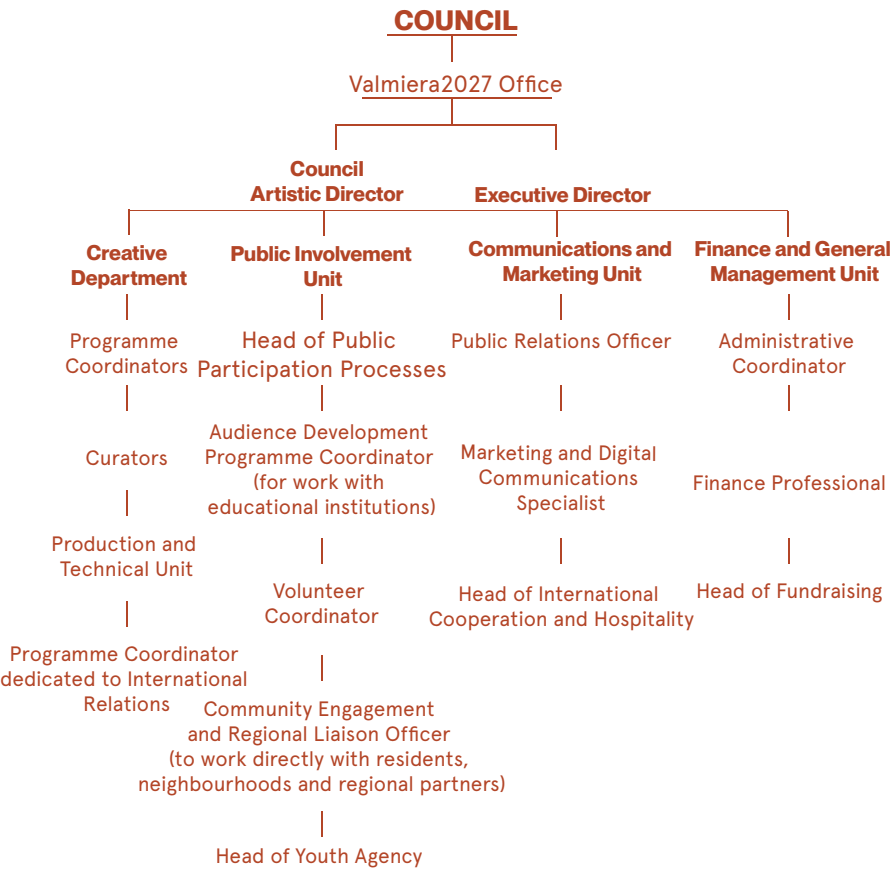
- **Heads of Units (Departments)** will be selected through open or limited competitive selection procedures (inviting pre-identified professionals from Latvia and Europe). These candidates will be approved by the Supervisory Council and they will be recruited by the Executive Director. The opinion of the Artistic Director will be taken into account in selection of the Heads of the Creative and Public Engagement Units. Each potential employee's CV and competences will be assessed and interviews will be held with Council members.

Other staff will be recruited gradually through open or limited selection procedures organised by the Executive Director, with decision being made by the Council and Heads of Unit. For selection purposes, the best specialists in each field will be identified in the county, Latvia and Europe.

The main tasks of the Valmiera2027 Office:

- Development of a detailed budget for the ECoC programme and submitting it to the municipality for approval in a timely manner. Planning of financial flow, monitoring of implementation.
- Programme Production - supporting local organisations in international networking.
- Event planning and organisation, motivation and involvement of local authorities, local organisations,

- businesses, educational institutions, communities, different social groups and individuals.
- Allocation of tasks and responsibilities between partners and institutions involved, constant communication and exchange of information.
- Evaluation of progress, results, identification of problems and necessary changes.



- Competence development of the Office staff and of the cultural and other creative staff involved in implementation of the ECoC. Involvement of volunteers, coordination of activities.
- Cooperation with national and regional level institutions at the political and administrative level (ministries, state institutions, the Vidzeme planning region, universities and other educational institutions, tourism agencies, etc.), as well as other municipalities in the Vidzeme region and outside of it.
- Communication with funders, attracting of sponsors.
- Communication and marketing activities to explain the status and impact of the ECoC at different levels.
- Development and strengthening of the cooperation with EU institutions, other ECoC, partner cities and organisations abroad, targeted development of international relations, attracting of new partners.
- Risk management.

Q30 - Q31

How will you ensure that this structure has the staff with the appropriate skills and experience to plan, manage and deliver the cultural programme for the ECoC project? According to which criteria and under which arrangements have the general director and the Artistic Director been chosen – or will be chosen? What are – or will be – their respective profiles? When will they take up the appointment? What will be their respective fields of action?

To ensure the effective implementation of Valmiera2027, we have assessed aspects relating to human resource allocation and have a clearly defined approach.

Recruitment of international staff:

- The **Artistic Director** has been selected on the basis of experience and achievements in the cultural field (please see CV below).
- The **Executive Director will be selected through an open competition** based on information given by the candidate in the application form (qualifications and professional experience) and Curriculum Vitae (CV), as well as interviews with the selection committee. Main selection

criteria: experience in the administrative management and financial governance of large-scale, long-term cultural projects, higher education, excellent communication skills, experience of working in a team of more than 20 people, excellent knowledge of English, preferably knowledge of at least one other foreign language, as well as experience working in an international team.

Heads of Units will be selected through open or limited competitive selection procedures (inviting pre-identified professionals from Latvia and Europe). The CV and competences of each potential employee will be assessed according to the specific nature of the job. Main selection criteria: experience in the specific field, higher education, excellent communication skills, excellent knowledge of English, preferably experience of working in an international team.

Other staff will be recruited gradually

through open or limited selection procedures, according to predefined criteria. Detailed requirements of the specific position will be developed during the preparation phase of the selection procedures in consultation with the governing bodies of other ECoC cities.

The Governing Council and Heads of Unit are selected and recruited by the end of 2023 at the latest. The areas, duties and responsibilities of members of the Management Council are described in section Q28-Q29.

Staff competency development will be implemented from 2023 onwards through regular in-house collective training in specific areas (e.g. communication, language training), mobility to other ECoC cities (Tartu, Kaunas, Trenčín, etc.), individual training in Latvia or Europe on specific topics (e.g. community engagement, fundraising strategies). Creative staff will be involved in a creative capacity and skills development activities (e.g. masterclasses) organised in the framework of ECoC activities. Once a year, a performance evaluation (follow-up and quality) will be carried out to identify relevant training topics. The evaluation will be carried out by the Management Council (jointly).

Reinis Suhanovs, Head of the Artistic Programme, has been making an invaluable contribution to the preparation of the Valmiera2027 application since 2020. He started his career in Valmiera and now works globally.

Education. Bachelor of Arts degree in Arts at the Art Academy of Latvia, Department of Scenography (2008), Bachelor of Arts degree in Arts at the Latvian Academy of Culture, specialising in Dramatic Theatre Directing (2013). Currently studying supervision skills at Riga Stradiņš University.

Experience as a director and stage designer in Latvia. Work experience in theatres since 2002, including in 2006 as a stage designer, in 2011 as a stage designer and director in various theatres, including operas. From 2015 - Director of Valmiera Summer Theatre Festival. From 2019 - principal artistic director at the Latvian National Theatre in Riga.

He has planned the stage design for the largest mass event in the country - the Latvian Song and Dance Festival (2013, 2015, 2018). Director of more than 30 theatre performances and events. Arranged and participated in exhibitions, created artistic concepts and graphic design for more than 20 events. Expert in the field of theatre arts at the State Culture Capital Foundation.

International experience. Has designed sets for performances in various theatres in Lithuania, Estonia, Czech Republic, Croatia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Austria, Armenia, Russia and China. Has curated exhibitions in the Czech Republic.

Academic work experience. Guest lecturer at the Latvian Academy of Culture and the Art Academy of Latvia.

Major awards. Received the most prestigious Latvian theatre award "Spēlmaņu nakts" 3 times in the nomination "Set Designer of the Year" (2009, 2017, 2018). He was nominated for the Russian Theatre Award "Golden Mask" (2016) and the Lithuanian Theatre Award "Golden Cross of the Stage" (2018). He received the Gold Medal at the Prague Quadrennial of Scenography and Theatre Architecture in the Czech Republic (2007), the main prize at the exhibition "New European Standards" in Riga (2008), the medal of the President of Latvia Egils Levits, for creatively realised national holiday concerts during the pandemic (2022).

involvement of the local community as an essential aspect will be specifically included in the responsibilities of all ECoC programme staff. A number of staff capacity-building activities will be dedicated to cooperation and involvement, especially during the early implementation phase of the programme in 2022-2024. A united message and communication code will be prepared which the Valmiera2027 Office staff, including the creative team, will need to learn in order to communicate with local authorities.

To provide successful cooperation with local partners, the etc.) will be held, as well as various **Public Engagement Unit of the Valmiera2027 Office** will ensure regular communication with partners and provide feedback. Different methods will be used, e.g. it will be possible to submit comments, critical remarks, positive feedback and suggestions on the ECoC Valmiera2027 website; short face-to-face/ telephone/ electronic surveys will be conducted; meetings of specially created focus groups (according to the art direction - music, dance, exhibitions, meetings happening in educational institutions and parish associations, etc. The Community Engagement Unit will report regularly (at least quarterly) to the Council on the work done, the next steps, and will report back to the Council on problems and solutions.

Q33

Have you carried out/planned a risk assessment exercise? What are your planned mitigating measures?

The Valmiera2027 team has identified and evaluated potential risks, as well as identified those responsible for risk prevention and mitigation - see table with the following designations: Valmiera2027 Office - Office; Valmiera Regional Council - VRC; Vidzeme Planning Region - VPR; Communication and Marketing Department - CMD.

Risk	Likelihood	Responsible for risk control	Measures to prevent or mitigate risk
<i>Political risks</i>			
Decline in local political support after the 2025 local elections.	Low	VRC	Work evaluatedby the political forces in power, which will help to maintain political influence after the elections. Regular dissemination of comprehensive information to citizens, MPs, leaders on the needs, objectives and impact of the ECoC programme on the Valmiera region.
Insufficient political support at regional and national level.	Low	Council VRC, VPR	Close cooperation with regional and national institutions at the political and, administrative level. Regular communication, clarification of ECoC status and impact.
Political and executive pressure on aspects of programme content.	Low	Council Office	Establishment of an independent body (association), distribution of seats on the Council to exclude political influence. Separation of tasks and responsibilities, constant communication and exchange of information, feedback.

Financial un economic risks

Insufficient budget and/or inefficient use of budget.	Medium	Council Office	A detailed budget for the ECoC has been approved by the municipality. Regular updating, monitoring and evaluation of the financial plan. Regular communication with funders, attracting of private sponsors, clear partnership rules. Use of budget reserve.
Rising prices of goods and services.	High	Office	Expenditure in future years is planned, taking into account the inflation index. Use of budget reserve.
Financial disinterest from the private sector (sponsors).	Medium	Office, VRC	Timely and systemic contact with potential funders. Multiple levels of support, with opportunities to participate in a way that is appropriate to the size and scope of each company. Creation of incentives.

Risks with an international dimension

Lack of involvement of foreign partners - lack of interest or resources.	Medium	Office, CMD in particular	Involving partners during the application process. Maintaining and strengthening cooperation with other ECoCs, existing partner cities and organisations from 2022 onwards. Online events.
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Q32

How will you make sure that there is an appropriate cooperation between the local authorities and this structure including the artistic team?

Cooperation and involvement of the local community is the focus of Valmiera2027. We consider local cooperation partners to be **Valmiera municipality institutions and organisations, educational institutions at different levels, government departments, businesses, non-governmental organisations, local communities and various community groups. Individuals and organisations from the cultural and creative industries (regardless of their affiliation and legal form) are seen as the main group.** Cooperation and

Management and staff risks

Poor cooperation within the management team, lack of professionals, difficulties in attracting them.	Medium	Council Office	Selection of experienced professionals through a competitive tendering process, with high expectations set from the selection stage. Competitive salaries. Ongoing professional development of the programme management team, involvement of experts.
Cultural professionals with insufficient competences	Medium	Council Office	Improving the knowledge and competences of cultural professionals in cooperation with national and international experts. Mobility to other ECoCs to learn and adopt good practices.

Communication risks

Communication strategy is not reaching the target audiences.	Medium	Office, CMD in particular	Identification of target groups and selection of appropriate communication channels (direct contacts, digital tools, interactive events, participation of celebrities, etc.)
Negative or incomplete perceptions of Valmiera as an ECoC city, media disinterest, problems in attracting national and international audiences.	High	CMD	Development and implementation of a detailed marketing and communication plan at national and international level (from 2022), high-level cultural events involving renowned artists, diversification of publicity channels, raising the profile of Valmiera at national and international level.
Local public misunderstanding of the benefits of ECoC, poor identification with ECoC.	Low	CMD	Ongoing and targeted dissemination of information on the benefits of the ECoC programme, e.g. increasing the visibility of Valmiera, raising the self-esteem of citizens, the overall positive socio-economic aspects of the municipality.

Participation risks

Insufficient involvement of local, regional and national partners, including local government bodies.	Medium	Office, CMD in particular VPR	Dissemination of information, explanation of the programme, regular communication with partners involved to increase their motivation, gain feedback.
Lack of public interest and willingness to participate in ECoC programme activities.	Medium	Office	Involvement of citizens, especially young people, senior citizens, ethnic minorities, etc. in the preparation, implementation and volunteering of the ECoC. Cooperation with local cultural professionals, NGOs. Raising interest and motivation (infrastructure facilities, environmental accessibility, events for families with children, free events, discounts on ticket prices, etc.).

Risks to programme implementation

Programme objectives and targets are not fully met, and planned results are not achieved.	Medium	Council Office	Continuous monitoring of processes and results, annual reports, expert consultation, problem identification and rapid problem-solving. Regular communication with partners. Definition of tasks and responsibilities, follow-up.
Insufficient or poor quality public services (accommodation, catering, facilities, etc.).	Medium	Office VRC	Attracting companies from relevant sectors to provide services, pre-training of companies (communication, language skills, etc.), involving national and international institutions for advisory, marketing, etc. assistance. Cooperation with sectoral associations.
Insufficient attraction of national and international tourists.	Medium	Office, CMD in particular	Close cooperation with national and international tourism agencies, dissemination of information through various communication channels. Active involvement of tourism service providers.
Planned infrastructure development projects are not implemented.	Medium	VRC	Monitoring the availability of financing instruments, developing projects from 2022 onwards. Allocation of funding from other municipal financial resources.

Environmental risks, including emergency risks

Negative environmental impacts of the measures.	Low	Office	Analysis of potential risks in the planning process, in communication with public authorities, experts, environmental NGOs and members of the public. Monitoring during events.
Unforeseen circumstances, crises (e.g. pandemics), impact of climatic conditions on the implementation of outdoor activities, etc.	Medium	Council Office	Regular information gathering, involvement of relevant professionals, early contingency planning (Plan B). E.g. online events or hybrid models, operational change of venue/time, etc.

Q34

Could your artistic programme be summed up by a slogan?

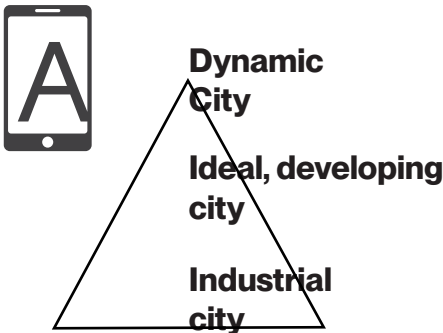
Valmiera's culture and arts programme and marketing strategy slogan is – DYNAMIC CITY. Dynamism, movement, process and conversion are the things that best describe Valmiera. The slogan also has cultural and historical roots, and the visual identity of the European Capital of Culture Valmiera2027 is developed from it.

Concept and visual identity

Gustavs Klucis "Dynamic City" (1919)	Square / rhombus - the base element of visual identity	Valmiera2027 logo
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"Dynamic City", one of the most famous artistic composition ideas of Gustavs Klucis, a Latvian constructivist artist and photomontage pioneer from the Valmiera region. The composition represents the historical theme of industrialisation, which still today refers in many ways to the pragmatic, rational and economic outlook on life of the residents of the Valmiera region.

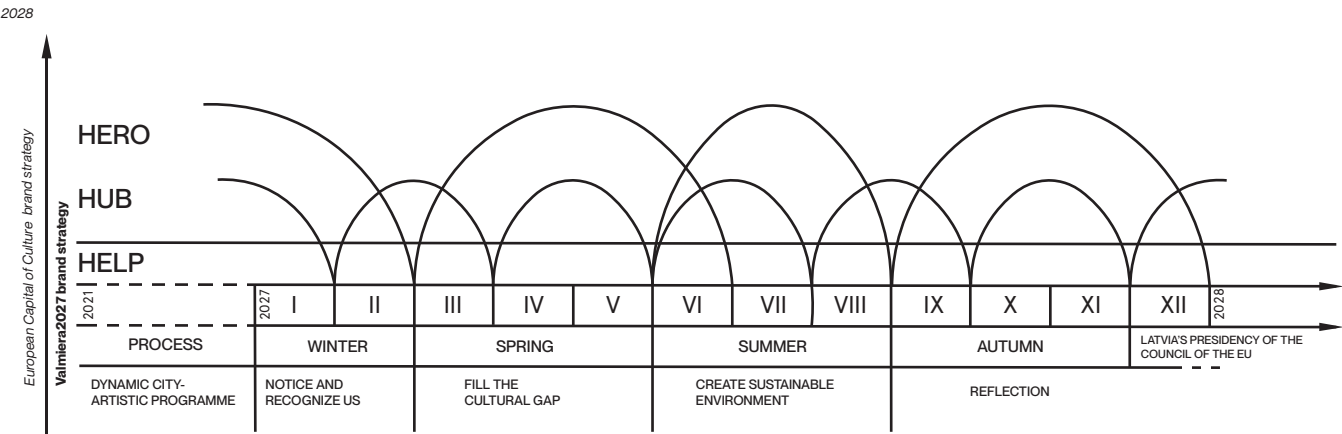
Based on the geometry of G. Klucis' "Dynamic City". The square is the same on all sides. The square is comprehensible, explicable and perfect. The square symbolically encapsulates the individual's understanding of culture, its perception and visual reception – pragmatically, realistically and rationally. The ability to understand and align with one's own visual standards. The square as a playground for creating a dynamic, open and inclusive environment.



"The city turns on its axis. No matter how you turn it, it is right, without a top and a bottom. Spin it any way you want, it is correct." (G.Klucis)

Just like G. Klucis in his works, we will give movement to everything we do and create - we will show how, with the dynamic micro-city as our guiding theme, we will improve our city and region, inspire change in Latvia and other European and world cities on our way to the ECoC title in 2027 and beyond. Colour (carmine red and complementary colours). Crimson is the colour of bricks. It is associated with the history of industrialisation of Latvian cities – city building, patronage. It is also the colour of Latvia's natural treasure – clay. Nature is closely linked to industry, economic growth and dynamism. Complementary colours are characteristic of the urban and rural landscapes of the Valmiera region.

Valmiera2027 MCS and ECoC brand strategy matrix



Q35

What is the city's intended marketing and communication strategy for the ECoC year, in particular with regard to the media strategy and the mobilisation of large audiences? Digital communication channels.

Our integrated marketing communications strategy (MCS) will help to achieve our **goals** by reaching a diverse and international **audience** with **messages** that match their values and perceptions, using **channels** that are most relevant and understandable to each audience, and engaging with **local people, business partners and the media both in Latvia and Europe**. Valmiera yearns for cultural development more than any other city in Latvia. Our outstanding achievements in economics and sport show that if we take on something, we get it done and we excel because we are pragmatic, realistic and economical, not afraid to initiate change and be innovators.

Valmiera2027's marketing and communication **slogan will be DYNAMIC CITY**. We will implement the MCS on several levels and in coordination with the intensity and timing of the artistic programme. Meanwhile, as the brand ambassador for the ECoC, we will strengthen ECoC brand awareness, an understanding of the values (dynamism,, ability to change, inclusion, openness, sustainability, etc.) and promote public participation and action. Our central **narrative** will be that we are an ECoC, which:

- is on a major transformation path from an industrial to a dynamic micro-city
- has set itself an ambitious goal, with the chosen path leading to significant transformations in culture, as well as in education, economy, environment and society, in the well-being, happiness and goodness of our people's lives
- is purposefully and resolutely realising its untapped cultural potential - closing the cultural gap
- is creating a wonderful environment - a vibrant micro-city - that is attractive to residents and visitors alike and thus becomes an example of good practice and experience for similar European cities (not metropolitan areas) to build a dynamic, modern, sustainable working and living environment focused on human well-being
- with its actions draws the attention of the European and global community and cities to the lessons learned and benefits gained during ECoC process in order to provide Europe with a legacy and reproducible experience, in the broadest cultural sense possible
- makes use of its strengths - economic efficiency and getting things done in order to achieve its intended results and objectives

We want people to be familiar with Valmiera, for them to visit it, to participate, to co-create. For people to have the skillset to be able and willing to engage more deeply in cultural processes, more specifically, to understand, accept and think about:

- the value, importance and development of culture in people's daily lives, with an individual understanding of values, meaning and involvement in programme development, creation and shaping of the environment around them, the environment in which we live
- cultural diversity
- how local cultural values and events are part of a common

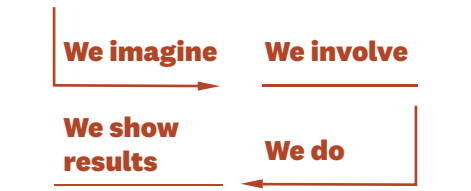
European cultural space

- the role of ECoC Valmiera2027 in the processes of territorial development and social change
- the ECOC Valmiera2027 programme as a joint achievement of the local community
- a unique and unforgettable experience in 2027, involving the local and international community

Thanks to the momentum created by the ECoC, we will reflect the upcoming and ongoing significant and sustainable changes from vision to result, which we will celebrate together across Europe in 2027!



Strategic communication matrix



The matrix comprises a set of activities and methods chosen to 1) reach and engage the widest and newest audience segments possible, 2) inform about ECoC 2027 brand, messages, promoters, country and venue and events. For this purpose we will make extensive and varied use of social networks - partnering, social, digital media, take a new and creative approach to the choice of content and format, and analyse the information channel usage habits of the target groups. We will do all this to ensure that the story of the ECoC brand is relevant in every possible way to the dynamic times and that our audiences give it the time, interest and engagement it deserves.

We will use creative and artistic solutions to make the ECoC story and events interesting for audiences who encounter the brand for the first time, as well as for loyal audiences, allowing them to take note of and engage with the ECoC and the latest developments from new perspectives. For example, to obtain new information, knowledge, draw inspiration, get involved and gain cultural experiences.

We will reflect this dynamism in everything we do and in the way we present and talk about it.

GOALS/ACTIVITIES	TARGET AUDIENCE	MESSAGE	CHANNELS
Phase No. 1: NOTICE AND RECOGNISE US! 2020. – 2024.			
Drawing the attention of the target audience and raising awareness by talking about: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Valmiera's motivation for joining the path to ECoC;- Valmiera's path to the ECoC (transformation process - from an industrial city with a history to a dynamic city focused on a cultural environment shaping and influencing human well-being);- the role of culture in bringing about societal change;- The unique and unifying historical and current cultural qualities of Valmiera and the Valmiera region;- The ECoC programme and the values and opportunities it promotes;- People involvement in societal processes as an EU cultural value Calls for public and NGO involvement;- The importance of people involvement and participation in the urban transformation process and the expected outcome through the different activities of the ECoC programme;- Demonstrating future added value in the ECoC process through the potential of established projects;- Involvement of stakeholders in EcoC communication (mobilisation of support), e.g. partners, including the diaspora;- Accumulation of best practice stories from previous ECoC cities;- Attracting partners;- The Valmiera region as a cultural space in Europe.	<div>Local audience</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Opinion leaders- Media- Social communities working in formal and informal cultural institutions-Valmiera municipality institutions and organisations, their employees- Leaders of working groups- Residents- Diaspora (ethnic groups living in Latvia and Latvians abroad)- Cooperation partners- Entrepreneurs- Hospitality entrepreneurs- Transport companies- Entrepreneurs, philanthropists who have invested in Valmiera Municipality <div>Regional audience</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Opinion leaders- Media- Social communities working in formal and informal cultural institutions- Valmiera municipality institutions and organisations, their employees- Leaders of working groups- Residents- Diaspora (ethnic groups living in Latvia and Latvians abroad)- Cooperation partners- Entrepreneurs- Hospitality entrepreneurs- Transport companies- Entrepreneurs, philanthropists who have invested in Valmiera Municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The story of Valmiera's vision - a dynamic micro-city, the benefits to residents of a micro city (where safety, being together in a close and familiar community, being close to nature is combined with a high level of prosperity and living standards, technology, development vision and international recognition).- Valmiera's history and drive to become a modern, forward-looking social centre where young people want to stay for the social aspects of the environment.- Dynamic change, which citizens engage in and take part in cultural transformation.- Valmiera as an example for other EU cities (a transformation story through the cultural lens as a holistic unifying factor for people, environment, city.- Valmiera's rational approach will ensure the sustainability of ECoC results and values for future generations.- Imagine it! We imagine and know what we want to be- The place with the highest potential for cultural growth!- If we can imagine it, we can make it happen!- We are together with other ECoC cities! We share common values and goals! We have the support and help of these cities!- Cultural gap.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mass media- Environmental solutions (bus stops, walls of buildings, fences, digital monitors, displays, vehicles, etc.)- Web pages and digital solutions- Earned (unpaid) media- Social networks- Valmiera Region's best known people as ambassadors/influencers on social media- Direct communication- Working groups- Partner communication channels (social media accounts, publications, events, etc.)- City mobile app "Valmiera" available for free download on AppStore and Google Play- Latvian embassies abroad- Embassies abroad in Latvia- Twin Cities of Valmiera- Latvian diaspora in Europe- EcoC Valmiera2027 logo on dynamic Valmiera products, packaging of Latvian and European entrepreneurs.- EcoC Valmiera2027 merchandising (souvenirs, t-shirts, bags, etc.) using sustainable materials.
Phase No. 2: LET'S BRIDGE THE CULTURAL GAP! 2024. – 2026.			
<div>Cultural "gap"</div> <p>Communication on project implementation, reflecting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Preparing a creative partnership programme, exchanging experiences- Reflecting the story of a person as a creator of culture and recipient of the EcoC experience- Active participation of cultural organisations, community groups and individuals in shaping cultural offering and consumption- Access to cultural offerings- Pre- and ECoC launch communication- Daily communication throughout the year- Individual project communication- Representation of benefits	<div>National audience</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Opinion leaders- Media- Residents- Social communities working in formal and informal cultural institutions- Visitors- Diaspora (ethnic groups living in Latvia and Latvians abroad)- Cooperation partners- Tourist agencies- Hospitality companies- Transport companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What is a cultural "gap"- What is the role of the ECoC being "filled" with new, diverse contemporary cultural offerings and content- Imagine and come and see!- A variety of activities - from contemporary culture to culture in nature!- If we can imagine it, we can make it happen!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mass media- Environmental solutions (Large posters and billboards at the "Valmiera Gate": bus station, railway station, on entry roads.- Web pages, digital solutions and channels- Earned (unpaid) media- Social networks- Direct communication- Working groups- Partner communication channels- City mobile app "Valmiera" in languages with all ECG information- Latvian diaspora in Europe

GOALS/ACTIVITIES	TARGET AUDIENCE	MESSAGE	CHANNELS
Phase No.3: DYNAMIC MICRO CITY 2027. <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Communication of cultural and artistic programmes and events- What we've done and achieved- Cultural potential tapped- Testimonials- What we contribute to local, national and European society- Attracting volunteers- Building of empathy and tolerance for diversity and openness to other cultures- Building the self-esteem of individuals and the community as a whole- Changing one's outlook and attitudes- Symbiosis between culture and the tradition of pragmatic management	<i>Opinion leaders</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Media- Social communities working in formal and informal cultural institutions- Visitors- Diaspora (ethnic groups living in Latvia and Latvians abroad)- Cooperation partners- ECoCs- Tourist agencies- Regional, national and international opinion leaders- Local and international media- International cultural community and travellers- Local community, diaspora management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Benefits for society- Emotions, fulfilment, satisfaction- Culture as a holistic factor in the human environment- The result of several years of public debate on the meaning of culture (future vision)- Future change, for future society- How different groups in society engage and participate in the organisation in diverse ways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Promotion of activities- Ticketing platforms- Practical information- Guides- Guides to getting to know the local area- Advantages programme
Phase No.4: SUSTAINABILITY 2027. + <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Close-out and a new beginning- Ongoing communication on activities on established platforms and infrastructure- Communication of added value to the economy and society from the Valmiera conversion process- Sharing results with others- Valmiera as a prime example of the symbiosis of industry and nature- Promoting awareness and responsibility for sustainability, interaction between different groups in society discussing environmental issues and the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Society (national level)- Partners- Other micro-cities- Business media (local and international)- European students and universities, their international programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Valmiera's rational approach has ensured the sustainability of ECoC investments- A place where other micro-cities can draw inspiration for their conversion- Culture as a holistic factor in the human environment- The story of Valmiera's transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Live events- Web platform- Earned (unpaid) media- Social networks- Direct communication- Mass media- City mobile app "Valmiera"- Latvian diaspora in Europe- Documentary on Valmiera's transformation towards ECoC - an inspiring best practice story - a gift to other EU cities- Good Practice Guide- Exchange of experiences

Digital marketing and communication

The ECoC has already established digital channels for delivering messages to audiences for marketing and communication purposes.

– The website valmiera2027.eu was created as the main digital source of up-to-date Valmiera2027 information, providing the audience with the necessary information about Valmiera2027 based on their interests, such as ECoC actions, news, events, programme, the application, partners, team, opportunities to get involved, timeline, etc.

– The Valmiera2027 Instagram account is designed to convey audiovisual and graphic content of Valmiera2027 through visual expression, to engage in ECoC activities and to network with other ECoC cities.

– The Facebook profile @valmiera2027 was created to provide the audience with in-depth information and knowledge, to reflect ECoC values, cooperation and participation, to give a glimpse behind-the-scenes and to tell the Valmiera2027 story. – We will use Twitter to promote our views by engaging cultural opinion leaders from other ECoC cities and EU.

Valmiera2027 social media profiles are linked and integrated into the digital communication channels of Valmiera2027

communication is closely linked with Valmiera Municipality accounts: www.valmierasnovads.lv and social media channels (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube). We will continue to provide live broadcasts of ECoC events, create and share visual and textual content. We will produce podcasts, create easy-to-use content for foreign media. We will develop new channels, such as TikTok, to reach the youngest – the most dynamic – social media audience and involve them in the creation of Valmiera2027 content.

We will design our digital communication in such a way that the Valmiera2027 target audience become Valmiera2027 digital ambassadors, creating content and sharing it on their channels with their audience. We will use hashtags for ECoC communication #dynamicValmiera2027 #dynamicmicrocity#dynamicpeople #dynamicculture#dynamicnature #dynamiceurope #dynamicmovement

#dynamicconversion #dinamiskāValmiera2027 #dinamiskāmikropilsēta #dinamiskiecilvēki #dinamiskākultūra #dinamiskādaba #dinamiskākustība #dinamiskākonversija

- Mobile app "Valmiera" - "European Capital of Culture 2027 in your pocket"

To facilitate the awareness and involvement of citizens and visitors, to facilitate the quick and easy exchange of information and to provide support, we will use the possibilities of the mobile app "Valmiera". The app includes a news section, an integrated events calendar, polls, suggestions, an interactive map with tourist attractions, leisure and entertainment opportunities, accommodation and places to eat. It also includes a loyalty programme with a basket of benefits offered by local businesses, or a section where local businesses post particularly friendly offers for residents and visitors. The municipality also has the possibility to send out push notifications for important and urgent events (5000+ downloads). By 2024, the app will be complemented by an integrated and interactive online public transport scheme and city guide, a user profile with loyalty levels, integrated e-services and language settings. Its promotion is included in the marketing and communication strategy, in promotional material, as one of the sources of information.

- Advertising in media

Our sponsors will be the environmental advertising media JCDecaux (local, national and international) and Visual Media (Riga, Latvia). We will also create new, easily assembled, transformable and transportable environmental advertising elements (e.g. an informative-educational objects in the centre of Valmiera, etc.)

- European Capital of Culture newsletter

The culture section of the municipality's newsletter (published once a month) already provides information about Valmiera's candidacy for the ECoC title in residents' mailboxes (26,960 copies) and digitally. A special edition with wide distribution and subscription possibilities and a digital version with a subscription function are planned.

- Sustainable methods in marketing and communication

We will use sustainable marketing communication tools – mainly digital marketing methods. However, we will not only assess the usefulness of promotional activities, but also look at the supply chains of marketing materials, analyse the environmental impact of production and propose a compensation mechanism. The Valmiera2027 brand identity will be linked to the social responsibility and sustainability of the form of communication, giving artistic value and depth of functionality to the communication format, e.g. a poster is a work of art displayed in an urban environment or can be taken home to be put on the wall, a flyer as a postcard, environmental advertising as a form of temporary architecture, photography in application and communication, video as a work of art in an exhibition or in a digital environment.

- Universal design and plain language

Valmiera2027 MCS will strengthen the implementation of universal design principles and plain language in

Valmiera2027 print, audiovisual and digital reading materials. In collaboration with Dr Aija Freimane, Associate Professor at the TU Dublin School of Creative Arts (Ireland) and international researcher on the socio-economic impact of design, we will organise training for Valmiera2027 practitioners to enhance our knowledge and competences, as well as strengthen our development processes. We will learn from Gävle municipality (Sweden) and adapt their strategy to inclusive communication, in collaboration with the “The Gender photographer” Tomas Gunnarsson (Sweden) and The Swedish Institute. We will collaborate with TU Dublin and other experts in the implementation of good practice in the field of universal design, so that Valmiera2027 communication becomes an example of good practice for other cities in Latvia and Europe. We will use digital tools and formulas already developed and widely used around the world to improve readability in plain language.

- Crisis communication

Taking into account the experience of the previous ECoCs, we have developed a crisis communication procedure (including crisis communication steps in each phase of crisis management), which will ensure swift and coordinated action in the event of any identified crisis in cooperation with the crisis management team (pandemic, fake news, populism, foreign propaganda (information bubble), radicalism, military and political tensions, climate induced weather events, “Meta company” warning to stop social media in Europe due to strict requirements on the protection of personal data, etc.).

Results

We will measure the results of the MCS implementation in 3 groups using different indicators and tools (SEO, social and Google analytics (follow, like, share, engage, #, media support, discounts, media monitoring, website traffic, interviews, surveys and increase in set indicators, QR code scanning, apps and app usage, real-time location analysis, etc.).

Indicators:

- **RECOGNITION** (the extent to which the ECoC brand identity, marketing activities and communications are recognised by the public);

- **AWARENESS** (how well the audience understands the brand, marketing and communication messages, whether and how they have influenced the perception of ECoC and Valmiera in 2027);

- **ACTION** (to what extent the brand identity, marketing and communication messages have influenced the audience's actions: attendance, live views).

We will analyse and measure how marketing and communication activities have contributed to achieving the

objectives and expected results of Valmiera2027 (Q3).

Former members of Riga2014, ECoC experts as well as international cultural event organisers and marketing specialists supported us as mentors during the application process such as Assistant Professor Ieva Jacobson Bellomi at the Frank Guarini Business School, John Cabot University in Rome, and Council member of the diaspora organisation #esiLV.

Q36

Please describe the partnerships planned or established with media with a view to ensuring wide coverage of the event.

The media strategy is based on broad contacts and diverse channels in terms of audience reach, interests, form and legal status. To reach the widest possible international audience, we will use our own channels as well as established partnerships with local, regional, national and international traditional media and diverse digital media. To implement a powerful media strategy for attractting international visitors, who make up a highly specialised and dynamic sector, we will engage and cooperate with a media agency with experience in both Latvian and export markets and with its assistance we will launch media campaigns to reach and engage European audiences and promote attendance at Valmiera2027.

Valmiera specialists have been involved in international networking events for ECoC communication and marketing experts and media. Local, regional, national, international and thematic media lists are being created, as well as ready-made content for use by local foreign media such as press releases, videos, photos, visualisations, translations, etc. is being offered to spread the message about ECoC 2027 objectives, to invite the regional, Latvian and European public to participate in person, and innovative ways are being sought to allow people to experience the ECoC events offline.

We will reach out to international media with meaningful collaborations through media agencies and our own content.

Cooperation with Latvian and European news agencies

Our information supporter will be the national information agency LETA. We will establish cooperation with European

news agencies within the Alliance of European News Agencies.

Cooperation with national public service media

The public media Latvijas Televīzija, lsm.lv and Latvijas Radio, as well as commercial TV and radio, which produce and broadcast content paid for by the state budget, will play an important role in covering Valmiera2027 as the most important cultural process in Latvia and event of the European Union and the nation. We will continue to work together by reaching out to broadcasters and finding points of convergence between audience needs and interests.

Cooperation with national commercial media

TV3 Group (TV3, radio STAR FM, portal tv3.lv), radio SKONTO, radio TEV, portals: satori.lv, fold.lv, Latvijas Avīze have agreed to be informative supporters of Valmiera2027.

Cooperation with regional media

Regional television ReTV, regional newspapers Liesma, Druva, Dzirkstele, Rīgas Apmēģa avīze and their portals, and valmieraszinas.lv have agreed to be information supporters of Valmiera2027. Negotiations We will continue to approach all Latvian regional media.

Cooperation with media in the Baltic States

BNN (Baltic News Network) has agreed to cooperate in the dissemination of information. Discussions regarding information support will continue with

TV3 Group (Estonia and Lithuania) and Postimees (Estonia), delfi.ee (Estonia), ohtuleht.ee (Estonia), Naisteleht (Estonia), Maaleht (Estonia), Kultuur ja Elu (Estonia), Vikerkaar (Estonia), epl. delfi.ee (Estonia), ekspress.delfi.ee (Estonia), maakodu.delfi.ee (Estonia), delfi.lt (Lithuania), Lietuvos Rytas (Lithuania), 15min.lt (Lithuania), etc.

Cooperation with international media in Europe

EUobserver, EU Reporter, The Baltic Times have agreed to cooperate and talks will continue with other media in the EU.

To expand media relations, we plan to approach media from Valmiera County and other Latvian twin cities, as well as media from other former ECoC cities. We will establish cooperation between cities similar to Valmiera for both media cooperation and exchange of experience.

To encourage the widest possible media coverage of the ECoC, we will organise visits and special events for journalists, bloggers and influencers from 2022 to 2026.

In cooperation with tourism experts and hospitality operators, targeted face-to-face events in Valmiera for these target groups from different EU countries are planned from autumn 2022. The aim is to make European countries aware of Valmiera and its cultural programme. In late 2026, a launch event for the media and media accreditation is planned, and in January 2027, a technologically equipped media centre will be set up and made available to the media.

Q37

How will you mobilise your own citizens as communicators of the year to the outside world?

The ECoC in Valmiera and the region will be the most important cultural event of national importance in 2027. **Cooperation and hospitality** will be our key words to promote international visibility of the event. To reveal its cultural potential, Valmiera's story will be told and showcased by external experts - cooperation partners who already "see more" - have a vision of the possibilities of Valmiera's cultural life. We are already strengthening our vision by organising workshops and creating platforms with local communities, different artists (opinion polls, thematic working groups, discussions, etc.) in a way that creates a sense of belonging and makes the vision a real, sustainable and achievable implementation plan. Through the cultural identity, events and people of Valmiera and Latvia, we will

ensure that the cultural needs of the inhabitants of a dynamic micro-city are a given and not an exclusive choice, that creativity is a human potential that, when realised, makes their lives better.

Local residents. The local community has already been a tremendous part of creating Valmiera2027 programme and will continue to be part of it by acting as our influencers and spokespeople. They will co-create the content on various Valmiera2027 social media platforms and be involved in the overall communication process. For more details please see Q12!

Q38

How does the city plan to highlight that the European Capital of Culture is an action of the European Union?

We understand the importance of culture in the context of sustainability and the EU's overall objectives. We are confident that this approach will result in conversion while making a significant contribution to the 17 Global Sustainability Goals. The programme will include a wide

range of events whose central and content narrative will focus on challenges and issues on EU scale.. Please see chapter Q11 "European Academy".

In all Valmiera2027 communication materials (printed and digital materials, souvenirs and corporate materials) we will refer to the EU and use the EU logo.



Q39

Please supply evidence of the continuous political support and commitment from the relevant authorities.

The political environment in Latvia for local authorities is considered stable. The councils are mostly comprised of candidates from regional parties who are well known in the local community and are judged by their performance. According to a survey by the Latvian research centre SKDS (conducted in early 2022), people trust the leaders of the largest municipalities more than the ministers – the highest rating (just behind the mayor of Riga) is given to **Jānis Baiks, the long-standing chairman of the Valmiera Regional Council**. We can say with confidence that political support will continue in the future since Valmiera municipality is characterised by a consistent approach – gradually completing the objectives set out in the development planning documents, and making **culture a priority, which guarantees support for the Valmiera ECoC**. It should also be noted that the current composition of the City Council will remain the same until June 2025, by which time many important preparations for the ECoC will be completed. The importance of culture is appropriately included in the future Sustainable Development Strategy for Valmiera 2022-2038 (see below). Not only the leading political party, but also other political powers in the municipality have identified culture as one of the municipality's key tasks.

The decisions of the Municipal Council to nominate Valmiera for the ECoC title confirm that the idea has political and institutional support of the municipality (decisions: Valmiera City Council on 28 January 2021 and Valmiera Regional Council on March 31st), which is clearly reflected in all the development documents and actions approved so far. In 2022, the development planning documents of the newly established Valmiera Municipality will be approved: Sustainable Development Strategy 2022-2038 and Development Programme 2022-2028 (submitted for public discussion). Culture plays an important role in the documents. Valmiera is to become **"the centre of culture and sport in Vidzeme, with a diverse cultural and sporting life and a creative and healthy society"**.

The regional development institution – Vidzeme Planning Region (one of the five planning regions in Latvia since 2006) has also confirmed its support for the Valmiera ECoC programme. Its mission is to promote long-term balanced development of the Vidzeme region and to serve as a platform for the development of the region's municipalities. The vision of the Vidzeme Planning Region Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 is for Vidzeme to be a region that attracts talented and hardworking people, is well connected, internally integrated and secure, is open to challenges, is competitive and strives for excellence in specific smart specialisation areas of the region. and wants to preserve and develop the distinctive cultural space of Vidzeme. The decision of the Vidzeme Planning Region Development

Council of 17 December 2021 **enables COOPERATION of the Vidzeme Planning Region and its constituent municipalities in the project "Valmiera - European Capital of Culture 2027", and APPROVES the participation of the Valmiera Municipality in the ECoC competition as an important development project for the entire Vidzeme region**. The document states that it would contribute to the economic growth of the Vidzeme region; the development of an educated, active, creative and environmentally friendly society; the participation of the region's population in socially important events, cultural and creative processes; and the development of a nationally and internationally competitive cultural environment. The programme activities would create a cultural and tourism offering rooted in cultural heritage and traditions, thus promoting the Vidzeme region as a nationally and internationally recognised destination. It would create an international cultural programme in the region by, promoting the professional development of those working in the cultural and creative industries and the creation of new sustainable cultural products and the accessibility of diverse artistic genres.

Vidzeme Planning Region's extensive network of partners worldwide will be used to promote ECoC Valmiera2027 and attract new partners. In the event of ECoC status, a representative of the Vidzeme Planning Region will be involved in the Council. Practical cooperation with the Valmiera Municipality will be separately stipulated in specific cooperation documents and agreements.

Q40

Please supply evidence of the continuous political support and commitment from the relevant authorities.

In our 1st bid book, we had identified a number of cultural and sporting attractions related to the ECoC. Several of them have recently been or are about to be put into operation after renovation and are therefore in excellent condition. The projects were and are being carried out with financial support from the municipality, the State and the European Regional Development Fund.

Two active lifestyle facilities were commissioned in 2021. They will be used for outdoor events such as the Contemporary Circus Festival:

- Sports and Active Recreation Park "Mežs" (cost: EUR 1,160,000);
- J.Daliņa Stadium and Athletics Centre (EUR 21,000,000).

The following facilities are in the process of being redeveloped by the end of 2022:

- Restoration of the historic walls of Valmiera Castle, reconstruction of the old pharmacy building ensemble and construction of the new Valmiera Castle Cultural Environment Centre (EUR 3,700,000);
- Development project of the Valmiera City Cultural and Historical Centre and the adjacent street (EUR 1,540,000);
- Industrial Areas Development Project (EUR 12,000,000).

The Industrial Design and Innovation Centre will be located in the park.

The above facilities will be used for exhibitions, audience development activities, outdoor music and dance events during the ECoC. They will be engaging to visitors to the city as attractions.

The renovation or reconstruction of several other cultural and educational facilities is also included in the municipality's investment plan. These include: the construction of a chamber hall for small-scale professional music and arts events at the Valmiera Music School (EUR 450,000); modernisation of infrastructure and equipment at the Valmiera School of Design and Art (EUR 562,000); and the redevelopment of the Valmiera Library to improve the quality of services (EUR 132,000). Establishment of the North Vidzeme Culture and Arts Centre by converting the Valmiera Culture Centre building for professional and amateur arts, including the construction of a new chamber hall (EUR 12,500,000). The first three sites will be renovated in 2024-2025 with the support of EU funds, while the redevelopment of the Valmiera Culture Centre will be covered by public and private funding, including EU's Recovery Fund under the axis: improvement of municipal buildings by promoting the transition to renewable energy technologies and improving energy efficiency, and is expected to be completed by the second half of 2026. All four facilities are in relatively good technical condition and are used for their intended purposes. It should be noted that in the event of delayed work completion, this would not pose a risk to the implementation of the ECoC programme activities, as the buildings are intended for separate events for which other venues and facilities may be used.

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