

S K O P J E  
2020

Dear cultural enthusiasts and fellow citizens,

As the Mayor of our beautiful city Skopje, I have the honor and privilege to address you on this remarkable occasion, as we embark on an extraordinary journey as Candidate for the title European Capital of Culture in 2028. Skopje, our beloved city, is a place where diverse cultures meet, and where creativity knows no boundaries. It is a city where ancient traditions and contemporary expressions coexist in harmony, creating a unique mix of creativity, innovation, culture and art.

The devotion to become the 2028 European Capital of Culture is a testament to our commitment to celebrate, promote, and nurture the rich cultural heritage of our city and share it with our European family. We believe that culture breathes life and vibrancy into any society, and in Skopje you can feel it everywhere, it resonates in our music, and creates magic in our theaters and museums. Culture is our unity in diversity, an expression of harmony and the bridge that connects us with the entire European community. It is a force that shapes our identity, reflects our values, and paves the way for a brighter and inclusive future.

Our city, with its vibrant mix of ethnicities, religions, and traditions, is a testament to the power of cultural diversity and European multiculturalism. Skopje is a magnificent blend of cultures, emotions, memories, aspirations, and this unique allure we strive to share with the entire European family.

Through our Skopje 2028 program, we envision a year-long celebration of culture, a program designed to be inclusive, innovative, impactful and sustainable, reaching every corner of our city and every segment of our society. It will be a program that unites generations, and ignites the flames of creativity in our youth.

The European rich cultural heritage, diversity of traditions, and commitment to freedom of artistic expression inspires us and motivates us to progress as friends and partners on this journey. Jointly we can create a legacy that extends beyond 2028, a legacy that will enrich our lives, deepen our understanding, and nurture the spirit of unity that defines Europe.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge the strong dedicated support we receive for the Candidacy for the title European Capital of Culture in 2028 from our Government, Skopje City Council, municipalities, our citizens, our European twin and partner cities, cultural institutions, and this commitment is testament to our collective belief that by the power of culture we can connect and grow together.

We would like to invite you to join us on this remarkable journey, where together we will discover the cultural treasures of Skopje and promote our common European values. Jointly we will celebrate culture over division, and strengthen the bonds of unity, understanding, and friendship. Our quest as Candidate for this esteemed title is not just about winning a competition, it's about creating a new value where European cultures converge, ideas flourish, and connections are strengthened.

As Mayor of Skopje, our capital city and our center of culture, diversity, equity and inclusion, I express our appreciation for all your support, and would be honored to welcome, support, embrace and enjoy European culture in Skopje in 2028.

Thank you,

**Danela Arsovska**  
**Mayor of the Skopje**



CANDIDATE CITY FOR EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE





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# Introduction

## 1. Why does your city wish to take part in the competition for the title of European Capital of Culture?

In the vibrant present of the Republic of North Macedonia, there stands a city named Skopje. Once known as Skupi in ancient times, it now proudly holds the mantle of the nation's capital. This urban centre is not just a location; it's a living testament to centuries of diverse influences that have shaped its cultural heritage. Skopje isn't merely a place; it's a treasure trove of history and culture waiting to be discovered.

Today, Skopje continues to be a hub of innovation and progress, where ideas take flight and dreams find their wings. It's a melting pot where culture, science, economy, politics, and administration seamlessly intertwine. Here, people from all walks of life unite, each thread contributing to the intricate tapestry of its identity.

But the people of Skopje are far from complacent. They're driven by the vision of progress, fuelled by a desire to align their city with the values of Europe. Their sights are set on a remarkable goal – securing the prestigious title of European Capital of Culture in the year 2028. This aspiration isn't just a promise to themselves; it's a commitment to the heartbeat of the city, a pledge to the soul of its citizens. Skopje envisions a future where creativity flourishes, where a fresh cultural identity is cultivated, enriched with the hues of Europe. The well-being of the community takes precedence, and they believe that cultural experiences hold the key to a fulfilling life. In the light of history, Skopje recognizes the immense power of culture – the act of sharing stories, embracing learning, and uniting in the sheer joy of entertainment.

The significance of Skopje radiates beyond its boundaries. It's a place where politics, business, and culture interweave, where innovation is both nurtured and celebrated. The city knows that culture infuses its streets with life, adding vibrancy and pride to every corner. The success stories of past European Cities of Culture stand as proof that culture has the power to spark investment, to transform a city into a thriving hub of creativity. The people of Skopje are firm believers in the profound impact of art and culture on society. They understand that culture is more than surface-level; it shapes the very essence of a place and its people. This collective belief drives them to raise awareness and celebrate the unique essence of Skopje. It's a city where diverse threads of ethnicity, beliefs, origins, and traditions are woven together, creating a dynamic and harmonious urban centre.

Within the heart of the city, a testament to its diversity stands tall – religious temples representing four distinct faiths, a rarity in the global landscape. These symbols symbolize unity, the strength derived from embracing differences. Multiculturalism is more than a concept here; it's the bedrock of Skopje's identity, a force that transcends boundaries and unites the citizens. The spirit of hospitality runs deep in the veins of Skopje. The city recognizes that economic and social challenges may hinder some from fully engaging in cultural pursuits. Yet, this doesn't deter them. The ECoC program stands as a beacon of transformation, extending the hand of art and culture to every citizen, fostering appreciation and involvement.

Creativity thrives within Skopje's streets, evident in the stories passed down through generations, in the vibrant pulse resonating among its people. The esteemed title they strive to hold offers a fresh perspective, a chance for every resident to showcase their culture to the world. Each citizen becomes a storyteller, sharing the city's spirit with a global audience.

And so, the resounding message echoes through Skopje's corners, through its alleys and squares: "CULTURE OVER DIVISION." This isn't just a motto; it's a rallying cry for unity, an invitation to inclusivity, and a celebration of shared cultural enrichment that transcends all barriers. Skopje's vitality isn't confined to its streets; it flows through its music, galleries displaying both local and global art, folklore breathing life into ancient traditions, and film festivals capturing the essence of diversity. It's a city where culture resonates vibrantly, where citizens feel the pulse of their existence.

The culture and society of Skopje harmoniously resonate with the motto **"CULTURE OVER DIVISION."** It's a city where culture isn't a distant concept; it's the very foundation of institutions – educational, cultural, and commercial. Skopje embodies the character of its people, its landmarks, its artistic havens, and its educational institutions. Its cultural heritage is a testament to the nation's identity, a legacy of a city that thrived through culture, trade, and economy.

Skopje isn't just a city; it's a crossroads of cultures, a place holding the power to shape residents' lives. Its chosen path aligns with the essence of Europe, aspiring to become a European City of Culture.

This is the story of Skopje – a story of a city believing in the transformative power of culture, unity, and transcending divisions. It's a tale of a city carrying its rich history while embracing a future where "Culture over Division" isn't just a motto, but a way of life. As the city embarks on this remarkable journey, it extends an invitation to the world to join them, to participate in their transformation, and to collaboratively build a stronger, more inclusive community for all.

Skopje, with its heart pulsating to the rhythm of history and innovation, seeks to embrace a transformative journey by participating in the competition for the title of European Capital of Culture. This aspiration is driven by a profound commitment to cultural evolution, unity, and the vibrant tapestry of our community. There are compelling reasons why Skopje fervently wishes to partake in this prestigious competition:

**1. Cultural Celebration and Identity:** Skopje stands as a living testament to the interplay of diverse influences over centuries. Our participation in the European Capital of Culture competition is a tribute to our cultural heritage, an opportunity to share the narratives that define us and celebrate the essence of our city.

**2. Cultural Unity and Exchange:** Skopje envisions this competition as a bridge that connects our city with the broader European family. By participating, we aim to foster cultural unity and initiate meaningful cultural exchanges that transcend borders, enriching both our community and Europe as a whole.

**3. Catalyst for Revitalization:** The competition serves as a catalyst for revitalizing our urban landscape. By rejuvenating cultural spaces, creating new artistic hubs, and transforming neglected areas into vibrant centers of creativity, we can uplift our city and create lasting positive impact.

**4. Economic and Social Growth:** Skopje recognizes that cultural development is intricately linked with economic and social growth. By competing for the title, we open doors to increased tourism, investments, and employment opportunities, which contribute to the prosperity of our citizens.

**5. Inspiration for Innovation:** The journey towards becoming a European Capital of Culture inspires innovation across various sectors. It encourages the convergence of art, technology, and community engagement, fostering a dynamic environment that pushes the boundaries of creativity.

**6. Youth Engagement and Empowerment:** Our youth are the torchbearers of the future. By participating in this competition, we empower the younger generation to actively engage in cultural initiatives, fostering a sense of ownership and instilling values of collaboration and inclusivity.

**7. International Collaboration:** Skopje's participation opens avenues for collaboration with other cities and cultural institutions throughout Europe. This exchange of ideas, projects, and experiences enriches our cultural landscape and strengthens our ties with diverse communities.

**8. Global Visibility:** Becoming a European Capital of Culture amplifies Skopje's visibility on the global stage. This recognition allows us to share our story, culture, and achievements with a wider international audience, inspiring mutual understanding and appreciation.

**9. Legacy of Transformation:** Competing for the title is about more than the present; it's about leaving a legacy for generations to come. By investing in cultural infrastructure, education, and community programs, we create a lasting impact that shapes Skopje's identity for the future.

**10. Cultural Diplomacy:** Our participation reflects a commitment to cultural diplomacy and cross-cultural dialogue. It is a platform to break down barriers, challenge stereotypes, and showcase the power of culture in fostering connections and promoting peace.

In essence, Skopje's decision to take part in the competition for the title of European Capital of Culture is an embodiment of our city's spirit—a vibrant blend of history, creativity, and unity. We view this journey as a voyage of self-discovery, an opportunity to showcase our potential, and a testament to the belief that culture has the power to transcend divisions, inspire change, and shape a brighter future for our city and Europe as a whole.



## 2. Does your city plan to involve its surrounding area? Explain this choice.

Our mission is to cultivate unity between rural and urban areas, enriching every aspect of citizens' lives through a strong cultural focus. From an administrative perspective, it's important to note that Skopje functions as a local government composed of 10 municipalities, operating under its distinctive legislation, the Law on the City of Skopje. It's essential to emphasize that the Republic of North Macedonia lacks administrative-territorial units with distinct political representation and individual budgets; instead, it features "statistical regions" which also serve as "planning regions" for gathering and analysing statistical data. Within this framework, the Skopje region stands as one of the eight planning regions.

Comprising 17 municipalities, the Skopje region includes:

- Municipalities within Skopje: Aerodrom, Butel, Centar, Gazi Baba, Gjorche Petrov, Karposh, Kisela Voda, Chair, Saraj, and Shuto Orizari.
- Surrounding area municipalities: Arachinovo, Zelenikovo, Ilinden, Petrovec, Sopishte, Studenichani, and Chucher-Sandevo.



As per the 2021 census, Skopje's population reaches 526,502 inhabitants, while the surrounding municipalities house an additional 86,000 residents.

Our commitment lies in strengthening collaboration in cultural policy and fostering stronger bonds between the City of Skopje and its municipalities. This endeavor represents a mutual aspiration to align with European values and seamlessly integrate them into every fiber of our cultural tapestry.

As a finalist for the European City of Culture title, Skopje garners support not only from its own regions but also from prominent towns such as Prilep, Bitola, Ohrid, Veles, and Kumanovo. These allies contribute to the candidacy by offering potential avenues for diverse cultural collaborations.

Skopje stands as a repository of cultural and artistic abundance, adorned with titles like the "City of the Seven Gates" and the "City of Eternity." Countless travel writers and admirers have been inspired by this city, all striving to capture its distinctive essence.

Reflecting contrasts and diversity, Skopje gracefully merges the modern with the ancient, and nature with urban elements. It's a city that thrives on paradoxes, creating a dynamic fusion. At its core, Skopje breathes culture, aspiring to claim the title of European City of Culture in 2028.

Skopje is home to galleries nestled within historic buildings, situated in the old city core or more precisely in the Old Skopje Bazaar, such as Daut Pasha Amam and Chifte Amam, Suli An, Kurshumli An, along with modern galleries in urban centres.

Skopje boasts numerous ancient cultural and historical structures, integral to Skopje's cultural presentation, with innovative digital reconstructions. Notably, the archaeological site of Skupi with its ancient amphitheater and Roman aqueduct offers a venue for cultural and musical events, bridging cultural heritage with modernity. The prehistoric settlement of Tumba Magjari (6,200 - 4,200 BCE), the ancient fortress (castle) Tauresion, the birthplace of Byzantine emperor and legislator Justinian I (483 - 565), buildings from the 6th century in the vicinity of Skopje, Sopishte, the acropolis of the early Byzantine city of Markovi Kuli, and the castle Crkvishte - Zelenikovo contribute to our rich cultural heritage.

We cherish a wealth of church cultural heritage, encompassing a multitude of medieval structures, churches, and monasteries. The oldest among them is the monastery of St. Andrew, constructed in 1389. The monastery of Saint Panteleimon, built in the 12th century, features the best-preserved frescoes from the Byzantine era. Ottoman architecture, which flourished during the Ottoman Empire, is also present in Skopje. Notable monuments include the Isa Bey Mosque from 1475, Sultan Murat Mosque from 1436, and Mustafa Pasha Mosque from 1492, representing the finest examples of Islamic architecture in Skopje. The natural canyon of Matka, with its unique geographical relief, captivates with its heights, depths, flora, and fauna. The distinctive Vrelo Cave and speleological park rank among the world's most captivating, with Vrelo Cave being one of Europe's deepest underwater caves.

### The map of Skopje encompasses:

- 10 monuments of sacred architecture.
- 3 archaeological sites.
- 13 monuments of secular architecture, sites of religious buildings.
- 13 museums, integral to our culture, boasting rich collections spanning history, art, archaeology, ethnology, and technology.

The abundant cultural heritage dispersed throughout the territory of the 10 municipalities of the city and its surroundings holds great potential for realizing cultural events within the Skopje2028 program, subtly connecting with European culture.





### 3. Explain briefly the overall cultural profile of your city.

Skopje, boasts a rich and diverse cultural profile that reflects its historical significance, multicultural heritage, and contemporary dynamism. Below is a closer look at the various facets of Skopje's cultural identity:

- 1. Historical Layers:** Skopje's cultural heritage is deeply rooted in its history, with influences from Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, and Yugoslav periods. This history is evident in the city's architecture, monuments, and archaeological sites, creating a unique blend of styles and eras.
- 2. Architectural Diversity:** The city's architecture showcases a fascinating mix of ancient and modern structures. From the historic Ottoman-era Stone Bridge and Kale Fortress to the modernist buildings of the Skopje 2014 project, the city's architecture is a testament to its evolving identity.
- 3. Religious Pluralism:** Skopje's religious landscape is characterized by its coexistence of different faiths. Mosques, churches, synagogues, and temples stand side by side, reflecting the city's multicultural fabric and respect for religious diversity.
- 4. Cultural Festivals:** The city hosts a wide range of cultural festivals celebrating music, dance, film, literature, and more. The Skopje Jazz Festival, Skopje Film Festival, and Taksirat Festival are examples of events that bring diverse artistic expressions to the forefront.
- 5. Art and Creativity:** Skopje has a thriving art scene, with galleries, studios, and public art installations showcasing a blend of traditional and contemporary art. The city's artists explore various mediums, contributing to its creative atmosphere.
- 6. Cuisine and Gastronomy:** Skopje's culinary scene offers a taste of the region's diverse influences. Traditional Macedonian dishes, Ottoman-inspired cuisine, and international flavours are readily available, making dining in Skopje a cultural experience.
- 7. Historical Landmarks:** The city is dotted with historical landmarks that bear witness to its past. The Old Bazaar, Mustafa Pasha Mosque, and the Millennium Cross on Vodno Mountain are iconic sites that tell stories of Skopje's history.
- 8. Museums and Institutions:** Skopje is home to a range of museums and cultural institutions. The Museum of Contemporary Art, the National Museum of North Macedonia, and the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle offer insights into the country's history, art, and culture.
- 9. Literary Tradition:** Skopje has a rich literary heritage, with a tradition of poets, writers, and intellectuals contributing to its literary landscape. Bookstores, literary events, and cultural gatherings celebrate the written word.

**10. Multilingualism:** The city's multicultural population contributes to a multilingual environment. Macedonian, Albanian, and other languages are commonly spoken, reflecting the diverse backgrounds of its residents.

**11. Youth and Innovation:** Skopje's young population is actively engaged in shaping its cultural scene. The city's vibrant youth culture is reflected in music, street art, and various youth-led initiatives.

**12. Community Engagement:** Skopje's citizens actively participate in preserving and promoting their cultural heritage. Community projects, workshops, and grassroots initiatives play a significant role in keeping cultural traditions alive.

Skopje's cultural profile is a captivating blend of history, artistic expression, religious harmony, and contemporary innovation. Its ability to seamlessly weave together its diverse influences is a testament to its enduring cultural identity and its role as a dynamic cultural hub in the Balkans.

Skopje is adorned with a timeless heritage that resonates through the ages. Its origins are woven deep into antiquity, a tapestry of history, culture, and diversity. This heritage serves as a bridge, connecting cultures and fostering mutual understanding, just as its emblematic Stone Bridge both divides and unites the old and new quarters of the city.

Guided by the spirit of our visionary Goce Delchev, who envisioned cultural competition among nations, Skopje embodies this sentiment. It's a city that breathes unity in diversity, standing as a testament to the harmonious coexistence of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multinational society that has endured for centuries.

As you cross the Stone Bridge, you step into the heart of Skopje's vibrant narrative. The Old Skopje Bazaar, once a melting pot of Ottoman hammams, has evolved into national galleries. Ottoman structures, once symbols of hierarchy, have transformed into cultural hubs, bridging diverse cultures and facilitating sharing and understanding.

Walking through the city, you traverse time itself. The bustling Skopje Bazaar gradually gives way to a modern cityscape adorned with architectural marvels by Kenzo Tange and distinctive Yugoslav-era designs. Even the former post office has transformed into a vibrant event venue. And for those who seek to uncover the past, treasures await—Roman aqueducts, the ancient amphitheatre of the Skupi archaeological site, and the ancient settlement of Tumba Madjari.

Skopje's historical journey is best embodied by the Fortress Kale, crowning the city's heart. It stands as a sentinel, a witness to the city's evolution from ancient times to the present day. With roots reaching back to the IV to III millennium BC, it has seen the rise and fall of civilizations, each leaving their mark on its stones.

Nature weaves its own story within the city's cultural tapestry, exemplified by the Matka canyon—a sanctuary where nature transcends ethnicity, fostering unity among all who share its beauty. Amid this natural splendour, medieval structures, churches, and monasteries stand as testament to Skopje's enduring connection to its land.

Among these treasures, the Saint Panteleimon monastery stands as a living relic of the 12th century, adorned with frescoes that whisper tales of Byzantine grandeur. The fortress Tauresion, perched on the hill Gradiste, echoes with the legacy of Byzantine Emperor Justinian I's birth, a testament to the city's role in shaping history.

These cultural gems will shine brightly during Skopje2028, a celebration that will infuse life into these historical stones. Among the city's diverse communities, the Roma population stands out, embraced within the city's cultural fabric. The Erdelezi festival at Skopje Kale exemplifies unity, where differences melt away, and shared celebrations are embraced—a heritage recognized by UNESCO.

Skopje's vibrant cultural mosaic is composed of individuals, groups, and institutions spanning various sectors. With public and state-founded cultural institutions dotting the cityscape, its vibrancy is the result of a collective endeavour that paints the city with hues of creativity and unity. As Skopje prepares to embrace its destiny as a European Capital of Culture, its storied past and vibrant present stand as a testament to the power of culture to unite, transform, and inspire.



## 4. Explain the concept of the programme which would be launched if the city is designated as European Capital of Culture.

The heartbeat of our entire program resonates with a single motto: **"CULTURE OVER DIVISION."**

Every initiative, every project that takes flight under the banner of Skopje2028 is rooted in this powerful phrase. It's not just a catchphrase; it's a guiding principle that shapes our cultural landscape and breathes life into the European values we hold dear. Our cultural concept isn't just a reflection; it's a celebration of European culture itself, an embodiment of our vision for unity among the diverse souls that call Skopje home—united in their diversity of cultures, traditions, generations, and abilities.

Culture isn't just a realm of art and creativity; it wields a gentle yet potent political power. It's the thread that weaves together the diverse tapestry of our city and, beyond that, bridges our connection with the broader world. Through culture, cities forge positive images of themselves, fostering emotional bonds that reach far beyond the surface-level differences among their citizens.

At the core of Skopje2028 lie principles that breathe life into our European Capital of Culture application. But our journey is no easy feat—it's about using culture to confront the very challenges that shape our society.

We embark with the firm belief that art and culture aren't just ornaments; they are catalysts for addressing the most pressing issues within our communities. We see culture as a platform, an open stage that has the potential to influence real change. Addressing cultural differences is no walk in the park; throughout history, culture has mirrored and borne the weight of complex social issues tied to these differences. The more intricate the challenges, the more crucial it becomes to safeguard culture as a means of dialogue. It starts with asking the difficult questions, the ones that push us to reimagine solutions. Our program is born from these conversations, aimed at expanding our local efforts to a European scale.

Skopje is more than a city; it's a culture in motion, a vibrant pulse that extends beyond its own borders. Skopje2028 isn't just about the city; it's about embracing culture on a grander scale. The European Capital of Culture title isn't a trophy; it's a catalyst for growth, a force that propels transformation in society.

We believe that the heartbeat of a city lies within its citizens, those who share a deep connection to its streets, its stories, and its soul. It's these individuals who keep culture vibrant, who engage in a perpetual dialogue with it. This bond empowers them to meld the mental landscape of the city, to etch their mark on its identity.

Skopje2028 isn't a closed-door event; it's an invitation to share, to participate, to experience culture as a communal space. We open our doors to artists from across Europe and beyond, inviting them to breathe life into these shared spaces, spaces that embody the very essence of European values.

Cultural diplomacy isn't a foreign concept in Europe; it's a tradition that we hold in the highest regard. Our candidacy stands as a testament to this tradition's importance. Cultural diplomacy isn't just an introduction; it's our essence laid bare. It's our story, told first hand, aligning seamlessly with our city's identity and driving the growth of cultural tourism. This endeavour resonates with Europe's commitment to cultural diplomacy.

In a world divided by economic gaps, cultural distinctions rise as bridges rather than barriers. When economies falter, culture thrives. A city's prosperity isn't solely measured in wealth and power, but in the shared cultural values that bind every member of the community. Without this foundation, a sustainable future remains elusive.

The Skopje2028 project isn't just a local pursuit; it's a call to action across the European landscape. Through our journey, we hope to illuminate the immense potential of art and culture as unifying forces, transcending divisions. It's an endeavour that aligns with Europe's very core, a testament to the values we hold high.

# Contribution to the long-term strategy

## 1. Why does your city wish to take part in the competition for the title of European Capital of Culture?

The aspiration to secure the title of “European Capital of Culture 2028” for Skopje signifies a monumental leap toward fostering transformative change that will endure for years to come. We approach this endeavor with a panoramic view, fully cognizant of its wide-ranging impact. This pursuit carries deep significance, touching every facet of our city’s cultural spheres and radiating benefits across diverse dimensions.

The very title itself is a badge of honor, one that carries a profound sense of responsibility embraced by every member of Skopje’s community. This commitment naturally extends to encompass enduring initiatives, seamlessly aligned with the Culture Strategy of the City of Skopje and other interconnected strategic frameworks that wield direct influence over our cultural landscape. Culture is not a mere accessory in shaping Skopje’s journey; it stands as a driving force in charting our city’s path forward.

It’s imperative to underscore that the Strategy for the Cultural Growth of the City of Skopje, spanning from 2021 to 2030, along with its accompanying Action Plan, received official endorsement from the Skopje City Council on September 22, 2021. This represents a significant milestone—the inaugural ten-year Cultural Strategy for the city, an evolution from the previous four-year strategy (2012–2015).

The comprehensive framework of this strategy was meticulously constructed through a methodology designed to ensure inclusivity and active engagement of all stakeholders, fostering a collaborative formulation. The process unfolded in close partnership with a multidisciplinary team from Skopje2028, drawing insights from a diverse array of independent collaborators and experts. Representatives from all 10 municipalities within the jurisdiction of the City of Skopje, delegates from 8 Public Institutions of the city, 23 National Institutions, 30 figures from the independent cultural scene, Foundations, Embassies, and 5 Academic Institutions specializing in culture were extensively consulted.

With an open, innovative, and participatory approach in collaboration with the City of Skopje, stakeholders were integral to shaping this Strategy. This participation encompassed focused group discussions, interactive meetings, debates, and comprehensive questionnaires. Voices from cultural sectors, municipal bodies, and local communities came together under the theme “Culture of the Local Communities and Municipalities,” demonstrating a collective commitment to cultural vitality on a European scale. Throughout the formulation of this Strategy, a series of engagement activities were meticulously executed, including 3 focus group meetings involving 68 participants, and 2 debates that drew a total of 44 individuals. Moreover, 204 questionnaires were thoughtfully completed, spanning 3 distinct themes.

This Strategy stands as the most ambitious and all-encompassing cultural framework implemented thus far. It sets out objectives and priorities across all cultural domains, with financial backing from the city’s budget. A notable emphasis is placed on fostering inter-sectoral collaboration, strengthening the connections between culture and realms such as tourism, education, environmental preservation, economic growth, and spatial development.

The Strategy outlines a plan to establish a coherent network that spans various sectors, resources, visions, and traditions, cultivating a fresh, intercultural, and vibrant creative atmosphere. It highlights the necessity for Skopje to infuse culture into economic and societal policies, harnessing the innovative potential of artists and cultural practitioners.

Given the current tumultuous times, this cultural strategy was designed as a flexible and adaptable plan, characterized as an “open-ended strategy.” Its objectives will be subject to reevaluation every three years. The Strategy also lays out a comprehensive framework for monitoring and evaluation, including a mid-term evaluation in 2026 and an ex-post evaluation in 2031.

The Strategy, coupled with the Action Plan for the evolution of Skopje’s culture spanning from 2021 to 2030, is built upon four strategic pillars. These pillars not only position Skopje within regional and international contexts, but also contribute to its cultural advancement.

**“SKOPJE – MAALA NE E SALA- A HAVEN OF ECOCULTURE”** – Skopje is evolving into an intercultural, unified, and inclusive metropolis, shaping itself as an ecosystem grounded in cultural engagement and territorial cultural policies, transcending ethnic distinctions.

Skopje is committed to fostering a cultural transformation that becomes a way of life, seamlessly integrating youth, environmental consciousness, sports, and tourism. This development aspires to cultivate an ecosystem of inclusivity, activism, environmental consciousness, and healthy living. It is a city built upon the principles of solidarity, where citizens reciprocally care for their environment and are nurtured by it.

**“SKOPJE - A VAST CREATIVE CLASSROOM”** – Skopje enthusiastically fosters creative learning within the realm of education. This encompasses the infusion of arts and culture across educational institutions, spanning from primary to secondary schools and kindergartens. Moreover, cultural establishments offer tailor-made programs for children and communities. This initiative serves to nurture creative potential within adults of diverse ethnic and social backgrounds. Ultimately, the overarching goal is to cultivate a future audience that both comprehends and fosters an innate appreciation for culture and the arts.

**“WE ARE FROM SKOPJE” - “EMBRACING SKOPJE’S IDENTITY”** - Skopje is fostering an environment that nurtures and sustains the culturally creative sector. This is achieved by endorsing an innovative approach to public cultural space development, bolstering support for both, the independent scene and the institutions. Moreover, the city is actively fostering creative hubs, centres, and spaces that seamlessly integrate innovations from the creative industries and digital technologies.

**“FACING OUTWARDS, GROWING INWARDS”** - This principle underpins Skopje’s bid for the European Capital of Culture title in 2028. It encompasses a comprehensive strategy for the city’s application, encompassing a diverse range of measures and activities. These actions are geared towards not only organizing the event itself but also enhancing regional and international cultural cooperation. This approach reflects the city’s commitment to upholding European values and advancing cultural exchange.

A robust and intrinsic link must be established between the Cultural Strategy and various sectoral strategies, specifically focusing on the following:

- **Fostering Cultural Tourism:** The Cultural Strategy seamlessly aligns with the “Strategy for Development of Tourism in the City of Skopje for the period of 2020–2023.” It endeavors to make cultural experiences a cornerstone of tourism, offering visitors a rich and diverse cultural tapestry that showcases the city’s identity.
- **Cultural Inclusivity in Education:** The “Strategy for Inter-Ethnic Integration in the Education and Civic Participation of the City of Skopje (2019–2024)” finds resonance within the Cultural Strategy by fostering an inclusive cultural environment. Through cultural initiatives, these strategies harmonize to cultivate understanding and collaboration among diverse communities.
- **Youth Engagement and Empowerment:** The “Youth Strategy of the City of Skopje for the period 2021–2025” complements the Cultural Strategy by promoting youth involvement in cultural endeavors. This synergy empowers the younger generation to actively participate in and contribute to the city’s cultural landscape.
- **Sustainable and Resilient Development:** The commitment to environmental sustainability, as outlined in the “RESILIENT SKOPJE – Climate Change Strategy,” aligns with the Cultural Strategy’s vision for a thriving and sustainable cultural ecosystem. The two strategies converge in their collective pursuit of a balanced and resilient city.
- **Promoting Gender Equality:** The “Strategy for Gender Equality of the City of Skopje 2021–2025” seamlessly intertwines with the Cultural Strategy’s core values of inclusivity and diversity. Together, they promote a cultural environment that empowers all citizens and champions gender equality.

These interwoven strategies create a comprehensive framework that amplifies Skopje’s commitment to holistic development, fostering a city that harmonizes culture, society, environment, and equality in perfect unison.

The commitment to sustaining cultural endeavors beyond Skopje2028 is deeply ingrained within the Cultural Strategy itself, augmented by the comprehensive Action Plan that is intricately linked to this strategic document. Our aspiration is to establish the requisite financial and logistical conditions, enabling the seamless continuation of projects and programs from Skopje2028. These endeavors, marked by their exceptional artistic quality and public reception, are envisioned to persist beyond the titular year. Of particular significance are initiatives fostering arts and cultural education, alongside the empowerment of public cultural institutions and NGOs through effective governance and cross-sectoral collaboration.

To this end, the Skopje2028 Foundation’s managerial team, in their final report by early 2029, will propose a collection of noteworthy program activities supported by public resources, constituting an expanded cultural repertoire. A key aspect of this process involves engaging the cultural community through a comprehensive public consultation in 2029, thereby determining which projects and programs warrant continuation. This participatory approach aligns with European values, fostering inclusivity and collective decision-making in the cultural realm.

The plans for sustaining cultural activities beyond the year of the title “European Capital of Culture” are integral to ensuring that the transformative impact of the cultural program continues to resonate long after the designated year. These plans are designed to create a legacy that maintains the momentum of cultural engagement, fosters ongoing collaboration, and ensures the enduring enrichment of the city’s cultural landscape. Skopje’s commitment to this endeavor is deeply rooted in its Cultural Strategy and Action Plan, which provide a roadmap for cultural development from 2021 to 2030.

**1. Comprehensive Cultural Strategy:** Skopje’s Cultural Strategy serves as a guiding document for long-term cultural development. It outlines objectives, priorities, and action plans across various cultural domains. The strategy’s “open-ended” nature allows for regular reevaluation and adaptation, ensuring that cultural goals remain relevant and responsive to evolving circumstances.

**2. Integration with Sectoral Strategies:** Skopje’s Cultural Strategy is interwoven with various sectoral strategies, including those focused on tourism, education, sustainability, and gender equality. This integration promotes cross-sectoral collaboration, ensuring that cultural initiatives continue to align with broader city development goals.

**3. Legacy Projects:** The Skopje2028 Foundation’s managerial team will propose a collection of legacy projects in their final report. These projects, supported by public resources, will constitute an expanded cultural repertoire that persists beyond the titular year. Engaging the cultural community through public consultations will help determine which projects are most deserving of continuation.

**4. Cultural Infrastructure:** Investing in cultural infrastructure, such as creative hubs, cultural centers, and public spaces, creates lasting venues for artistic expression and community engagement. These spaces can serve as hubs for ongoing cultural activities, workshops, exhibitions, and performances.

**5. Cultural Education and Outreach:** Continuing cultural education initiatives, such as programs for schools and community organizations, ensures that cultural appreciation and participation remain embedded in the city's fabric. Fostering an appreciation for culture from a young age can create a lifelong engagement with the arts.

**6. Cultural Tourism:** Skopje's commitment to making cultural experiences a cornerstone of tourism can continue to attract visitors interested in exploring the city's rich cultural heritage. This sustained focus on cultural tourism can generate economic benefits that support ongoing cultural activities.

**7. Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborations between public institutions, private enterprises, and cultural organizations can provide sustainable funding and resources for ongoing cultural projects. These partnerships can help diversify funding sources and ensure the continuity of initiatives.

**8. Community Engagement:** Involving local communities in the planning and execution of cultural activities fosters a sense of ownership and connection. Building a community of cultural enthusiasts ensures a dedicated audience for ongoing events and programs.

**9. Evaluation and Adaptation:** Regular evaluations of ongoing cultural initiatives will provide insights into their effectiveness and impact. This feedback-driven approach allows for adjustments and improvements to ensure that cultural activities remain relevant and resonant.

**10. International Collaboration:** Fostering ongoing collaborations with other European cities, cultural institutions, and organizations can create a network of support for cultural initiatives. Exchanging ideas and best practices can inspire innovative approaches to sustaining cultural activities.

By weaving these strategies together and remaining committed to cultural vitality, Skopje aims to create a lasting legacy of enriched cultural engagement that continues to benefit residents and visitors alike for years beyond its designation as the European Capital of Culture.

The strategy was meticulously crafted through a process of consultation and mapping, which actively engaged a diverse array of stakeholders and systematically evaluated the existing cultural landscape. Through consultation, valuable input, feedback, and insights were gathered from a wide spectrum of individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions connected to or influenced by cultural undertakings within the city. This inclusive group comprised artists, cultural practitioners, educators, community leaders, residents, and experts spanning various domains.

The mapping aspect involved a methodical analysis of the city's cultural resources, assets, and opportunities. This entailed the identification of cultural institutions, venues, creative spaces, heritage sites, and ongoing cultural events. By charting the cultural ecosystem, the strategy aimed to comprehend the strengths, weaknesses, gaps, and potential zones for growth and development.

This dual approach of consultation and mapping equipped the strategy with an all-encompassing grasp of the city's cultural dynamics, its challenges, aspirations, and needs. This holistic comprehension served as the bedrock for establishing lucid objectives, priorities, and action plans, all of which were profoundly influenced by the voices and insights of the community. The strategy derived its effectiveness and relevance from its roots in the collective wisdom and contributions of those intimately engaged and affected by the city's cultural endeavours.

Some specific initiatives, programs, and measures outlined in the cultural strategy of the city of Skopje that directly contribute to educational activities and initiatives promoting intercultural integration within the city:

- **Cultural Exchange in Schools:** The strategy outlines a program where local artists, musicians, writers, and performers visit schools to conduct workshops, lectures, and interactive sessions. This initiative exposes students to various cultural perspectives and artistic forms, fostering appreciation for diversity and creativity.
- **Intercultural Workshops:** The strategy promotes the organization of intercultural workshops in community centres and cultural institutions. These workshops provide a platform for residents from different cultural backgrounds to share their traditions, stories, and experiences, facilitating understanding and interaction.
- **Cultural Heritage Education:** The strategy emphasizes incorporating cultural heritage education into school curricula. This could involve teaching students about the city's history, heritage sites, and cultural landmarks, fostering a sense of pride and ownership among the younger generation.
- **Language and Arts Programs:** The strategy supports language and arts programs that encourage the learning of multiple languages and artistic expressions. This helps bridge linguistic and cultural gaps, enabling better communication and collaboration among residents.

- **Community Arts Projects:** Collaborative arts projects involving residents from diverse backgrounds are encouraged. These projects could involve public art installations, performances, or exhibitions that reflect the multicultural identity of the city.
- **Cultural Competency Training:** The strategy promotes cultural competency training for educators, officials, and service providers. This equips them with the skills to effectively engage with individuals from different cultural backgrounds and ensure inclusivity.
- **Cultural Festivals:** The strategy highlights the organization of cultural festivals that celebrate the traditions and customs of various ethnic groups in Skopje. These festivals provide opportunities for cultural exchange, fostering understanding and unity.
- **Multilingual Libraries and Resources:** The strategy advocates for the establishment of multilingual libraries and resources centres. These spaces provide access to literature, music, and media from different cultures, promoting cross-cultural understanding.
- **Student Exchange Programs:** Collaborative student exchange programs with schools in other cities or countries are encouraged. These programs allow students to experience different cultures first hand, fostering friendships and global awareness.
- **Intercultural Dialogues:** The strategy supports regular intercultural dialogue sessions where residents can openly discuss cultural differences, challenges, and solutions. These dialogues facilitate respectful conversations and promote harmony.
- **Cultural Mentorship Programs:** The strategy suggests mentorship programs where individuals from established cultural backgrounds guide newcomers in navigating the city's cultural landscape, promoting integration and social cohesion.
- **Inclusive Cultural Events:** The strategy encourages cultural events that highlight the contributions of different ethnic groups. These events showcase diverse art forms, cuisines, and traditions, creating opportunities for residents to engage with each other's cultures.

By incorporating these measures, the strategy seeks to build bridges between communities, foster mutual respect, and create a more inclusive and harmonious urban environment.

## 6. Describe the city's plans to strengthen the capacity of the cultural and creative sectors, including through the development of long-term links between these sectors and the economic and social sectors in your city.

With the support of ECOC, our aspirations can seamlessly come to fruition.

Over the course of the next five to six years, Skopje's cultural and creative sectors will undergo substantial empowerment. The Skopje2028 project aims to establish enduring connections with both societal and economic domains, actively contributing to the value chain that translates ideas into tangible products. Leveraging human and other available resources within the cultural and creative sectors, the objective is to magnify culture's positive impacts on both the economy and society.

From an economic standpoint, Skopje2028 acts as a catalyst for advancing the cultural and creative industries (CCIs). It forges new avenues for economic expansion and facilitates the active participation of youth in the job market. Niche sectors, often overlooked, such as the gaming industry, digital fashion, and sound design, will gain broader visibility and attract a wider audience. Skopje2028 provides us with a unique platform to craft a cultural program that seamlessly intertwines artistic, cultural, economic, social, and environmental dimensions. We are unwavering in our commitment to seize this exceptional opportunity for the betterment of our community.

We are cultivating improved conditions for the development of the CCIs through fresh and renewed infrastructure, novel co-working spaces, creative labs, reinforcement of human potential, creative and intelligent utilization of academic-creative education's potential, capacity-building programs, workshops, enhancing the connection among stakeholders, and enriching international exchange.

Creating shared venues for interaction and collaboration between the arts and the CCIs, private and national cultural institutions will offer their venues and galleries without charges for workshops and lectures connected to the CCIs. By implementing this initiative, cultural institutions will become more appealing locations for start-ups and creative workshops.

Skopje2028 is poised to significantly enhance the capacity of CCIs in Skopje by:

- Establishing a vital connection between arts, culture, business, and technology;
- Creating fresh employment opportunities within the creative, arts, and entertainment sectors;
- Fostering a robust ecosystem for CCIs and cultivating new collaborations among private enterprises, NGOs, and public institutions;
- Promoting diverse creative, arts, and entertainment endeavours through a variety of activities;
- Implementing supportive initiatives to train professionals across various creative, arts, and entertainment fields;
- Introducing new infrastructure for the young and innovative, exemplified by the Universal Hall Hub;
- Strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation, with a specific focus on nurturing synergies between culture, tourism, technology and education.

This comprehensive approach aligns with European values of innovation, collaboration, and holistic development.

## 7. How is the European Capital of Culture action included in this strategy?

The cultural strategy of the city of Skopje is intricately linked to the concept of the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) initiative. This connection is not only a strategic alignment but also a fundamental component that underpins the city's approach to cultural development and its aspirations to hold the ECoC title. The ECoC initiative is a prestigious program that aims to highlight the cultural richness and diversity of a chosen city. It emphasizes the transformative power of culture in shaping urban identity, fostering social cohesion, and driving economic growth. The cultural strategy of Skopje recognizes this potential and thus integrates the principles and goals of the ECoC initiative into its core framework.

To establish a strong connection between the cultural strategy and the ECoC, several necessary actions will be included in the strategy in the next year:

**1. ECoC-Informed Goals and Objectives:** the cultural strategy explicitly incorporate goals and objectives that reflect the vision of the ECoC initiative with aims to enhance cultural diversity, promote intercultural dialogue, foster creativity and innovation, and position culture as a driver of urban development.

**2. Collaborative Stakeholder Engagement:** the strategy outline a comprehensive plan for engaging a wide range of stakeholders, including artists, cultural practitioners, community leaders, educational institutions, businesses, and residents.

**3. Capacity Building and Infrastructure:** The strategy prioritize the development of cultural infrastructure and the enhancement of the creative and cultural sectors. This involve establishing new cultural venues, upgrading existing ones, creating cultural hubs, and providing training and capacity-building programs for artists and professionals.

**4. Community Participation and Inclusion:** The strategy emphasize inclusivity and community participation. It outline ways to involve citizens in cultural activities, decision-making processes, and co-creation of cultural content, thus fostering a sense of ownership and belonging.

**5. Promotion of Cultural Education:** In the strategy are incorporated initiatives that promote cultural education within the community which involve integration of cultural content into schools' curricula, organizing workshops, lectures, and cultural programs that educate and engage people of all ages.

**6. Cultural Exchange and Collaboration:** strategy define the needed actions for international collaboration and cultural exchange, establishing partnerships with cultural institutions, artists, and organizations from other European cities, creating a platform for cross-cultural dialogue and artistic exchange.

**7. Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue:** In the strategy we pprioritizedd initiatives that celebrate and promote cultural diversity wuth organizing festivals, exhibitions, performances, and events that showcase various cultural expressions and encourage intercultural dialogue.





**8. Sustainability and Legacy:** In the strategy we outlined plans to ensure the sustainability and legacy of the cultural initiatives beyond the ECoC year with integrating successful projects into the city's long-term cultural programs, creating cultural networks, and nurturing partnerships with cultural stakeholders.

**9. Monitoring and Evaluation:** In the strategy is included a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the strategy's progress, impact, and alignment with ECoC-related goals. Regular assessments will help us to adjust strategy and actions based on real-time feedback.

**By incorporating these actions into the cultural strategy, Skopje has created a comprehensive framework that seamlessly integrates the principles of the ECoC initiative into its long-term cultural development. This approach not only enhances the city's chances of obtaining the ECoC title but also ensures that cultural growth becomes an integral part of the city's identity and future.**

## 8. If your city is awarded the title of European Capital of Culture, what do you think would be the long-term cultural, social, and economic impact on the city (including in terms of urban development)?

We perceive the ECOC2028 title as the definitive platform for uniting progressive societal forces, envisioning Skopje's transformation into a thriving European city. In this vein, every facet of our application – encompassing concepts, organization, finances, and more – has been meticulously crafted to uphold the enduring legacy of ECoC. Recognizing that political backing is pivotal in securing the necessary financial resources for establishing and perpetuating sustainable positive change, we are resolute in our commitment.

Our pursuit of the European Capital of Culture designation serves as a catalyst for sustainable shifts, not confined solely to the cultural realm but spanning the entirety of the city's advancement. We hold a deep appreciation for the economic potential harboured within the cultural and creative industries.

Our strategic objective is to catalyse a broad spectrum of transformations within the cultural and creative sectors, ensuring they endure as the lasting legacy of Skopje2028. For us, ECoC 2028 transcends being a mere year-long cultural event; it's a far-reaching initiative that nurtures the growth of cultural and creative domains, alongside interconnected sectors like tourism and creative entrepreneurship. The core aim of this long-term strategy is to provide a blueprint for the city's sustainable cultural and economic development.

Consequently, this endeavour generates a substantial and enduring positive influence. Its impact can be categorized into three overarching spheres:



# Cultural Impact

- Revitalize urban culture to breathe renewed vibrancy into the city's cultural scene;
- Promote the cherished values of European culture;
- Enhance the capacity of cultural and creative sectors through global collaborations, innovative initiatives, informal and educational training facilitated by international experts emphasizing the significance of creative industries;
- Fortify capabilities for cultural endeavours within the city, reaching out to new audiences;
- Enrich the city's cultural repertoire in terms of both quantity and quality;
- Increase culture's accessibility for citizens, particularly those with limited resources, by offering complimentary tickets or reduced pricing for museum visits and cultural events;
- Amplify citizen engagement in cultural life through workshops aimed at fostering cultural awareness, especially among the youth and vulnerable demographics;
- Deepen international cultural partnerships, encompassing artist exchanges and collaborations with professionals across the cultural spectrum; thus, propelling the city's culture into recognition throughout Europe and beyond;
- Strengthen synergy between public cultural institutions, non-governmental organizations, and other cultural stakeholders through international alliances, facilitating training for those in culture-related professions that don't demand formal education;
- Enhance collaboration among public cultural entities initiated by the city, the ten municipalities, and the nation;
- Practice cultural diplomacy as a tool for cultural propagation and advancement of the city's interests;
- Foster networking and knowledge exchange with fellow European Capitals of Culture;
- Enhance the city's image, cultivate tourism, fortify the cultural and creative industries.

# Economic Impact

- Empower the local economy, particularly in tourism and creative industries, through attaining the title of European Capital of Culture 2028;
- Contribute to the growth of cultural tourism as a foundation for economic and societal advancement, while also serving as a tool to promote the city's image and identity;
- Elevate international tourism figures by establishing the city as a recognizable cultural destination;
- Generate employment opportunities within the cultural sector and attract global investors, leveraging the synergy between digitalization and culture;
- Facilitate access to EU funding sources;
- Promote entrepreneurship within the cultural realm, with a focus on creative industries;
- Foster collaboration among public, private, and civil sectors;
- Strengthen partnerships between cultural practitioners, artists, and cities within the country and across member states;
- Promote active collaborations between cultural institutions, cultural and tourism operators to pave the way for a sustainable future.

# Social Impact

- Elevate citizen engagement and social integration through cultural participation;
- Empower local communities within municipalities and neighbourhoods;
- Expand the scope of "community projects," involving both citizens and artists;
- Enlist hundreds of volunteers to contribute;
- Encourage the active involvement of young people in cultural endeavours;
- Promote international sharing of best practices and networking for the inclusion of marginalized individuals in social activities;
- Strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration between cultural and social care domains;
- Enhance citizens' awareness of the role and significance of culture within our lives and in the broader social context;
- Highlight the values of the concept that align with the principles of the European Union;
- Advance the culture's role as a mechanism for nurturing connections among the diverse communities within both Macedonian and European multicultural societies.

We firmly believe that significant enhancements across the aforementioned domains are attainable, primarily through the successful execution of the Skopje2028 project.

It's of paramount importance to highlight that the ECoC candidacy has already sparked positive shifts in the city's cultural policies. For instance, it has brought to the forefront a heightened awareness of certain inadequacies, such as gaps in cultural statistics that require rectification. Concurrently, the candidacy has fostered stronger collaboration between municipal authorities and cultural experts, focusing on crucial areas like audience expansion, cultural and artistic education, community art, and creative industries. These advancements are clearly evident in the city's cultural strategy for the period 2021-2030.

## 9. Briefly outline the plans for monitoring and evaluation.

The Skopje2028 monitoring and evaluation process is designed to generate a comprehensive analysis of the city and create an enduring repository of documentation and reflective analysis regarding the transformation linked to the ECoC title. Our intent is to formulate a plan that systematically gauges progress in alignment with set objectives, providing concrete evidence of the fulfilment of our ECoC candidacy's mission.

This evaluation will be executed through an independent team led by experts and local academics selected via a competitive process. While we have established preliminary evaluation objectives, these will adapt as the project advances, with a more detailed plan mapped out for the forthcoming phases. Our impact strategy extends beyond the confines of art projects within Skopje2028. We're committed to scrutinizing the transformation's implications for the city in terms of culture, society, and economy. To do so, we'll define specific metrics and benchmarks, actively monitor pertinent city data, and maintain current research methodologies and reports. Armed with this information, we can refine and enhance the trajectory of ECoC activities as they unfold and continue overseeing legacy planning.

Conducting city-wide evaluation is one of the fundamental aspirations embedded in our cultural strategy, and it will be seamlessly integrated throughout our ECoC year.

## Impact

Utilizing carefully crafted indicators, we will analyze the impacts of the Skopje2028 project across various dimensions:

- **Cultural legacy;**
- **National and international reputation of the city;**
- **Legacy of organization and capacity building;**
- **Performance and effectiveness of the cultural sector within the region;**
- **Regeneration legacy.**

We intend to measure the success of all undertaken activities aimed at advancing social, cultural, and economic well-being, guided by the proposed indicators. Notably, our most momentous achievement will be the metamorphosis of the City from a regional Balkan entity to a recognized European urban center.

We are committed to devising a comprehensive evaluation plan that encompasses the following aspects:

- **Objectives and indicators;**
- **Methodology;**
- **Dissemination strategy;**
- **Expertise selection;**
- **Timetable of execution;**
- **Budget allocation.**

This evaluation endeavor will be aligned with the fundamental goals of the ECoC initiative, intricately connected with designated indicators and targets.

### Here are the outlined annual milestones:

- **October 2023:** Formation of the evaluation team;
- **November 2023:** Finalization of the evaluation plan;
- **December 2023:** Initiation of the research institution selection process;
- **January 2024:** Implementation of Baseline Survey I;
- **Throughout 2024:** Improvement of the evaluation plan and data requisites;
- **January 2025:** Commencement of data mining and tracking;
- **June 2025:** Conclusion of the interim evaluation phase;
- **September 2025:** Assessment and adjustment of monitoring prerequisites;
- **November 2025:** Progress update on the evaluation progress;
- **Throughout 2026:** Publication of Baseline Data, Objective reevaluation;
- **Throughout 2027:** Conducting Baseline Survey II, continuous data collection, and quarterly reports on crucial indicators;
- **Throughout 2028:** Compilation of an Impact Report (immediate benefits);
- **June 2029:** Submission of the comprehensive evaluation report;

- Throughout 2029:** Execution of Baseline Survey III;
- September 2029:** Dissemination of Results Report and associated conference;
- September 2030:** Execution of the ex-post evaluation;

We are adopting an integrated approach to monitoring and evaluation, combining established research methods with custom data collection and analysis. An initial baseline survey will be conducted within our ECoC region in the early years following the designation (starting in 2023). This survey will gauge citizens’ perceptions, drawing from the insights gathered in previous baseline surveys conducted in other ECoCs. Subsequent repetitions of this survey will take place in 2027 and 2029.

To facilitate effective monitoring, we will establish a dedicated system to track the recommended indicators. Quarterly reports will be prepared and presented to a diverse panel consisting of citizens, artists, academics, local government representatives (from the City of Skopje), and businesses. These reports will be made publicly available to ensure transparency and accountability.

Here’s a table outlining indicators for cultural, social, and economic welfare within the Skopje2028 project:

Category	Indicator	Measurement Method
Cultural Welfare	Number of cultural events and activities	Count
	Audience attendance and participation rates	Surveys, Ticket Sales
	Cultural diversity and representation in programming	Diversity Index, Representation Ratio
	Number of local artists and professionals engaged	Count
	Number of international collaborations and exchanges	Count
Social Welfare	Community participation in cultural projects	Participation Rate, Surveys
	Inclusivity and accessibility of cultural events	Accessibility Index, Surveys
	Social impact on marginalized groups	Case Studies, Surveys
	Improvement in cultural awareness and education	Surveys, Workshops
	Volunteer participation and engagement	Number of Volunteers, Surveys
Economic Welfare	Increase in cultural and creative industry revenue	Financial Reports, Economic Data
	Employment growth in cultural and creative sectors	Number of Jobs, Employment Data
	Growth in cultural tourism and related revenues	Tourist Arrivals, Revenue Data
	Innovation and entrepreneurship in the creative industries	New Ventures, Start-up Growth
	Increase in local business partnerships	Number of Partnerships, Business Data
Cultural Welfare	Number of cultural events and activities	Count
	Audience attendance and participation rates	Surveys, Ticket Sales
	Cultural diversity and representation in programming	Diversity Index, Representation Ratio
	Number of local artists and professionals engaged	Count
	Number of international collaborations and exchanges	Count
	Enhancing the capabilities of our cultural sector involves empowering cultural operators and reinforcing our regional cultural network within a broader European context	Count
	Quantifying the number of activities that highlight European diversity and address pertinent European subjects.	Survey/count
	Engagement and enthusiasm for cultural events among citizens	Survey
Achieving a target of 70% participation among Skopje citizens attending at least one event in 2028 as visitors, and involving 35% of young individuals (aged 18-30) as active participants in at least one event during 2028	Analyzing and counting	

Category	Indicator	Measurement Method
	Establishment of a robust cultural policy integrated within the overall development of the City	Procedure
	Revitalization of dilapidated areas to foster cultural production	Plan / measure
	Elevated participation of marginalized groups and individuals facing challenges in event attendance; Heightened appreciation of investments in cultural sector infrastructure and facilities; Augmented citizen recognition of ECoC, Expanded network of partnerships among cultural operators, Amplified engagement in European cultural collaborations, Enhanced recognition of utilizing public spaces for cultural projects	Survey/count
	Augmented count of collaborating municipalities in Republic of North Macedonia, Elevated capabilities of cultural operators and managers, Increase quantity of artists and cultural managers establishing permanent residencies in the city	Strategy / Survey
Social Welfare	Community participation in cultural projects	Participation Rate, Surveys
	Inclusivity and accessibility of cultural events	Accessibility Index, Surveys
	Social impact on marginalized groups	Case Studies, Surveys
	Improvement in cultural awareness and education	Surveys, Workshops
	Volunteer participation and engagement	Number of Volunteers, Surveys
	Elevated utilization of previously underused public spaces through activation	Case Studies / Workshop
	Contribution to diminished social and physical segregation, fostering enhanced integration	Survey
	Elevated indicators of mental health and well-being, heightened social inclusion across all social groups, and increased levels of tolerance and openness towards diverse cultures	Case studies/workshop
Economic Welfare	Increase in cultural and creative industry revenue	Financial Reports, Economic Data
	Employment growth in cultural and creative sectors	Number of Jobs, Employment Data
	Growth in cultural tourism and related revenues	Tourist Arrivals, Revenue Data
	Innovation and entrepreneurship in the creative industries	New Ventures, Start-up Growth
	Increase in local business partnerships	Number of Partnerships, Business Data
	Increased number of creative entrepreneurs; Increased value of an investment in arts by the private sector; Increased investment in digital platforms for a culture	Number of Partnership, Business data development

The evaluation process stands as an essential indicator in evaluating the city's cultural policies, signifying a validation of commitment and principles upheld during the execution of planned and realized initiatives. The quantifiable outcomes will be gauged through a series of surveys, conducted every four months in 2028, culminating in a final assessment in January 2029. To attain the targeted 70% engagement rate, the Skopje2028 program will orchestrate a multitude of events encompassing all citizens, complemented by an awareness campaign that underscores culture as an integral way of life. Responsible governance, asset oversight, internal and final reports submitted to the governing body, as well as mandated audit reports in accordance with national regulations, constitute the primary steps of self-evaluation within the entire process.

The provided monitoring and evaluation plan aims to substantiate the alignment of cultural policy planning with their methodical realization and the project's overarching objectives, serving as incontrovertible evidence. To ensure impartiality and comprehensive independence in appraising and tracking our progress, the implementation of the monitoring and evaluation mechanism will involve both internal and external qualified expert evaluators.

Internally, the monitoring and evaluation duties will be executed by the designated team, in collaboration with esteemed institutions such as the Faculty of Fine Arts, Faculty of Philosophy-Institute of Sociology, PMF University-Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, and University of Tourism and Management-Skopje.

Externally, monitoring and evaluation will be entrusted to experts from associated European Capitals of Culture, such as Maribor (Slovenia). External research institutions, spanning economics, social sciences, and communication faculties, will contribute to the evaluation process, guided by an external advisory group. This advisory group will define the methodologies for the research institutions and oversee the research proceedings.

# I. Cultural and artistic content

## 10. What is the artistic vision and strategy for the cultural programme of the year?

We envision the overarching scope of the cultural program as distinctly European, with its European essence being expressed through the rich cultural and artistic content of the Skopje2028 program. Our perspective on artistry and creative potential stems from the harmonious interplay of various generations of artists, who, through their art and self-awareness, champion, explore, and solidify sentiments for European values within the city.

This artistic vision also delves into a specific matter concerning cultural accessibility, which aligns with the contemporary discussions on diversity prevalent in Europe. Recognizing cultural participation as an inherent human entitlement, we emphasize its pivotal role in personal growth, creativity, and the well-being of individuals, transcending all divisions. Our endeavour thus centres on creating a program that engages a diverse array of citizens, uniting them through their differences while showcasing these diversities as quintessential European values.

Our primary aspiration revolves around cultivation a prosperous environment for the youth to reside and create within our city, propelled by our unwavering support for their ideas and the provision of space and opportunities. We remain persistent in our dedication to ensuring equal rights for all, enabling them to relish our natural treasures, cultural heritage, and the safeguarding of these legacies. Our aim is for modern living to serve as our forte, with digitalization, creativity, and innovation serving as vehicles to both preserve our past and shape our future. Our intention is to create an artistic sanctuary that welcomes individuals with creative aspirations, providing them with a stage to present their creations to both local and European audiences.

Guided by these principles, our conceptual framework is structured around four central themes, carefully designed to address potential risks. This approach shapes the Skopje2028 cultural program into the following four distinct program strands:



The subjects encompassed in each of these four sections are intricately tied to the fundamental conceptual idea. Within every program strand, artists, creators, and other cultural contributors will present their insights into significant questions concerning the city's future and the well-being of its residents. Our foundation rests on the expansive interpretation of culture as "a way of life." Through this approach, our aim is to encourage widespread citizen participation in the Skopje2028 project, fostering their active involvement in addressing everyday life concerns. This approach resonates with the European values of inclusivity and civic engagement.

### Art4Hope

Overcoming feelings of apathy and hopelessness stands as a significant hurdle in both individual and communal advancement, demanding our utmost efforts to struggle. Within this framework, we place a prime emphasis on rallying Skopje's artists and creators, along with the broader community, to collaboratively cultivate hope and conviction in the potential for Skopje's transformation into an improved living environment. In our city, the yearning for "positive narratives" holds immense importance – genuine stories that yield benefits for the majority. Nurturing hope is imperative, particularly to halt the increasing emigration of our youthful populace.

Similar to how creativity cannot be ignited by a single formula, nurturing hope doesn't adhere to a one-size-fits-all recipe. Our motto resounds, "It's not hope that propels action— its action that propels hope." Skopje2028 embodies a project that directly ignites action and injects renewed vitality that the city craves through collective accomplishments.

We call upon artists and creators to boldly tread into unexplored realms of creative expression, unhampered by the fear of failure, and to embrace a multitude of interdisciplinary approaches while pioneering novel cultural event venues. This approach characterizes the essence of creativity and innovation, cultivating a culture of resilience and rejuvenation.

## Togetherness

As previously emphasized, the spirit of solidarity is deeply ingrained in Skopje's essence, a fact exemplified notably in the aftermath of the 1963 earthquake. Nonetheless, in the present era, attributes such as tolerance, dialogue, mutual respect, and understanding among residents seem to be diminishing.

Skopje is in a position to undergo a thoughtful rejuvenation in harmony with the values of solidarity, comprehensive advancement, and interconnectedness. From revitalising public spaces to repurposing neglected structures, creative endeavours that resonate with diverse communities hold the potential to bridge gaps. By re-establishing the citizens' rightful claim to the city and providing them spaces to share joy and creativity, a reinvigoration of the city's vitality can be orchestrated, interweaving sturdy bonds among its inhabitants. The discussions, workshops, community art projects, and more, centred on the importance of collaboration in tackling shared concerns, stand as a profound lesson in the art of harmonious coexistence.

## rECOvering

Skopje's past has witnessed brighter days. The tumultuous and damaging urban development orchestrated by past city administrations has created divisions among both the city and its populace, causing deeper fractures. The once-vibrant green areas that once graced the city centre have sadly dwindled beyond repair. Skopje's reputation as one of the most polluted cities in Europe and the world adds another layer of concern. To reverse these trends and infuse new life, a unified and all-encompassing strategy is essential, bringing together diverse efforts spanning various sectors.

Our overarching vision is to transition into a resilient and harmonious city. Our aspiration revolves around becoming a city that casts its gaze toward the future with the hope of tomorrow and the determination of today. We aim to nurture a city that evolves into a hub of innovation and collaboration, drawing lessons from its past and avoiding the repetition of past errors. Our goal is to cultivate a city with an unwavering realization that culture demands courage – the courage to expose its vulnerabilities to the world, the courage to embrace the uncharted, the courage to perceive, listen, and experience the world through the perspectives of those who differ from us; the courage to empathize and to embrace both our own identity and that of others.

## CreARTing

From an economic perspective, creators in the realm of information and communication technologies (ICTs) are forging the path toward the future. Neglecting to engage with dynamic technological trends equates to forfeiting our place in the forthcoming landscape. Hence, we intertwine artistic ingenuity with novel technologies and science, fostering the rise of creative and cultural entrepreneurship. We strive to narrow the digital gap spanning generations, enhance entry to innovative, technology-oriented education, and stimulate youthful entrepreneurial thought. This effort births fresh opportunities within the domain of creative industries, positioning Skopje prominently on the global stage of inventive European metropolises.

## 11. Give a general overview of the structure of your cultural programme, including the range and diversity of the activities/main events that will mark the year.

A creativity Skopje2028 program refers to a purposefully structured and curated initiative aimed at fostering innovative and artistic expressions within a specific context or community. It is designed to encourage individuals and groups to explore novel ideas, experiment with various forms of creative expression, and generate unique solutions to challenges. We often encompass a diverse range of activities, events, workshops, and projects that inspire participants to think outside the box, push boundaries, and collaborate across disciplines. Its ultimate goal is to stimulate imagination, promote cultural enrichment, and contribute to the advancement of art, culture, and social engagement.

The Skopje2028 cultural program has been meticulously crafted to enrich the city's existing cultural tapestry. Rooted in an artistic vision that aims to bridge societal divides through creative expression, the program extends an open invitation to both the cultural community and the broader public.

Structured around four distinct thematic threads – Art4Hope, Togetherness, rECOvering, and CreARTing – the program presents a vibrant array of events and activities. While the primary events for each thread are outlined below, the program's evolution will be guided by ongoing collaborations with partners across Europe. Furthermore, additional projects resulting from public solicitations will seamlessly intertwine with the program's fabric during the preparatory years (2024–2027).

Welcome to a world where creativity knows no bounds, where imagination takes flight, and where innovation thrives.

## Description: The “Cultural Crescendo” event marks a monumental occasion in Skopje’s journey towards becoming a European Capital of Culture for 2028.

The “Cultural Crescendo” event is poised to be a remarkable and transformative experience that marks the announcement of Skopje as the European Capital of Culture for 2028. As the crescendo of a musical piece reaches its peak, so does this event symbolize the pinnacle of Skopje’s cultural journey... this event is a grand celebration that transcends borders, uniting citizens, artists, dignitaries, and cultural enthusiasts from near and far. The event’s main objective is to herald Skopje’s cultural triumph while setting the stage for the transformative journey that lies ahead.

**Venue:** All cultural and iconic location within Skopje that reflects the city’s rich cultural heritage and promising future.

### Highlights

**Grand Unveiling:** The event kicks off with a dramatic unveiling of the official title, “European Capital of Culture 2028,” projected onto a mesmerizing backdrop, captivating attendees with a visual spectacle.

**Artistic Performances:** The air is emotional with artistic dedication as renowned local and international artists present captivating performances spanning various disciplines, showcasing the city’s vibrant creative spirit.

**Keynote Addresses:** Eminent personalities from the cultural and political realms share their insights, highlighting the significance of this achievement and its potential impact on Skopje’s cultural landscape.

**Community Engagement:** The events promotes unity by encouraging citizens to participate, express their aspirations, and become active stakeholders in the forthcoming cultural transformation. Each cultural institution will host a series of small events that are closely connected with various aspects of our rich cultural heritage.

### Countdown Celebration

**Location:** Various galleries, historical places and all cultural institutions in Skopje

**Description:** Join us on a captivating journey through Skopje’s cultural tapestry as we present the “Skopje Cultural Crescendo” event, a remarkable showcase of our city’s vibrant heritage, creativity, and anticipation for Skopje2028. This immersive event will take you on a tour of some of the city’s most esteemed cultural institutions, showcasing the richness and diversity of Skopje’s artistic and heritage landscape. Join us as we celebrate Skopje’s bid to become the European Capital of Culture in 2028.

### *‘crescere’ = to grow*

In celebrating its status as the European Capital of Culture, the city of Skopje embraces the essence of ‘Crescendo.’ This term, derived from the Italian word ‘crescere,’ meaning ‘to grow,’ perfectly describing the journey that Skopje undertakes throughout this cultural initiative. Just as a musical passage builds in intensity and volume, so too does Skopje amplify its cultural richness and vibrancy, fostering a gradual crescendo of artistic expression, heritage exploration, and creative collaboration. The project’s symbol, reminiscent of an elongated triangle ( $\Delta$ ) often found in musical notation, serves as a visual representation of this rising crescendo. Through a diverse array of events, exhibitions, performances, and cultural exchanges, Skopje’s European Capital of Culture project becomes a harmonious crescendo, resonating with the city’s cultural growth and the collective spirit of its people.

During the main event Skopje’s artistic heart will beat stronger than ever. From sunrise to sunset the town will be a stage full of creativity that resonates across all 10 municipalities - Aerodrom, Butel, Centar, Gazi Baba, Gjorche Petrov, Karposh, Kisela Voda, Chair, Saraj, and Shuto Orizari.

For the young generations who hold the key to tomorrow, a dedicated program ignites the spark of creativity. Workshops, interactive installations, and talks by accomplished artists encourage exploration and innovation. The vibrant energy of the youth echoes through the streets in each municipality as they immerse themselves in the transformative power of art.

The heart of the city, the emblematic Stone Bridge, poised elegantly near the River Vardar, will be illuminated with a soft, mesmerizing glow, serving as the stage for the grand opening of ‘Skopje Over Division’ – a celebration of culture, art, and togetherness. The renowned Philharmonic Orchestra takes their place, their instruments tuned to perfection. With the first notes, a symphony of melodies begins, resonating over the water, transcending time and division. The music itself becomes a bridge, uniting hearts and generations, echoing the spirit of unity and solidarity.



Through the bridge, the journey continues into the heart of the Old Bazaar, where history and tradition come alive. Each store a living testament to the skilled hands that have shaped generations. The old craftsmen, guardians of time-honored techniques, open their doors with warm smiles, inviting the audience to witness their artistry and legacy.

As the main event unfolds, the historic settings of Daut Pashin Amam and Cifte Amam will be hosting exhibitions that intertwine tradition and innovation. Visitors will have the privilege of experiencing a fusion of traditional showcases and cutting-edge digitalized NFT exhibition from young North Macedonian authors.

From the enchanting Old Bazaar our path naturally leads us towards the white facade of the National Opera and Ballet. Classic dancers, draped in timeless costumes, move with grace and precision, evoking the echoes of centuries past. Their every movement pays homage to the heritage of dance, embodying the legacy that has shaped their craft.

Beside them, young contemporary dancers exude a vibrant and dynamic energy. Their movements are bold, innovative, a reflection of the modern world that inspires them. Yet, despite the differences in technique, the dancers find a remarkable synergy in their expressions, a shared passion that transcends generational and stylistic divisions.

During the main event, all the significant buildings that are around – from the Kale Fortress to the Stone Bridge, along with other culturally significant structures – will be adorned with light mapping, creating a kaleidoscope of diversity and uniqueness.

During the day a Slow Food and Wine Festival will come to life, inviting attendees to indulge in a culinary journey that celebrates the art of unhurried gastronomy and the refined pleasures of fine wine.

### Event Schedule:

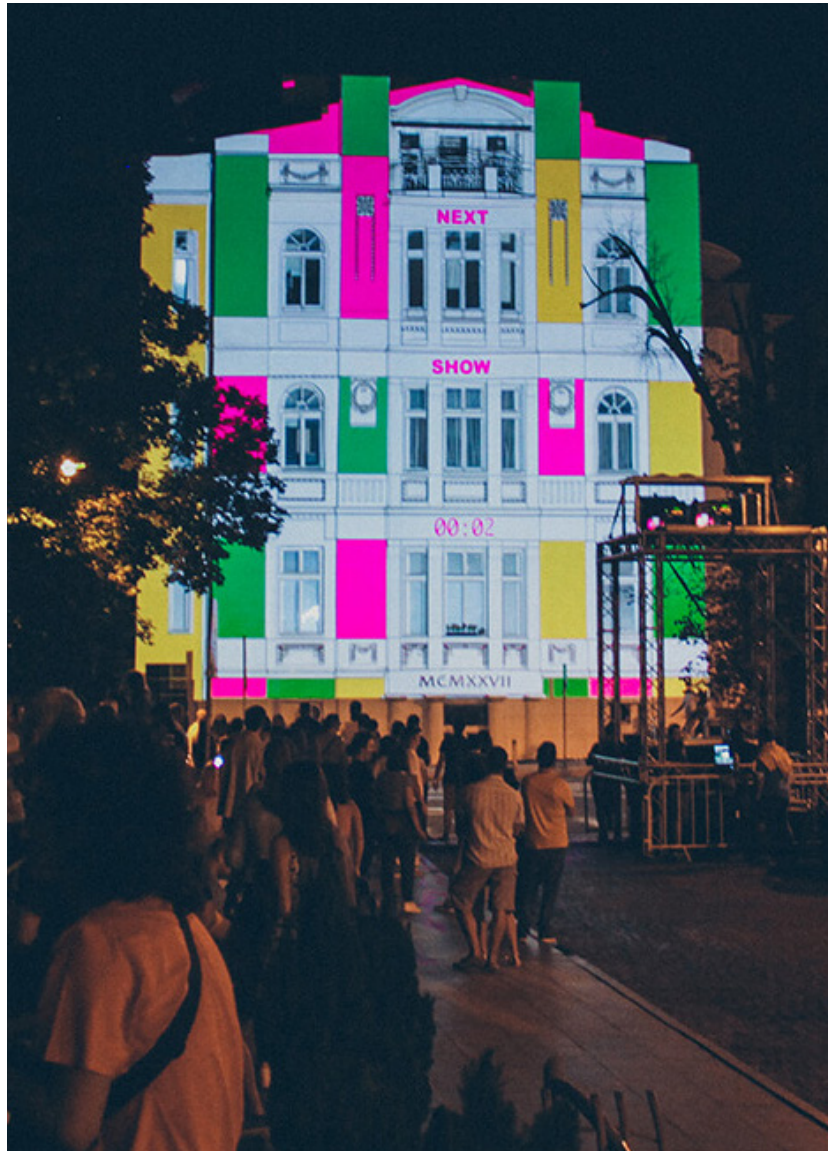
**Children’s Cultural Center Karposh: “Young Artists Unleashed”** Visit the Children’s Cultural Center Karposh, where “Young Artists Unleashed” presents the creative achievements of Skopje’s budding talents. Be inspired by the artistic expressions of over 500 young participants, each with a unique cultural perspective. **Skopje Zoo: “Nature Meets Culture”** The Skopje Zoo invites you to an enchanting experience where “Nature Meets Culture.” Explore exhibits that celebrate North Macedonia’s diverse wildlife and cultural heritage, providing an educational and entertaining experience for all ages. **Cultural Information Center: “Artistic Showcase”** Next, venture to the Cultural Information Center, where an “Artistic Showcase” will immerse you in Skopje’s contemporary art scene. Experience captivating exhibitions, live art performances, and meet local artists who are at the forefront of Skopje’s cultural renaissance. **The Miladinovci Brothers City Library: “Literary Haven” Exhibition** Begin your cultural odyssey at the Miladinovci Brothers City Library, where the “Literary Haven” exhibition will introduce you to Skopje’s rich literary history. Explore rare manuscripts, first editions, and literary treasures that have shaped our city’s intellectual landscape. **Kocho Racin House of Culture: “Cultural Hub”** At the Kocho Racin House of Culture, discover the heart of Skopje’s cultural activities. Engage with interactive workshops, cultural discussions, and educational programs that reflect the city’s commitment to nurturing creativity and cultural growth. **Youth Cultural Center: “Creative Youth Spotlight”** The Youth Cultural Center is your next stop, where the “Creative Youth Spotlight” shines on the city’s talented young artists. Experience cutting-edge art installations, live performances, and interactive exhibits that demonstrate the cultural vitality of Skopje’s youth. **Museum of the City of Skopje: “Preserving Heritage” Exhibition** Delve into Skopje’s historical heritage at the Museum of the City of Skopje’s “Preserving Heritage” exhibition. Explore archaeological treasures, historical artifacts, and multimedia displays that tell the story of our city’s evolution. **National Institutions – Ministry of Culture: “Cultural Kaleidoscope” Pavilion** At the heart of the event, immerse yourself in the “Cultural Kaleidoscope” pavilion. This central hub showcases the collective efforts of national institutions, presenting a dynamic array of performances, exhibitions, and interactive displays that reflect the true essence of Skopje2028. **Universal Hall: “Harmony in Diversity” Performance** Conclude your cultural journey at the Universal Hall with a spectacular performance titled “Harmony in Diversity.” This breathtaking showcase of music, dance, and theater embodies Skopje2028’s vision of unity, diversity, and cultural excellence. **Reception:** After your cultural journey, join us for a celebratory reception where you can interact with artists, cultural enthusiasts, and fellow attendees. Savor traditional North Macedonian cuisine and beverages while sharing your impressions of this unforgettable event. **Closing Remarks:** The “Skopje2028 Cultural Extravaganza” offers a rare opportunity to immerse yourself in Skopje’s cultural soul and celebrate our city’s journey towards Skopje2028. Together, let’s recognize and appreciate the richness of our cultural heritage and the artistic talents that make Skopje an exceptional European Capital of Culture. **Gallery’s Daut Pashin Amam, Cifte Amam Gallery Gaia: “Artistic Crossroads” Exhibition** Start your journey at the galleries across Skopje, where the “Artistic Crossroads” exhibition will introduce you to the diverse influences that have shaped Skopje’s art scene. Explore paintings, sculptures, and mixed-media pieces that reflect our city’s cosmopolitan nature, serving as a perfect introduction to the event. Kondovski, Zani, Korubin, Masin, the exhibition of the Museum’s 75th anniversary. **Skopje Fortress: “Echoes of History” Tour** Next, venture to the Skopje Fortress, where a guided tour titled “Echoes of History” will transport you through time. Learn about the fortress’s historical significance, its role in shaping the city, and its relevance to the Skopje2028 narrative. **TANEC: Folklore Extravaganza** Experience the rich tapestry of North Macedonian tradition through the electrifying performances of the NI TANEC ensemble. As a symbol of cultural ambassadorship, witness the vibrant dance routines and soul-stirring songs that celebrate the heart and soul of Macedonia’s folklore. **Museum of Contemporary Art: “Visions of Tomorrow”** Showcase at the Museum of Contemporary Art, immerse yourself in the “Visions of Tomorrow” showcase. Witness the fusion of tradition and innovation as local and international artists present their interpretations of a

future shaped by cultural unity and creative expression. **Old Bazaar: “Cultural Mélange” Walking Tour** Embark on a walking tour of the Old Bazaar, guided by historians and cultural enthusiasts. This “Cultural Mélange” tour highlights the coexistence of various ethnic, religious, and artistic traditions that have enriched our city’s identity. **Museum of the City of Skopje: “Preserving Heritage” Exhibition** Delve into Skopje’s historical heritage at the Museum of the City of Skopje’s “Preserving Heritage” exhibition. Explore archaeological treasures, historical artifacts, and multimedia displays that tell the story of our city’s evolution. **Philharmonic Symphony: An Immersive Journey** Immerse yourself in a world of symphonic brilliance as the NI Philharmonic presents a mesmerizing symphony performance. Revel in the harmonious melodies that have resonated through generations, showcasing the orchestra’s exceptional talent and dedication. **Opera and Ballet Elegance: A Night of Extravagance** The stage comes alive with the enchanting performances by the NI National Opera and Ballet. Be captivated by the opulent costumes, intricate choreography, and emotive storytelling of opera, ballet, and musical productions that transcend time and emotion. **North Macedonian National Theatre Showcase: Celebrating Artistry** Discover the legacy of the NI North Macedonian National Theatre, an institution with a storied history of countless performances and international acclaim. Witness a curated selection of powerful monologues and scenes that highlight the depth of artistic expression, with the main performance of King Lir with Rade Serbedjija. **Drama and Comedy Unveiled: A Theatrical Spectacle** The NI Drama Theatre Skopje and NI Comedy Theatre join forces to present a unique blend of drama and humour. With an annual attendance exceeding 40,000 spectators, prepare to be transported to different worlds through captivating storytelling and impeccable acting prowess. **Universal Hall: “Harmony in Diversity” Performance** Conclude your cultural journey at the Universal Hall with a spectacular performance titled “Harmony in Diversity.” As the sun sets, gather at the Universal Hall for the grand finale—a “Unity in Diversity” concert of Leb I Sol, North Macedonian most famous music group. Enjoy an enchanting performance featuring musicians, dancers, and artists representing various cultural backgrounds, harmonizing together to showcase Skopje’s cultural unity.

**Reception:** After the performance, join us for a lively reception where you can engage with fellow attendees, artists, and cultural enthusiasts. Enjoy local delicacies and refreshments while discussing your impressions of the event.

**Closing Remarks:** The “Skopje Cultural Crescendo” event offers a unique glimpse into Skopje’s cultural panorama, setting the stage for our journey towards Skopje2028. As we celebrate our city’s heritage, creativity, and aspirations, we invite you to be part of this exciting cultural exploration. Together, let’s weave the threads of culture, history, and unity that define Skopje’s identity and its future as a European Capital of Culture. Whole town will be marked with EU colors and North Macedonian one.

**Interactive Art Installations:** we will set up interactive art installations throughout the venue, encouraging attendees to engage with different forms of art. These installations could include digital art, interactive sculptures, and immersive experiences that symbolize Skopje’s cultural diversity. **Cultural Workshops:** arrange workshops where attendees can participate in hands-on cultural activities such as traditional crafts, painting, dance, or cooking. This provides an opportunity for everyone to experience different aspects of Skopje’s culture. **Local Artisan Market:** creating a marketplace in Old Bazaar showcasing local artisans, craftsmen, and artists. Attendees can explore and purchase unique cultural artifacts, souvenirs, and artworks that represent the city’s heritage. **Culinary Delights:** Offer a diverse range of local and international cuisine, giving attendees a taste of Skopje’s culinary identity. This can include food stalls, tasting stations, and live cooking demonstrations. In each restaurant North Macedonian food will be serving. **Interactive Photo Booths:** Set up themed photo all around the cultural places, where attendees can take photos dressed in traditional or artistic costumes, creating lasting memories and engaging social media content. **Projection Mapping:** Using projection mapping technology to transform the venue’s walls into dynamic canvases, displaying visual art, historical footage, and messages related to Skopje’s cultural significance. We will do that on several big institutions and places, such as North Macedonian Opera and Ballet, the Stone Bridge, The Archeological Museum and in the Parks all over in Skopje. **Guest Speakers:** Invite renowned cultural figures, historians, and artists to deliver inspiring speeches that emphasize the importance of culture and its impact on Skopje’s future. **Light and Sound Show:** Conclude the event with a spectacular light and sound show that represents the fusion of culture, art, and technology. This immersive experience can reflect the vibrancy and diversity of Skopje’s cultural identity together with European one. **The Skopje Light Festival,** an unforgettable celebration of light art, where art and technology converge to illuminate the cityscape. For several days, the urban landscape becomes a canvas for innovative installations and mesmerizing performances. Guided by the creative team of Universal Hall-Skopje, this event invites both residents



and visitors to embark on a journey of radiant imagination, igniting the night with a symphony of brilliance. **Virtual Reality Experiences:** Incorporate virtual reality stations that transport attendees to iconic cultural landmarks and historical moments in Skopje's history, allowing them to explore the city's heritage in an innovative way.

The "Cultural Crescendo" event not only celebrates the city's new cultural identity but also ignites a collective passion for cultural renewal, collaboration, and innovation with European culture and values. It symbolizes the city's commitment to the Europe embracing its role as new European dynamic hub of artistic expression and intercultural exchange, setting the stage for an enriching and transformative cultural journey.

## Congratulations Skopje2028!

Aligned with our four foundational pillars, the initial projects serve as the underpinning and directing force for each pillar's implementation.



## Quart-Art

The project represents the quality of life in each of the ten municipalities in Skopje. One Macedonian and one foreign artist are to create artworks inspired by life in Skopje's neighbourhoods. The project internationalizes the local art scene showing Skopje as a City of cultural diversity. An exhibition of the created artworks is planned in the Open Graphic Studio in the Museum of the City of Skopje. Mini versions of the works will be sold online, whereas the funds are intended for the municipalities and the benefit of the residents. This project strengthens the collaboration of local artists with artists from the Western Balkans, Southeast Europe, and other parts of Europe. The aim is to encourage intercultural dialogue and common aspects of European culture, heritage, and history.

**Production:** Association of Artists of Macedonia – DLUM

**Partners:** Museum of the City of Skopje - Open graphic studio; Culture sections in each municipality in the City of Skopje; Associations of fine artists of Germany, Spain, France, Serbia, Greece, Albania, Romania, Montenegro, Slovenia, Trencin ECoC2026

## Untangled Stories of Skopje

This project locates the cultural, historical, and urban toponyms on the territory of Skopje and reveals its inhabitants' hidden and forgotten stories. The goal is to encourage citizens to retell their stories, creating an alternative history different from the classic tourist approach. The main focus is on the creative use of language to develop empathy between the storyteller and the listeners. The stories will be shared in a public space. An interactive website with a map of Skopje will be created, including sculptural objects - toponyms of the locations. The target group is individuals of different ages, generations, ethnicities, and social backgrounds. The project emphasizes the multi-ethnic character of Skopje.

**Production:** Cultural and social space "Centar Jadro" – Skopje

**Partners:** CAC - Contemporary Art Centre; Rouen Seine Normande 2028; team of artists, Maribor ECoC2012

## Are you crazy?

Are you crazy? is a professional theatre performance in sign language intended for youth and adults deaf and partially deaf, as well as the general public. The goal of this project is to provide this vulnerable population with the experience of the sensational feeling of theatre art for the first time in their lives. Furthermore, the general public and audience will be offered the opportunity to be introduced and to learn the basic sign language. Also, it includes a workshop for the general audience for theatre in sign language. The project participates in the process of inclusion in the society. The vision is to make an impact on the professional theatres in Republic of North Macedonia and the Ministry of Culture to implement in the regular annual programmes every year this kind of plays. The play also addresses the social injustices and the right to equal life of the deaf population globally.

**Production:** Centre for Contemporary Art and Culture – ATO – Bitola

**Partners:** Centre for culture - Bitola; Ministry of Culture; companies and institutions which saw the importance of this pioneer art, JMS production Belgrade, Drama Theatre, cinema Frosina and Macedonian National Theatre, Novi Sad ECoC2022

## Salvation for melting pot

In cooperation with other institutions in Skopje, Slovene National Theatre Maribor (SNG) Maribor is preparing the project in the field of art as music, dance, and drama with the idea of prosperous authors as Dejan Dukovski, musician Vlatko Stefanovski and choreographer Edward Clug. The idea of the project is based on the aim of creating culture over social divisions. This project could be part of the programme Art4Hope expressing the idea of cooperation between different national and ethnic groups in the Balkan area. Balkan region went over a demanding and challenging period and the project explains the concept of togetherness in differences. The idea of multiculturalism, dialogue, and art as an umbrella for cooperation and solidarity for saving our planet and environmental challenges is the aim of the project.

**Production:** Slovene National Theatre Maribor

**Partners:** Theatre institutions in Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia; Artists from Slovenia, Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia, Cinema Millennium, Cinematheque of R.N. Macedonia, Sector film, Nova Gorica ECoC2025

## The Autonomous Festival of Women (AFŽ)

The Autonomous Festival of Women (AFZh) is created with the idea to open the public space to marginalised topics – violence against women, women's labour rights, women's health care, the position of women in art, science, entrepreneurship, as well as women's creativity. The programme is dedicated to women's culture, art, creativity, and heritage, to create a fairer and more gender-equal society. The two-day programme consists of dance and drama performances; comic book exhibition, speech programme - tribunes and literary and theoretical criticism; pop and alternative music concerts. It is open for dialogues and raising issues that are essential for improving the position of women in Serbia and Republic of North Macedonia. The work is based on broad cooperation at the local community level, in this case with both communities in Novi Sad, Serbia and Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia.

**Production:** Partner organizations and individuals gathered under the colours of AFZh

**Partners:** Organizations of artists from Novi Sad, Serbia and Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia, Macedonian National Theatre, Bad Ischl ECoC2024

## Mexedonian

Mexedonian is a theatrical performance based on the principles of investigative and documentary theatre. The concept revolves around the satirical invention of a historical essay that proposes a shared origin between Macedonians and Mexicans. The story begins with the fictional discovery of ancient artifacts in both Macedonia and Mexico, suggesting a remarkable connection between the two cultures. By combining satire, historical invention, and social commentary, the concept of Mexedonian offers a thought-provoking exploration of the absurdities and consequences of a capitalist consumer society that thrives on polarization and division. The project seeks to promote dialogue, cultural exchange, and a deeper appreciation for each other's heritage.

**Production:** MI Film&Theater (Republic of North Macedonia); Agua Quemada Creatividad (Mexico)

**Partners:** Institutions and companies interested in audiovisual and performing arts production, Comedy Theatre, Tartu ECoC2024

## Creative Bridges

Creative Bridges is an ambitious and innovative youth-led project that aims to empower young people from Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The main objective is to bridge cultural divides and build a cohesive, inclusive society in the Western Balkans through the transformative power of arts and intercultural exchange. The project will host two intercultural youth exchange programs that will bring together 20 young people from each country, fostering empathy, appreciation for diversity, and collaboration through workshops, guided tours, artistic collaborations, and cultural evenings. A series of three creative producers' workshops will be organized that will engage 50 young creative individuals. As a highlight it will offer nine talented young artists from the three countries a unique opportunity to showcase their artistic potential at the prestigious Garden of Dreams Festival in Sarajevo.

**Production:** Association Zora

**Partners:** Organization from Montenegro, City of Skopje and PI of City of Skopje, Macedonian Youth Centre, Union of the Movers and Shakers of the Creative Industries (UMPAKI), Rouen Seine Normande 2028

## Inclusion

Inclusion is a Festival for short films that are from 3 to 5 minutes long. The first festival of short films in Skopje will be on the theme "Minorities-inclusion". It is open for participation of students from secondary schools, faculties, cultural centres and minority communities from the Republic of North Macedonia and Europe. Several competition categories are planned: student, regional, international, special programme. Materials recorded with a mobile phone in Full HD format should have at least 2k resolution. The accompanying programme of the festival includes book promotions, plays, and forums, a film-educational programme accompanied by master classes, discussions, collaborations, and workshops. The duration of the festival is 5 to 7 days. An expert international jury will decide on the awards and credits for the best films, as well as the possibility of scholarships for the studies of the talented students. The goal of the project is to develop new models for the inclusion of minorities and vulnerable groups, sharing good practices and recommendations for improved policy making. Choosing the path of inclusion, social justice and equality, the festival offers equal opportunities for all citizens in accordance with European values.

**Production:** JMS PRODUCTION – Belgrade

**Partners:** Sector film production, Macedonian Film Professionals Association, Cinematheque of R. N. Macedonia, Cinema Millennium, Novi Sad ECoC2022

## Love in Silence

Love in Silence is a 120-minute family drama that will be filmed in four European cities: Skopje, Belgrade, Vienna, and Cologne. The film is based on carefully designed script and story. The action follows the love and life story of a young man from Belgrade, Serbia, and a girl from Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia, from the Roma national minority, whose historical story has roots in India, then settles partly in Egypt, and the other part in Europe: Greece, North Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Austria, and Germany. This is a socially responsible project because the actors will learn Romani language, which has many dialects but is the same throughout the world. Standardization of the Romani language has not yet been implemented, so this project can be an incentive for that process. Also, the actors will also learn sign language, and at the same time both Serbian and Macedonian language.

**Production:** JMS PRODUCTION

**Partners:** Sector film production, Macedonian Film Professionals Association, Cinematheque of R. N. Macedonia, Cinema Millennium, The National association of deaf and Hard of Hearing, Associations of interpreters of Macedonian sign language, and Youth Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Trencin ECoC2026

## Mori Dej

Mori Dej is a Romani cabaret whose performers are eminent vocal and instrumental artists from Republic of North Macedonia, the region and Europe. The world's most famous Romani hits will be accompanied by an adequate ballet-traditional dance. As nomadic people in the past, the Roma have long been considered entertainers and musicians. The lyrics of Romani songs are often sung in one or more dialects of the Romani language and dance often accompanies the Romani musical performance. Most of the Romani music is based on the folk music of the countries that the Roma have passed through or where they have settled. Preserving this part of the cultural heritage of the Romani community is in the focus of Mori Dej. The project highlights the importance of the Romani music in classical music. The values it promotes include recognition, understanding of others, creativity, tolerance, and admiration. The project promotes Romani values for building intercultural bridges, social inclusion, and education of children through music.

**Production:** JMS PRODUCTION – Belgrade

**Partners:** National opera and ballet, Home of the Army of R. N. Macedonia, KIC (Salon 19'19), Ministry of Culture, Municipality of Suto Orizari and Municipality of Gjorce Petrov, Nova Gorica ECoC2025

## Goji berries

Goji berries is a 91-minute feature film for children, which will be filmed in Belgrade (Serbia) and Skopje (Republic of North Macedonia). The author's team includes: Sreten Jovanovikj/director, Tode Nikoletikj/screenplay, Jelena Miljush/script idea, Rajko Gjukikj/director of photography, Ivan Jerogovikj/creative producer, and Jelena Miljush/producer. The film shows the life and problems children in mixed marriages face with by providing a positive image of these families. Goji berries is a children's feature film that every market lacks. Due to the urban way of living, lack of commitment to the family, alienation of parents from children, neglect of family values, the main heroes Angja (6), who suffers from asthma, and her brother Alexa (12) are trying to find the way to happiness. The project sends a message that love is the biggest moving force of the family and society as a whole.

**Production:** JMS PRODUCTION

**Partners:** Youth Cultural Center – Skopje (Cinema Frosina), Cinematheque of R. N. Macedonia, Sector Film Production and the ten municipalities in the City of Skopje, Montpellier ECoC2028

## (In-Service) Technical Hands-on Training.

Technical Hands-on Training for scenic, museum, gallery, and concert technicians; light and sound technicians; and props makers. In the domestic theatre, museum, gallery, and concert institutions and open stages, there is a rapid and radical deficit of expert technicians with updated hands-on knowledge, for analogue and digital operation and setting of exhibitions, scenography, lighting, sound, and production of props for various projects. The project is to be organised in the long term, through intensive expert and professional training for technical masters who are to be able to realise and implement all the imaginative ideas of the artists and cultural workers. The training is to last from one to three months of intensive training outside Macedonia in cooperation with various expert teams from European institutions of culture and art. Training period: 2024–2027. In this way, we solve the key problem of development and the possibility of realisation of various projects, and we motivate employment in the cultural sector. International cooperation is carried out through long-term series of the practice training.

**Production:** KIC-Kulturno Informativen Centar-Skopje and Z. U. Macedonian Center of the International Theatre Institute (ITI)/PRODUKCIJA.

**Partners:** All public cultural institutions in Skopje (national and municipal, members of ICOM/ICOMOS/ITI Macedonian Centre), and the entire domestic NGO sector in culture; ECoC partner cities: Braga – an ECoC 2027 candidate city, Clermont-Ferrand – an ECoC 2028 candidate city, Maribor ECoC 2012, Plovdiv ECoC 2019, Rijeka ECoC 2020, Novi Sad ECoC 2022, Rouen – France – an ECoC 2028 candidate city etc., and the institutions such as museums, theatres, and music halls connected to them; the cultural institutions connected to the twinned European cities with the city of Skopje; the international networks for performing arts – ITI UNESCO, ENICPA, OISTAT, and Opera Europe.

## Dance The Night Away

The "Dance the Night Away" was raised by the idea of having a unique open-air music event that will offer an alternative for the younger generation that are looking for a different summer experience. A concept created with the idea of local, regional and world music scene coming together for a three - day music festival located at one of the most iconic landmarks in the city of Skopje - Havzi-Pasha shelters. The main aim of a three-day music festival would be a different unique experience for the younger generation, helping them make connections with people who share the same values with them and have the same goal of aiming towards European values and principles all through the sound of music. The structure of the festival would consist of constant networking activities during the day such as workshops, exhibitions, movie screening, and discussion groups; giving the youth a

chance to connect, learn from each other and talk about important. It aims to activate Macedonia's youth into becoming more proactive on issues that concern them, gather experiences and learn how the best versions of themselves and to each-other. The larger portion of the festival would be the music sets, which would start late in the afternoon and go on until the next morning. The idea behind this is to gather world - known artists, from different music genres, as well as local up-and-coming artists and to create a mixed line up, offering a little something to everyone's taste. One of the main goals is to pair up big names with smaller artists, giving them a chance to be heard by a larger audience by giving them a prolific platform for showcasing their music and talent. This three day event would be such an important contributor to the local economy of the country, as well as educational for the youth of the Republic of North Macedonia, while also providing an unforgettable summer experience. It will raise the standards of what a music festival should bring to one community, all while people make memories for a lifetime.

**Production:** Skopje Film Studio

**Partners:** EXIT Festival

**Co-Partners:** Macedonian Film Professional Association, Youth Cultural Center, Cinematheque of Republic of North Macedonia, Europe House, Novi Sad ECoC2022

## Skopje - Under The Stars

An initiative called "Skopje - Under the Stars" features exhibitions of the best-known Macedonian painters' works in various locations throughout the city. The focus will be mostly on well-known and well-loved locations throughout the city with a thematic assembly of paintings about that exact location. The exhibition would be spread throughout the city on a predetermined schedule so that it could tell our audience a story. As mentioned above, it will feature the works of prominent Macedonian painters whose works focus on these historical landmarks in Skopje as well as show people's life in the city in the past. Partnering with institutions like the Museum of Contemporary Art, the National Gallery, the Museum of the city of Skopje as well as some independent galleries will allow more people access to these historical art pieces and inspire more people to learn about Macedonian art and the legacy of its pioneers. Besides this initial phase, this initiative will also concentrate on educating the younger generation about the significance of these landmarks in Skopje, as well as it would serve as a wonderful memory lane for older generations. This blend of history, architecture, and art is designed for a wide range of target audiences since it combines the past and present in a way that celebrates some of our most valued treasures.

**Production:** Skopje Film Studio

**Partners:** Museum of Contemporary Art, the National Gallery, the Museum of the city of Skopje, museums and galleries from the region who own works by Macedonian painters, Budejovice ECoC2028

## Film Culture

An event with a working title "Film Culture" is a multimedia film-musical event, which main focus would be to present film as a comprehensive art positioned at the core around which we build the culture in the country. With the help of film, you can recognize the identity, culture, current social moment of the country, the mentality, as well as use it to promote the language. Through contemporary Macedonian film, the world can see the evolution of the habits, the place of our people in the context of global living and all the other things that make up the identity of our country. If we take into consideration the development and success of our home cinematography at a world level, we could easily say that our film industry is the face of our country. The festival would include a selection of ten feature films that have marked the last decade, and a selection of short films. The beginning will be marked by the main event "**Solemn Film Academy**" dedicated to the development of the film industry from independence to today. The festival is planned to last five days. The audience will be able to learn more about the films that will be showing, through a moderator, and after the projections there will be a Q&A session with the authors of the films. For a larger audience to get a chance to take a closer look at the development of the film industry from independence to today and the changes it went through, a conference with the following theme, will be held: "Evolution of the film industry from the period of independence to today - from "Vardar Film" to successful independent productions and international success"- which will also be distributed for the media.

**Production:** Skopje Film Studio

**Partners:** Macedonian Film Professionals Association, Faculty of Dramatic Arts, University of Arts in Belgrade, Faculty of Dramatic Arts at Cetinje, University of Theatre and Film Arts (SZFE) - Budapest, Clermont - Ferrand ECoC2028

## NEET group of youth

The objective of this project is to elevate consciousness about the aftermath of the pandemic and the associated crises that have emerged, encompassing challenges faced by the younger generation, both within the existing framework and beyond. As a result, a substantial portion of young individuals are grappling with heightened uncertainty and added stress regarding their future prospects. Concurrently, novel priorities are coming to the forefront among young people, encompassing the protection of life, sustainability of the environment, promotion of gender equality, eradication of discrimination, and the advancement of digitalization. Gender inequality and discrimination impede the full realization of the potential within young individuals. Despite a larger proportion of women graduating from universities, this advantage often translates into more profound challenges within the job market, leading to higher unemployment rates and fewer leadership roles for them compared to men. Moreover, in certain settings, there is an anticipation for young men to choose careers traditionally associated with women. At the same time, societal pressure persists, suggesting that they should balance career pursuits with family, marriage, and parenthood, which can hinder their career dedication. Stereotypes also persist in young men's participation in politics. Multiple studies have indicated that more than a third of young people perceive men as more competent in this domain, regardless of their employment status. The discontent of young people with the state of affairs is closely tied to their limited opportunities to engage and influence institutional processes, relying on the trust they place in these institutions. To address these issues, a proposed project includes a series of events throughout the year, featuring panel discussions focused on these topics. This initiative offers the NEET group a platform to express their perspectives.

**Production:** City of Skopje

**Partners:** Youth Cultural Center, Cultural Informative Center, Universal Hall Skopje, University "Ss Cyril and Methodius", Clermont - Ferrant ECoC2028



# Togetherness

## CreArt 3 - 2024-2026

CreArt (Network of Cities for Artistic Creation) is a network of European medium-sized cities, led by Valladolid (Spain), to foster creativity and maximize the economic, social, and cultural contribution that the visual arts can make to their local communities, through collaboration in a permanent European Exchange programme for emerging creators. Artists, curators, and managers of CreArt cities benefit from unique opportunities for training and promotion: participation in collective and double exhibitions, artist-in-residence programmes, workshops, conferences with a European dimension, or in actions of local level such as the celebration of the European month of creativity or art in an urban space, the AiR programme. CreArt represents a school of Europeanism and a physical and virtual common space for collaboration for partners, both for public entities that promote the network and for artists, managers and citizens that participate in its actions, collaborating with cities, complementing our limitations, and taking advantage our particularities, to enrich and improve the scope of our activities, from local to European level. The project is supported by the Creative Europe Program.

**Partners:** Spain: Valladolid (Fundación Municipal de Cultura), Portugal: Aveiro (Municipality), Poland: Lublin (Municipality), Croatia: HDLU-Zagreb (Croatian Association of Fine Artists), Republic of North Macedonia: Skopje (Municipality), Lithuania: Artkomas-Kaunas (Cultural institution funded by Municipality), France: Rouen and Clermont-Ferrand (Municipalities), Italy: Venice (Municipality), Latvia: Liepaja (City Council), Czech Republic: Budweis 2028- Ceske Budejovice (Public organization), Finland: Oulu (Municipality), Germany: Regensburg (Municipality)

**Associated partners:** Atelierhaus Salzamt (Linz), Bluecoat (Liverpool), Hafenkombinat (Lepizig), Artists Council Dialogue (Lviv)

## “Pampurche unites through art”

“Pampurche unites through art” is a project that includes workshops and an exhibition of the Pampurche train, which today is an exhibit in the park in Gjorce Petrov settlement and is also an inspiration for transcultural workshops that would unite the local and international population, in the region and beyond. This municipality is a home to Macedonians, as well as several minorities: Roma, Albanians, and Turks, who will be included in the project. The exhibition will be preceded by educational and creative activities in kindergartens, elementary schools, and high school students, located in Gjorce Petrov. The goal of the project is a qualitative change in consciousness, encouraging overall development, raising physical and motor skills, a sense for rhythm and artistic values through empathy to the development of environmental awareness, developing creative imagination on various topics, as well as education. Emphasis is placed on environmental conservation through artistic practice that seeks to preserve or vitalize life forms, resources, and ecology, as well as education on inter-ethnic interaction among children.

**Production:** The City of Skopje

**Partners:** PI Universal Hall, Municipality of Gjorce Petrov, Rouen ECoC 2028

## The Agile Creative Producers (ACP) Programme

The Agile Creative Producers (ACP) Programme disrupts the systematic centralisation of arts to create a new network of support and tools to accelerate creative economies. The aim is developing cities by empowering young people and equipping them with the skills to lead independent cultural programmes. The project allows local teams to efficiently establish an ongoing training programme for creative production connected to traditional institutions. Providing training in the basic building blocks of creative production, with the power of community-led co-design to provide opportunities for inclusion based on local needs rather than national or regional narratives which would also connect individuals facing similar challenges. Support ongoing mentoring from trainers and alumni spread across 18 countries but rooted in their communities.

**Production:** Creative Placemakers (t/a Curated Place), Ireland

**Partners:** UMPAKI, City of Skopje, PI of City of Skopje, NGO Center – Skopje, Daut Pasha Amam, Museum of contemporary Art, Novi Sad ECoC2022

## Moving Classics Sonic Flux

Moving Classics Sonic Flux is a project that brings together composers, researchers, film makers and producers to create original music and moving image work exploring hidden histories and conditions of flux in communities. Residency actions will enable mobility and upskill artists allowing them to undertake experimental projects with moving image specialists. Additionally, actions will aim to reach large audiences to partake in the intangible cultural heritage of migrants using arts production as a meeting point. A new label will be established to represent and promote artists/works online, and through live performances. Following the trajectories of people's stories to explore how all countries share the condition of being in a constant state of flux. Bringing communities together with writers, musicians, composers, events, and festivals, to explore new methods of storytelling through immersive experiences.

**Production:** Einkofi Productions Ehf., Iceland

**Partners:** UMPAKI, City of Skopje, Pl of City of Skopje, Cinematheque of R. N. Macedonia, Film Professionals Association, "Pocket" Cinema Frosina, Clermont – Ferrant ECoC2028

## Neighbourhood

Neighbourhood is a photography project that includes three workshops in each of the participating countries: Germany, Republic of North Macedonia, and Serbia. Teams of students and teachers from three universities are to create several series of images, either documentary or staged, and interpret them visually and photographically. They will explore and research the topic of neighbourhood in public and private life in the cities of the partner universities. As a result, individual perceptions, and representations of young photographers from different cultures are to be expected. An intercultural dialogue on a professional level between the teachers from the partner countries will be initiated or extended. Thus, the Neighbourhood project should not only enhance interpersonal relationship, but also the relationship between the neighbouring nations.

**Production:** Fachhochschule Dortmund University of Applied Science

**Partners:** Faculty of Design, The Megatrend University, Faculty of Art and Design (Serbia), Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, KIC, MKC, International University Europa Prima (Republic of North Macedonia), galleries, Novi Sad ECoC2022



## Culture at Universities

This is an interdisciplinary project whose main aim is to enhance and enrich the cultural life of students and bring culture and arts closer to them by offering free cultural events at the universities, such as concerts, recitals, exhibitions, film projections, readings and discussions, guest talks by artists, writers, musicians, and other cultural agents, workshops, and debates at the universities. Moreover, our second aim is to provide opportunities for students to get acquainted with the contemporary trends in culture and the arts in the country and abroad, to foster interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research, and bring the humanities, the arts, and culture closer to students; to motivate and equip them with the necessary skills to do interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research. We are to give space to young artists and students engaged in different artistic activities to discuss their work and cultural and societal issues with the student audience, the already-established artists from Republic of North Macedonia and the European cultural scene. Besides, we are to support formal higher education through debates, student forums, guest talks by artists and guest lectures by domestic and foreign lecturers, and interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary researchers, and workshops. We are also to provide opportunities for students to develop critical thinking and analytical thinking skills, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research skills, and to offer international and intercultural networking opportunities.

**Production:** Asst. Prof. Ivana Trajanoska, PhD, University American College Skopje.

**Partners:** University of Belgrade – Serbia, University of Cologne – Germany, Krosno State College – Poland, Polytechnic University of Timisoara – Romania, Timisoara ECoC2023 and other Macedonian universities.



## It can be different

It can be different is an educational project intended for children and young people. It includes a 3-5-minute feature film programme on various topics under the motto "It can be different". The aim is to educate the new generations about true values at a time when they increasingly lack empathy, are prone to violence, non-acceptance of differences, manipulation, and vices. Through advanced methods, techniques, and approaches to education and stimulation, a positive atmosphere is created in which the children feel confident, secure, and develop self-confidence to realize their potential, to find their talents, passions, and interests and to be themselves, but also to respect the others. The programme will be broadcast in schools, on television, and it will be available on educational platforms, internet platforms and institutions of public importance. Education, through a multidisciplinary learning system, is focused on the development of intellectual skills and a positive impact on the development of children's personality and the acquisition of real values.

**Production:** JMS PRODUCTION – Belgrade

**Partners:** Sector film, Children's creative center, Children cultural center – Karposh, Macedonian Radio-television, Novi Sad ECoC2022

## Building beyond Bar(rier)s

Prison furniture upcycle workshop. The project is to have prison inmates working in pairs, preferably from different backgrounds. Both inmates are to be working together to breathe new life into a single piece of old furniture guided by professional designers, craftsmen, and artisans. They both are to be tasked with giving the furniture their distinctive seals – what represents them in our society – under the condition of joining those distinctive traits in a perfect whole. The distinctive contributions of both prisoners are to work in harmony with one another, creating a visually pleasing unique piece of upcycled furniture. The project has several goals: to celebrate the treasure of diversity, provide inmates with professional skills in a trade to reintegrate them into society and prevent discrimination, and to prevent old furniture from being landfilled. The pieces are to be exhibited and auctioned, serving as a testament that tearing down barriers – working together instead of against each other – can create beauty.

**Production:** EduAktiv (NGO).

**Partners:** Ministry of Justice of the Republic of North Macedonia, Public Enterprise Communal Hygiene – Skopje, furniture companies, and activist groups working towards the zero-waste goal, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University- Mechanical Faculty, Nova Gorica ECoC2025



## Memo events

Cultural events, exhibitions (DJ performances, literary readings, concerts, film screenings, lectures, workshops) in the Museum of the City of Skopje, a representative place in the capital that can function even better with a regular programme for all generations. Support for local DJs working in Skopje, as well as artists from the region and Europe. Memorial events in honour of deserving cultural figures (Goran Stefanovski, Aki Rakimovski, Danilo Kocovski, Toshe Proeski) who contributed to the development of the city. Supporting talented young artists through multimedia exhibitions that bring together different arts, styles, and content. A calendar for marking important world dates in order to raise public awareness and organize workshops and lectures for education of the population.

**Production:** Terapija – music platform

**Partners:** The Museum of the City of Skopje, Novi Sad ECoC2022

## Giffoni Festival

The basic idea and motivation for this project was the lack of youth in cinemas in the country. In that direction, the largest youth organization was created, as part of the biggest cultural event for young people in the world, the "Giffoni Experience". More than 6,500 participants from over 30 countries will take part in the festival, which means that various nationalities, cultures, religions, and languages are included. This helps to overcome any existing barriers to diversity.

**Production:** Planet M – Skopje

**Partners:** Youth Cultural Center MKC; Cutaway, RSM Film Agency; Ministry of Culture, Republic of North Macedonia; Uzengia, Giffoni Experience – Italy, Montpellier ECoC2028

## Rise of Women in Culture in Western Balkans

This project aimed to enhance the visibility of female visual artists and their contributions, emphasizing the role of women in contemporary Balkan culture. It also aimed to boost transnational circulation and mobility of creative works and participants from the Western Balkans, challenging stereotypes, with a particular focus on gender equality and women's representation in society.

**Production:** TBD

**Partners:** Association BEOART, Serbia, Association FENOMENA, Serbia, Udruga Prizma, Croatia, Lokarijeva Galerija, Slovenia, Association SENSUS, Republic of North Macedonia, Nova Gorica ECoC2025

## Skopje Creative

The Skopje Creative project, in collaboration with the City of Skopje and its potential for development as a creative urban centre, aims to ignite citizens' creative and innovative potential. The goal is to produce a body of work that contributes to both societal and economic growth. One significant aspect often underestimated in the realm of creative industries is its societal impact. This impact involves not only generating economic value but also fostering broader societal value, enhancing citizens' well-being and overall quality of life. With this in mind, the core objective within the scope of the "Skopje Creative 2023" project is to awaken local creativity. This creativity will be conceptualized, developed, and brought to life through collaborations with domestic and international partners. Various activities will be organized to enhance the overall quality of life for all citizens in the city. Acknowledging the importance of creative industries as a vital economic asset, not solely for the business community but also for urban development, the "Skopje Creative" project unites creative minds from within the country and the wider region. The festival program will encompass a range of events including presentations, workshops, and lectures from both domestic and international sources. Additionally, the program will feature film screenings, concerts, videos, and multimedia showcases.

**Production:** City of Skopje

**Partners:** Suli An, Kurshumli An, Kapan An, Youth Cultural Center, City of Sarajevo, Banja Luka

## Legal Walls

The Legal Walls project was launched in 2021 within the framework of Skopje 2028, as an initiative born out of the need for active street art, involving both domestic and foreign artists. These legal walls will serve as dedicated artistic canvases, which will undergo conceptual changes after specific time periods. All artists from the independent scene will have the opportunity to participate in collaboration with international artists.

**Production:** the City of Skopje and the Skopje 2028 team

**Partners:** 10 municipalities of Skopje, City of Dresden, City of Zagreb, Rouen, City of Sarajevo, Tirana Municipality

## Electronic music festival "Skopje Music Festival"

The Electronic Music Festival is one of the biggest projects and connections of young people. Music that is key to the booming club scene of the 70s, and that boom isn't over yet. Skopje has an extremely large group of electronic DJs who are involved in the rise of the electronic music scene in Macedonia in the 90s, as well as the rise of young DJs who have been adding to the scene in the last 10 years. The project will be focused on promoting electronic music through several workshops on DJing, creation of electronic music, history of electronic music, etc., as well as performances by several DJs who will present electronic music as they know it, including multiple genres of it. The demand group for these events is huge, and because of that, the target group is located towards the young, but also towards the elderly who enjoy one of the most important forms of art.

**Production:** City of Skopje

**Partners:** MKC, Universal Hall, City of Skopje, MSU, Archives of the City of Skopje, Post, Montpellier ECoC2028

## The Spectrum of Colours

"The Spectrum of Colours" is a captivating theatre play that delivers the intricate and evolving stories of a diverse group of LGBTQ+ individuals as they navigate the complexities of love, identity and acceptance. Set in a vibrant urban backdrop, the play introduces us to five unique characters from different walks of life. "The Spectrum of Colours" masterfully highlights the significance of self-acceptance and the powerful impact of forging bonds within the LGBTQ+ community. This play is intended for youth and adults. The goal of this project is to set this theatre play up and to enable in dignified way the self-confidence and the sense of belonging to this community. It also participate in the process of inclusion in the society, by familiarizing the whole public with the presence of the community.

**Production:** ATO - Centre for contemporary art & Culture

**Partners:** Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Business Accelerator UKIM

## All Faces of the City

All Faces of the City is a project poised to capture and celebrate the myriad facets that collectively define Skopje's urban landscape. The project emanates from a resolute belief that a city's essence transcends its mere physicality; it is a blend of emotions, experiences, and diverse narratives that converge to create a vivid mosaic of life. It seeks to shed light on every facet that constitutes the city's identity, acknowledging that its multifaceted nature is what renders it truly vibrant. It is focusing on multiculturalism, multi-ethnicity and diversity of the city. Central to the project's endeavour is a comprehensive documentary production that will illuminate the diverse personas that coexist within our city. In addition to the documentary, dedicated social media channels will be established as interactive platforms. By harnessing the power of social media, it is intended to foster a dynamic dialogue that transcends conventional boundaries, encouraging citizens and visitors alike to partake in a collective exploration of the city's rich spectrum.

**Production:** Macedonian Association of Film Producers

**Partners:** APRA Ltd. Sofia, Bulgaria / Possibility for Regional consortium

## CINEIndustry Film market

Given the evolving economic landscape and the dynamics within the film industry, the current market is predominantly oriented towards film distribution. Essentially, it serves as a training arena for the marketing and dissemination of films originating from Southeast Europe, with a specific emphasis on achieving global outreach. The core concept behind this initiative is to establish initial dialogues and connections among filmmakers and various stakeholders including distributors, sales agents, Video on Demand (VoD) platforms, and other relevant entities. The ultimate goal is to evolve into a comprehensive sales and distribution platform, essentially becoming a central hub where producers, distributors, sales agents, and other industry professionals can interact within a professional workspace. This environment would facilitate the growth of the domestic film market, subsequently fostering the development of film projects, collaborative networks, funding and production processes, as well as the distribution aspects within our nation.

**Production:** Cutaway-Skopje

**Partners:** AFIDI (Macedonian Film Distributors Association), MKC, FIADn (The International Federation of Film Distributors' and Publishers' Associations), Rouen Seine Normande 2028

## Annual Conference of UNESCO Cities of Film

Two-day event welcoming and gathering most of the cities of UNESCO NETWORK, led by the Mayors and Head of cultural department of each city. UNESCO Film Cities span the globe, from Japan to South America, bringing together this international and a thriving sector, encouraging partnerships and the exchange of ideas. 21 cities of the film work together and with fellow cities in the network of creative cities, to realize the common one aim: putting creativity and cultural industries at the heart of local engagement and prioritizing cross-border cultural cooperation. The project aims to reconnect film cities, enhance their partnerships as well as exchange future new ideas and collaborations. During this event Skopje will have a chance to present the future cultural projects, the desire of become part of the UNESCO NETWORK, will be signed bilateral agreements/MoC between the cities and will be discussed future cultural project developments. The main aim is to promote creative industries and their sustainable development by creating new policies, improving national capacities and organizing promotional events in this field.

**Production:** Film Centre

**Partners:** Sector film, Rome City of Film, Terrassa City of Film

## Skopje Art-Tech Festival

The initiative known as the Skopje Art-Tech Festival is set to become an event that converges the realms of performing arts and technology. This festival is slated to be of substantial scale, supported by both public and private entities. Its objective is to serve as a platform for unveiling the latest technological advancements within the realm of art. Concurrently, it aspires to serve as an educational conduit, fostering public awareness and introducing novel artistic trends through live performances and demonstrative showcases. The festival will encompass a diverse range of activities tailored to varying levels of interest and expertise. The journey will commence with professionals exchanging insights, encompassing performances, and spanning to educational workshops and lectures that cater to those intrigued by entering the industry. This project envisions a meticulously outlined festival structure coupled with a proposed strategy for its evolution. At its core, the festival is motivated by the aim to prioritize the progression of artistic technology in both public and private sectors. It seeks to foster an environment conducive to diverse artistic expressions and local creative manifestations. Furthermore, it seeks to actively involve the community in artistic pursuits and contribute to the establishment of a sustainable destination with a flourishing cultural scene. In essence, this festival encapsulates a pivotal occasion for the city to realize its ambitions and latent capacities with respect to the advancement of art and technology.

**Production:** City of Skopje

**Partners:** MKC, Universal Hall, City of Skopje, Museum of Contemporary Art, Archive, Museum of the City of Skopje, Archive, Museum of the City of Skopje, Montpellier ECoC2028

## The Entrepreneurship Fair in Skopje

The city of Skopje is hosting an entrepreneurship fair designed for the youth demographic. This event will serve as a platform to unite all stakeholders engaged in youth initiatives, fostering the exchange of information and ideas. The fair aims to cultivate collaboration among youth associations, young individuals, and programs dedicated to youth empowerment. As a part of its offerings, the fair will conduct training sessions focusing on equipping attendees with the skills necessary for drafting project proposals and effectively managing projects across various stages. These skills will be valuable not only for applications to domestic institutions but also for accessing international and EU funding opportunities. At its core, the fair seeks to bridge the gap between young people and prospects for professional advancement. Furthermore, it endeavours to facilitate connections between employers and potential talents, providing a conduit for companies to discover promising candidates to join their ranks.

**Production:** City of Skopje

**Partners:** Youth Cultural Centre, KEA European Affairs – Brussels, Braga ECoC2027, Tirana Municipality



# rECOOvering

## My EU Neighborhood

The project MY EU NEIGHBORHOOD embarks on a transformative journey through empowering the neighbourhoods in Skopje. This endeavour seeks to breathe life into the heart of these communities, fostering a sense of unity, empowerment, and shared purpose among their residents. With the project the aspiration is to amplify the voices of residents, illuminate the strengths inherent within each neighbourhood, and cultivate an atmosphere of collective progress. The aim of this project is to unveil the latent potential within these microcosms, creating a thriving, interconnected neighbourhoods that collectively enhance the essence of the city. It includes celebrating World Youth Day; meet the neighbour events; community gardening; eco-action; large neighbourhood gatherings; neighbourhood New Year's Bazaar; humanitarian and donor initiatives etc. The project aspires to create neighbourhoods where every voice matters and where the collective spirit is harnessed for meaningful change.

**Production:** APRA Porter Novelli Makedonija d.o.o. Skopje

**Partners:** APRA Balkan Communication Group Sofia, Bulgaria / Possibility for Regional consortium

## The Tale of a Tree

Eco-activists holding "agoras" in different neighbourhoods are spreading awareness of the importance of the greenery in the surrounding residential buildings – to inspire a culture of protection and mindful coexistence between humans and nature. What one of the most polluted cities in the world needs is oxygen factories – and trees are just that. In addition to providing residents with science-based data about the numerous benefits of caring for our green public spaces, they are to be part of a crowd-sourcing green activity – completing the Green Cadastre of Skopje. People are to be tasked with photographing trees in their vicinity and uploading them to the Green Cadastre base. They are also to be invited to write a story related to the specific tree to provide another level of value in the eyes of their fellow citizens. Officials from the City of Skopje and Hans Em Faculty of Forest Sciences, Landscape Architecture and Environmental Engineering, Skopje are to add the remaining necessary information about the tree, such as its type, age, state, needs, etc., thus completing its story.

**Production:** O-Krug (NGO).

**Partners:** Hans Em Faculty of Forest Sciences, Landscape Architecture and Environmental Engineering, Skopje, City of Skopje, people of Skopje, and various civil society groups, Business Accelerator UKIM, Municipality of Jesenice

## Creating Commons

Transforming abandoned and illegally occupied spaces into green public havens and areas of creativity and prosperity provides much-needed opportunities for communities dedicated to the progressive civic struggle. Repurposing these spaces is to be a great example of clever usage of already urbanised areas as well as an act of giving the city back to its inhabitants where they are to be free to imagine, create, and produce. The use of these areas is tangled in a maze of winding uncertainty, personal interests, and unclear property rights, which require joint efforts from institutions both on local and national levels. The project is intended to create new common spaces, especially ones that bring people together.

**Production:** Humane Cities (NGO).

**Partners:** City of Skopje, ten municipalities of Skopje, Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of North Macedonia, and Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA), Montpellier ECoC2028

## Green Design Community

Green Design Community is a project that promotes sustainable practices against urgent environmental challenges. By prioritising sustainability in design – green design aimed at reducing waste and minimising our impact on the planet. The network of the involved organizations seeks, by employing innovative design and artistic methods, to inspire individuals and communities to perceive waste as a valuable resource that can be repurposed creatively. The project includes creating new eco-friendly products, focused on inspiring different communities, including refugees/migrants, and Youth by organizing thematic awareness-raising events and green design workshops. By the end of the project, the Green Design Community will be established including designers, entrepreneurs, scientists, students, citizens, and local communities.

**Production:** TCCI - the regional development centre & business incubator of the CCI sector

**Partners:** MOSAIC- private organization offering Incubation, Training, Consulting & Research services to CCI - Greece; UMPACI; NGO GoGreen- organization with mission to develop and share values for sustainable development; LOW imPACK - a start-up with the mission to re-value fashion waste into novel packaging material, Red Cross, PI Reception center for asylum seekers, Business Accelerator UKIM, Bodo ECoC2024

## Cultural Garden

The project aims to establish a single pilot centre to bring the community together in all ten municipalities of Skopje. Cultural Garden is a place where ideas, ideologies, and worldviews are exchanged and approximated. Each centre is to feature an urban garden with a semi spherical geodesic greenhouse, a photovoltaic plant, a unit for composting bio-waste (kitchen plant-based waste) from households that are to produce both compost and biogas, as well as multifunctional space suitable for holding any cultural-educational events. Cultural Garden is conceived as a fountain of knowledge, innovation, and coexistence. It is also a visual reflection of the progress of our society where conflicts are transformed into a dignified exchange of facts and our outdated habits are transformed into advanced and sustainable inclusive practices with which we are to initiate the creation of strong, solidary communities, resilient to modern crises.

**Production:** E.D.E.N.

**Partners:** Faculty of Agricultural Science and Food in Skopje, Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Information Technologies – Skopje, Faculty of Computer Science and Engineering – Skopje, City of Skopje, public companies owned by the city, various civil society groups, social enterprises, PE Parks and Greenery, PE Vodovod i kanalizacija – Skopje, NGO Volonterski centar, Budejovice ECoC2028

## A renewed green city

The project includes reconstruction of the existing tree rows and green corridors in the city of Skopje, which are empty or damaged, as well as creation of new ones, especially in places that represent heat islands in the summer. The green points will be named after the cities that were in solidarity with the city of Skopje which will reflect the European dimension. Artistic sculptures made of recycled material will be placed at these points. The aim is to provide, especially young people, with living in a healthy environment. The project is from the field of ecology, but it also indirectly affects the selection of the city's tourist facilities. Green, instead of concrete city, is the motto of the project.

**Production:** Eurothink – Centre for European Strategies

**Partners:** Florozon – Center for environmental democracy; Plantopija – Garden Center, PE Parks and Greenery, Trenčin ECoC2026.

## Ethnic permaculture food festival

The annual Ethnic Permaculture Festival is a three-day grassroots event for people to learn how the ethical design science of permaculture can offer sustainable, regenerative green solutions to different areas of modern life. Choose from workshops about upcycled food that takes ingredients typically lost in the food supply chain and not eaten by humans and turns them into meals. Upcycled dishes also often include all edible parts of a specific food, making sure none of it goes to waste. Visit the market and the “family zone”. Enjoy discussions, networking and learning about creative solutions for a sustainable, healthy future. We desperately need to make changes to help feed people and fight climate change. By choosing to eat locally made upcycled and permaculture produce meals, you can do both.

**Production:** Gradinana, Youth Cultural Center, Skopje, R. N. Macedonia

**Partners:** SUGC Lazar Tanev, City of Skopje, PI of City of Skopje, Peoples Initiative “Bostanie” and Rouen Candidate City for an ECoC 2028, 23 High schools of the City of Skopje

## TRANSFORM – Ecology/Sustainability

TRANSFORM is an ambitious project connecting Southeast Europe's higher fine/visual art educational institutions. The first symposium and exhibition were held in Istanbul in 2009 and then in Sofia, Zagreb, and Ljubljana. Skopje is to host the event in 2028. The event provides an international platform for the professional presentation of young creatives in visual arts and the development of international exchange of students. The theme of Transform 2028 is ecology and sustainability.

**Production:** Faculty of Fine Arts, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje.

**Partners:** National Gallery of R. N. Macedonia, Museum of Contemporary Art, Youth Cultural Centre, ArsActa, Faculty of Fine Arts in Belgrade, Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana, Faculty of Fine Arts in Sarajevo, National Academy of Arts in Sofia, Faculty of Arts of Pristina, University of Arts in Tirana, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Istanbul

## Reviving The Cobbled Pavements

Following the need to further revive life in the Old Bazaar in the city of Skopje, this project will focus on a series of Balkan Fests, each imbued with identical nomenclature and branding. They'll span between three days and an entire week, invoking the Bazaar's heritage as both a timeless hub of interaction and an avantgarde centre of inspiration. The festival's kaleidoscope shall encompass an array of creative and business pursuits, brought to fruition through the synergy of business communities and artists. The fests include street of painter - openair exhibitions, photo competition, TV clip “New in the Old bazaars”, wedding of the year focusing on marriages of diversity, “Bazaar of Oddities” an exploration from traditions to gastronomy, mobile art exhibitions and fashion shows, Mini kebabfest. The project shall harness active participation from business communities, infusing economic forums with discussions on investments in bazaars. Expanding this visionary initiative on the broader European stage, the orchestration of parallel synoptic Balkanfests in diverse metropolises stands as an ambitious aspiration.

**Production:** APRA Porter Novelli Makedonija d.o.o. Skopje

**Partners:** APRA Balkan Communication Group Sofia, Bulgaria / Possibility for Regional consortium

## To Skopje, With Love

This concept is planned for one of the most iconic locations in Skopje. Build in the 15th century, Suli An is a han in the Old Bazaar of Skopje. It has been a host to so many cultural events in the past and is the perfect place for a concert – spectacle dedicated to the city of Skopje. This concept's initial outline is a 3 part multimedia performance, created to celebrate the people and bring them together through music. In order to play original songs and covers honouring the city of Skopje, an impressive choir will be accompanied by some of the most well-known musicians and artists from the Republic of North Macedonia. While this would be the primary focus of the audience, a video compilation of work by professionals, amateurs, film inserts, and music videos with the same theme—the city of Skopje—will be projected in the background. It would fill the room with this admirable nostalgia, allowing the audience to more deeply experience

the music being performed. Traditional Macedonian dances would be showcased in the second half of the evening accompanied by modern Macedonian music. The goal of this would be to introduce the younger audience to a part of the Macedonian culture through something they enjoy and are familiar with, while also showing a mix of the past and a glimpse of the future to the older generations. The end of the evening would be focused on newer modern genres of music, giving a chance to younger up-and-coming Macedonian musicians to put on a small party-like performance, allowing them to promote their music and perform in front of a large audience. The last part of the evening is dedicated to the younger generation and the cultural future we aim for. To summarize, the main aim of the event is to bring people together. Concerts are a bonding experience and can bring people of different cultures and backgrounds together while also promoting the roots and the future of our country - on its rise towards a cultural renaissance.

**Production:** Skopje Film Studio

**Partners:** Centre for Film – Art & Popcorn, Belgrade, Kaunas ECoC2022

## Artistic co-productions in green spaces (engage audience in outdoor cultural activities)

We will run a series of pilot artistic projects in the XXX cities associated with the ECoC project in Skopje, with a view to develop innovative approaches to audience engagement and connecting with citizens which are not yet actively engaging with cultural activities. They will be planned and managed in an environmental-conscious way: 0 carbon projects, with the objective to encourage behavioural change towards greener lifestyles. These will be coproduced and will be mirrored between Skopje and partner cities. Examples of such project could include:

**Digital Calligraffiti** is about digital place making, urban media art campaign originally designed for the arrival of refugees in Berlin. The participatory place making project can be applied for all communities to freely share meaningful messages and visions on the urgencies of our society. It combines the traditional cultural technique of calligraphy and graffiti with the possibilities of urban media art and new streaming and projection technologies. Digital Calligraffiti facilitates the communication between the individual and the whole and transforms walls and digital screens into a canvas of civic expression to build bridges of intercultural understanding.

**Nature Writing.** It includes essays, poetry, travel and adventure writing and incorporates personal and philosophical observations upon nature by exploring and sensing in place to collaboratively map populations' relationship with their local ecologies and to record and archive environmental cultural heritage. Nature Writing strives to find empathetic and sensory ways to record peoples emplaced experiences and memories of their local biotopes and landscapes, beyond the language of statistics and science. These projects can use the format of Digital Calligraffiti (live projections, connecting people and places) to record and display these writings in collaborative public events.

**Re-connecting nature:** From Cultural Landscapes to Data Landscapes. The pandemic in particular has shown how important the experience of nature has become for people. The phenomenon of 're-connecting nature' has been evident in all areas of life and culture. For example, the exhibition Critical Zones, curated by Peter Weibel at the ZKM, presents works such as 'Atmospheric Forest' by the famous artist duo Rasa Smits and Raitis Smite, who, with research institutions, show the CO2 conversion of trees into oxygen in a region as a real-time installation. The kick-off event is an ideation where common ideas are developed (see co-design process above) and cultural practitioners can exchange and share their experiences and practices. - Digital earth – data visualisation and storytelling, and creating artistic scenarios (raise awareness).

**Production:** UMPAKI Skopje

**Partners:** GoGreen – Skopje, Scientific research centre Bistra Ptuj

# CreARTing



## 2028 Young Entrepreneurs Conference

The digital revolution brought profound changes in every area of life, including economy, culture, and education. It brought the need for new workplaces, skills, and professions. People must overcome challenges, adapt, and collaborate, learn new educational approaches, master new skills, and train. The Young Entrepreneurs Conference is to be organised in collaboration with Tartu, ECoC 2024, ITTI (Institute for Technology Transfer and Innovation – Plovdiv, Bulgaria), and ECoC 2019 to present and share the best practice of European young entrepreneurs in the fields of digital design, gaming, film postproduction, 3D printing, architecture, etc. The 2028 Young Entrepreneurs Conference is to be held in Skopje with practical workshops on polishing ideation and elevator speeches focused on young people and business start-ups. The conference will encourage youth entrepreneurial thinking and provide practical tools to help them develop their ideas. The conference's overarching theme is bridging the gap between cultural and creative industries and education.

**Production:** AKI – Association of Creative Industries (Economic Chamber of N. Macedonia)

**Partners:** Tartu Centre for Creative Industries, Estonia; and ITTI (Institute for Technology Transfer and Innovation) Plovdiv, Bulgaria

## Skopje GameDev Conference (Skopje GDC)

The Skopje GameDev Conference Skopje (GDC) is a dynamic and immersive program aimed at providing participants with a comprehensive and hands-on understanding of the game development industry. The program will deliver a series of learning sessions and workshops, each hosted by esteemed professionals within the game development field. These sessions will cover a diverse range of topics including Level Design, Art Direction, Game Design, Programming, Sound Design, and more. The program aims to attract participation from prominent global game development companies, including Naughty Dog, Guerrilla Games, Band Studios, Sony Studios (PlayStation), and Criterion Games, among others. This offers participants a chance to connect with established professionals and gain insights into the inner workings of successful game development enterprises.

**Production:** MGI (Macedonian Games Industry)

**Partners:** MAGDA, SGA – Serbia, Montpellier ECoC2028

## Creative Industries Expo

Creative Industries Expo is the convergence of all industries on the cutting-edge of technology, design, education, social good, health and wellness, and more. Brands, services, innovations, platforms, and products will attend the Creative Expo. Hundreds of exhibitors from Republic of North Macedonia and across the region will meet under one roof to ignite passions, collaborate, and share ground-breaking discoveries. The exhibitors are paving the way for the future by focusing on the diverse and dynamic trends defining tomorrow's technologies, creative pursuits, and more. More than a hundred exhibitors are expected to attend, with innovative and diverse products.

**Production:** UMPAKI – Union of Macedonian Professional Associations in the Creative Industries.

**Partners:** KEA European Affairs – Brussels, Tartu Centre for Creative Industries in Estonia, Virtual Campus – Portugal, AKI – Association of Creative Industries

## International Forum of Creative Industries and the Role of Women's Entrepreneurship in the Creative Economy

Creative Industries Forum and the Role of Women's Entrepreneurship in the Creative Economy to promote and develop the creative industries in the country. They will continue to facilitate the discussion of creative industries, creative and cultural entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurs in creative and cultural industries, and innovation cooperation to speed up the progress in these industries. This Forum is envisioned as a creative and interactive event in 2028 that will bring together representatives from creative industries, entrepreneurs, innovators, economic chambers, ministries, institutions, and other high-level policymakers, as well as representatives from civil society and international organisations to discuss business opportunities, development of international projects, funding, etc.

**Production:** UMPAKI – Union of Macedonian Professional Associations in the Creative Industries.

**Partners:** KEA European Affairs – Brussels, Tartu Centre for Creative Industries – Estonia, Virtual Campus – Portugal, AKI – Association of Creative Industries, Rouen Seine Normande 2028

## REACT Gate project

REACT Gate project is a collaboration project between Albania, Republic of North Macedonia, and Kosovo (Western Balkans) that focuses on creative industries. The aim is to improve the regional creative industry scenario towards a modern ecosystem, based on information sharing and collaboration, as 'the missing link' for driving continued growth. The project recognizes several vulnerable groups that face various challenges. For example, young professionals and small businesses that struggle to establish themselves in the creative industries due to lack of access to funding, a competitive environment, and limited resources for marketing and promotion. Women, other marginalized groups, including the LGBTQ+ community and ethnic minorities, who face discrimination, harassment, and exclusion from certain opportunities. Partners of the project will support the creative industries in their respective countries.

**Production:** Adriapol Institute; ICK; UMPAKI

**Partners:** Women's Economic Chamber – Albania; Women's Chamber of Commerce – G7 – Kosovo; National Platform for Women Entrepreneurship – Republic of North Macedonia; Creative Industry Agency, AIK Tirana; Governmental entity in the Municipality of Tirana

## SheLeaders – VR

The project aims to tell the stories of prominent women who ruled the Balkans in the middle ages. Based on their lives, habits, successes, and challenges of their time, to create stories that are to be presented through virtual (VR) and augmented reality (AR) applications.

**Production:** Centre for Scientific Research and Promotion of Culture "HAEMUS".

**Partners:** Museum of the Republic of North Macedonia; NoHo, Ireland; Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade, Serbia; National Museum of Montenegro; Sarajevo School of Science and Technology.

## Recognizable city logo

Development of an urban recognizable city logo that would lend the city a unique and discernible identity with intrinsic local relevance. A comprehensive analysis will be undertaken to discern the facets of Skopje that resonate with its residents and encapsulate the municipality's essence. Moreover, it shall culminate in an iconic hallmark that distinguishes itself prominently amidst a broader audience. The process begins with mobilizing the local photographic community through an open invitation to make a series of images capturing the city iconic landmarks, destinations, and emblematic monuments. Launching of an interactive digital platform as an opportunity for crafting personalized digital postcards with a distinctive signature of its author, thus amplifying their visibility and recognition. Prizes shall be conferred upon the publisher of the most widely acclaimed postcard on social media, as well as the author of the underlying photographic composition.

**Production:** APRA Porter Novelli Makedonija d.o.o. Skopje

**Partners:** Tourist Board Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia; Ustanova za promocijo oblikovanja vidnih sporočil Fundacija Brumen, Ljubljana, Slovenia / Possibility for Regional consortium

## International Mobile Film Festival

The core concept of the Festival revolves around amplifying the avenues for youthful creative expression. This is achieved by capturing and documenting captivating moments and incidents from daily life, all facilitated by the ubiquitous pocket companion - the mobile phone. The overarching goal is to inspire greater engagement of young individuals in social and cultural affairs, while simultaneously enriching the cultural landscape accessible to them within the N.Macedonia. This mode of expression serves as a catalyst, igniting the creative ingenuity of all those enthusiastic participants who harness unconventional technological mediums, namely, their mobile phones.

**Production:** Association of Film Producers, MZFP Skopje

**Partners:** Cinematheque of N.Macedonia, platform cinesquare.net, MINA (Mobile Innovation Network and Association)

## Skopje IT Meetup

The Skopje IT Meetup is an initiative led by the City of Skopje that aims to foster discussions about events in the IT world and technology. Participants will have the opportunity to connect and learn new skills while listening to expert opinions. Expecting insightful conversations on relevant topics, the event is geared towards young and promising students, as well as individuals interested in the IT field. The main goal of the City of Skopje is to encourage discussions that provide valuable insights for companies, employees, and students. By staying up-to-date with industry trends, this project also addresses the fast-paced nature of the IT industry. The initiative is designed for those who wish to share their research and knowledge or engage with specific topics. The IT meetups will facilitate unrestricted opportunities for exchanging experiences and personal growth, connecting with experts in the field, and creating networks that could lead to potential employment.

**Production:** City of Skopje

**Partners:** Faculty of Computer Science and Engineering (FINKI), Scientific research Bistra Ptuj, IT labs

## Discover Skopje History with the Queen Maria - VR game

The goal of the project is to create an educational Virtual reality (VR) game that would introduce users to Skopje's history in an attractive and immersive way. The player would solve various tasks and challenges in the 3D reconstruction of Skopje Fortress in various historical periods. The avatar character of Macedonian queen Maria Paelologina would guide the players and help them in their mission. AI interface would be used for communication with the queen. The project is a follow-up of the Creative Europe SHELeadersVR project, where we presented the female rulers of Balkans countries in the medieval period through a VR application. The game would be published on the Steam VR platform, free for download, and set up in a VR showroom within the Fortress as well, to be available for the visitors.

**Production:** Association for cultural heritage digitisation DIGI.BA

**Partners:** HAEMUS | Center for scientific research and promotion of culture, Macedonia, Museum of Macedonia, NoHo VR production, Ireland

## Roman heritage of North Macedonia - VR/AR application

Roman Empire stretched throughout the whole Balkans region. There are many archaeological sites and museum exhibitions in these countries, but most of them are not so known to the general public. Close to the city of Bitola, Republic of North Macedonia in the Roman period was the town of Heraclea Lyncestis, founded in the Greek period, but later ruled by the Romans. The visit to the remains does not provide a lot of information for understanding this city and the life inside it. Using Virtual and Augmented Reality we will create a fully immersive 3D reconstruction of this city during the Roman times and enable the users to explore it and communicate with its inhabitants using AI interface. AR application will make the archaeological remains much more interesting as the users will be able to see the original buildings through their mobile devices cameras. The VR application will be published at the online platform and accessible in the local museums. The AR application will be accessible online for free download.

**Production:** Association for cultural heritage digitisation DIGI.BA

**Partners:** HAEMUS | Center for scientific research and promotion of culture, Macedonia, Museum of Bitola, Museum of Macedonia, Skopje, NoHo VR production, Ireland

## Time travel to Skopje before the earthquake - Mixed Reality application

In 1963 Skopje was destroyed by a terrific earthquake. Over 1000 people were killed, many more injured and remained homeless. After that destruction it took many years to rebuild the city to its present appearance. Still, some parts were never reconstructed in the way they used to be before this tragic event. Mixed Reality application will recreate the Old City of Skopje to the shape it looked like before the earthquake. The users will be able to be transferred in time and explore the parts of the city that don't exist anymore using VR headsets. They will also be able to switch between the present and past city appearances. A virtual guide will help them to understand where they are and tell them stories about important historical buildings and monuments. This way, the destroyed parts of the city will be returned to the public memory.



**Production:** Association for cultural heritage digitisation DIGI.BA

**Partners:** HAEMUS | Center for scientific research and promotion of culture, Macedonia, Museum of Macedonia, Skopje, NoHo VR production, Ireland

## Srednolend

SREDNOLEND is an event through which talented high school students promote themselves, while also promoting their school. The goal is to direct students to the right values, developing an interest in art and culture, and to bring the world of high school students closer to the public, through a display of their talents and their interests, laying the foundation for cooperation between schools and inter-institutional support. The purpose of the event is to encourage high school students to present their talents through music, dance, fine arts, dramatic arts, photography and film. SREDNOLEND is a virtual picture of the world of a high school student – a world of carefreeness, youth, a world of friendship.

**Production:** Universal Hall – Skopje

**Partners:** All high schools in Skopje within cooperation with all high schools from Maribor, Slovenia

## Cult(o)risam

Launch of a platform / webpage entitled CULTURISM for promotion of the culture in the city of Skopje, containing different segments. With a multifaceted approach, this webpage will serve as a dynamic repository encompassing an array of distinctive segments, all aimed at fostering a deeper connection with the city's cultural heritage. Delving into traditions, customs, habits, language nuances, and ways of life unique to the residents of Skopje, the platform artfully captures the essence of the city's soul. The platform will illuminate the city's culinary treasures, inviting visitors on a journey that mirrors Skopje's multicultural diversity through delightful delicacies. Serving as a comprehensive guide, it will offer an all-encompassing resource for travellers, aiding them in planning their journey.

**Production:** APRA Porter Novelli Makedonija d.o.o. Skopje

**Partners:** Turist Board Ljubljana, Slovenia; Infodata Sistemi, Trieste, Italia / Possibility for Regional consortium

## Open Air Museums

Digital transformation of museums, monuments, and landmarks within the expanse of the City of Skopje. This metamorphosis entails the creation of immersive 3D representations, and the establishment of open-air cultural exhibition zones in highly frequented locations, leveraging cutting-edge technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR). An innovative, attractive paradigm established to invite the younger population and tourists to explore the cultural treasures. The initial phase will focus on digitizing museums, followed by the subsequent phase centered on monuments, and so forth. In sum, the envisioned initiative emerges as a powerful intersection of cultural heritage and technological innovation, poised to bridge generational gaps and redefine the way in which cultural landscapes are perceived, embraced, and cherished.

**Production:** UMPACI - Union of Macedonian Professional Associations in the Creative Industries

**Partners:** Festival Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia; Ustanova za promocijo oblikovanja vidnih sporočil Fundacija Brumen, Ljubljana, Slovenia / Possibility for Regional consortium

## Skopje City Events - Mobile application



Project proposal for mobile application that will cover all cultural and sport events in the city, delivering unique user experience. Multilingual mobile application that will list all city activities on one place, including cultural events (theatres, opera, concerts, ...) and sport events in the city. Mobile application will be available for iOS, Google and Huawei application stores.

### Functionalities of SKOPJE CITY EVENTS APP

All users can browse events by categories, see their details, dates, locations, prices as well have the opportunity to buy tickets online for that events with bank cards. Users can set notifications for type of events, so they will be notify for any new event of chosen type and share that information with their social friends through integrated social media. All tickets will

be delivered electronically directly to the user so they can enter events without printing tickets that is very essential for tourists visiting the city. Aside of that the City will have the possibility to provide crucial information for tourists that will enrich the application with additional and useful information for them. **The mobile application will be completely free of charge delivering end-user prices for all events without additional commission and without registration required, so it will make attractive for tourists and citizens to use it.**

### Benefits

Existing of this mobile application has multiple benefits for all stakeholders in the tourism and event industry as well as for the city and their tourists and citizens. Promotion of all events globally will rise the interest among tourists to visit and stay in the city more than usual, event organizers will get more sales and additional promotion of their events, users will have simple and easy procedure to get their tickets and city will have more tourists and more income from this industry segment.

### Partners

In order to deliver fast, proven and confirmed solution the city needs to partner some of the crucial players in the industry: ExploringMacedonia.com, National Tourism Portal, Karti.com.mk, National ticketing platform for all events in the country, Nextsense.com, Technology provider of mobile and IT integrations and solutions that will guarantee delivery of complete solution.

## Kidsquare

PanEuropean network for physical and online distribution of European children content, dubbed on Macedonian, Albanian, Italian and Polish language. The project aims to contribute to the creation and the building of cultural habits connected through film art among the youngest population in the republic, through the use of new media, new technology and innovative ways of connecting with culture and through technology, which are close to the youngest audience.

**Production:** Cutaway-Skopje; Nexo Digital - Italy; New Horizons-Poland

**Partners:** AFIDI, Uzengija DOOEL, Giffoni Film Festival

## International Conference for Copyrights and Related Rights in AV Sector

The rich cultural diversity and economic potential of this region is currently stifled by fragmented legal and administrative systems, uneven policy implementations, and a lack of coordinated, strategic initiatives for cross-border cooperation. There is a lack of structure and organization of management of audio-visual copyright and related rights in the region. The two days International Forum for Copyright and related rights will bring European lead Collective Management Organizations such as SAA, AEPO-ARTIS, SCAPR and others from the Balkan region to one place to discuss about the needed steps for further development of this field as something which is from great importance for the development of the CCI's. With a transnational cooperation of different European CMO's in an organized and structured way, experiences will be exchanged and the principal objective is to achieve regional collaboration, which will be made possible by dissolving legal and administrative barriers, fostering the uptake of shared solutions, and guaranteeing persistent cross-border cooperation. The main ambition is to cultivate a harmonious cultural and socio-economic environment that offers long-term benefits to the communities of the region. By reshaping the regional landscape, we pave the way for a future that is prosperous, unified, and cooperative, thereby making a long-lasting impact on the region and its people. In the longer term, the project's outputs will support the development of the creative sector and contribute to the region's economic growth. It will empower creators and businesses, particularly SMEs, by simplifying administrative processes and protecting their rights.

**Production:** AZAS Skopje

**Partners:** SAA, AEPO-ARTIS, SCAPR, Association of Artists of Macedonia

## b.creative International conference

b.creative is a global event series focusing on the transversal nature of the creative sector and its capacity to foster social and economic innovation. b.creative aims to build bridges between the diversity of stakeholders linked to creative entrepreneurship, coming from the business, the technological, the scientific, the arts, cultural and creative sectors to establish dialogues with policy makers. b.creative is an association connecting young creative professionals worldwide to encourage cross-cultural collaborations and foster creative entrepreneurship. It gathers today more than 2000 contacts across creative industries, hubs, associations or networks throughout the world. b.creative in Skopje will focus on creative entrepreneurship and urban challenges and will be linked to the ECoC programme. It could also present the winners of a b.creative Challenge focusing on cooperation between creative workers from Skopje and the other two ECoCs in 2028.

**Production:** b.Creative Brussels, UMPAKI Skopje and KEA European Affairs – Brussels

**Partners:** Montpellier ECoC2028, Budejovice ECoC2028

## Joint internationalization actions for creative businesses

The cultural and creative sectors are mostly made out of talented start-ups and creative individuals. These companies are often properly incubated by local or national sponsored programmes, yet they are challenged to further grow past the incubation stage, due to the difficulty to reach new markets. For many creative companies, national markets are very small as their customer basis is a niche one, so their growth is correlated to their ability to access new European markets and emerging economies where creativity is in high demand.

**In particular, creative businesses face a number of challenges:**

- Lack of scale (start-ups and SMEs) and funds to launch activities abroad
- International branding and marketing is very expensive for CCIs
- Need to establish a network of trusted commercial partners
- Insufficient marketing and sales skills
- Raising investment money to go international
- Protection of IP rights
- Training needs on market access regulations

**The project would aim at developing a joint internationalisation strategy and action plan with selected partner creative hubs and clusters, by:**

1. Mapping the needs of creative businesses to export their goods and services (in each hub/cluster).
2. Providing an inventory of export tools and support schemes available, covering inter alia digital and financial aspects
3. Encouraging cross-border collaboration and clustering among the consortium partners
4. Developing training tools and methods tailored to creative businesses
5. Launching joint trade missions and peer-learning and doing schemes (e.g. mentoring and job-shadowing)

**Production:** UMPAKI Skopje and KEA European Affairs – Brussels

**Partners:** Montpellier ECoC 2028, Budejovice ECoC 2028



## 12. Explain succinctly how the cultural programme will combine local cultural heritage and traditional art forms with new, innovative, and experimental cultural expressions?

“We view digitalization as a tool that extends an invitation to citizens and collaborators beyond national borders, fostering creativity and cultural cooperation to elevate awareness of shared history and values across the European landscape. Our focus is on enhancing Skopje’s cultural infrastructure as the European Capital of Culture 2028. We consider digital innovations as a foundation upon which an innovative approach to the development and dissemination of cultural values can be built.”

Skopje holds the distinction of not only being the capital of Republic of North Macedonia but also a cultural epicentre. The city boasts a diverse population composed of migrants from various ethnic and religious backgrounds, who have migrated over time in pursuit of improved lives, bringing with them their unique cultural practices. This amalgamation has given rise to an array of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, spanning from physical sites and objects to intricate cultural traditions. It is crucial to underscore that many of these cultural customs, nurtured through generations, remain vibrant and integral to the daily lives of the inhabitants. However, for heritage to endure and thrive, it must acclimate to its cultural milieu, evolving and aligning with contemporary technological advancements and innovations.

Throughout its history, the city has epitomized integration, with people coexisting, labouring, and participating in collective social and cultural transformations as a unified entity. During the early 2000s, significant political changes brought forth divisive narratives within the city, giving rise to ideas of separation among its populace and eroding the collective commitment to heritage. Today, Skopje challenges an unjustified situation, where formidable disintegrative forces materialise as a genuine threat, starkly contrasted against its vibrant history of unity and mutually beneficial coexistence.

Therefore, our aim is to present a program that is inclusive and open to everyone, transcending distinctions of ethnicity, nationality, religion, and age. To us, heritage holds paramount significance as a conduit for fostering connection and integration. This is especially true given that many heritage practices have emerged as a fusion of two, and at times three, cultural influences. This is a reflection of Skopje’s historical position as a crossroads of diverse cultures.

Within the framework of the Skopje2028 cultural programme, we’ve emphasized the rich cultural HeritAGE’S that define Skopje’s historical essence, employing inventive methodologies and digital tools. To realize this, we’ve crafted a distinct sub-programme named HeritAGE’S within the Togetherness strand, aiming to showcase the city’s cultural legacy in a contemporary light. In societal conversations, it’s frequently highlighted that heritage practices endure across AGES, underscoring their vital role in preservation. This concept vibrates intensely with us, driving the conception of HeritAGE’S. This concept embodies a rich tapestry of diverse cultural expressions and varied forms of heritage, underlining the importance of cultural transmission spanning both past and future generations. HeritAGE’S, a meticulously crafted endeavour, speaks to all age groups—the custodians of our traditions, our grandparents, as well as our children, on the brink of discovering heritage’s essence. It calls upon forthcoming generations to embrace these HeritAGE’S, ensuring their enduring legacy for times to come.

Within this sub-programme, we have crafted three flagship projects:

### Macedonian Heritage

Macedonian Heritage is a collaborative venture merging heritage and digital innovation. Expert heritage researchers collaborate with renowned videographers and photographers to craft a digital archive on a website. This archive showcases Macedonia’s diverse natural, tangible, and intangible cultural heritage through information, photos, and videos. This multiyear project encompasses on-site ethnographic research and will culminate in an interactive platform. The archive will be presented as a captivating photography and video exhibition during the European Cultural Heritage Days’ launch.

**Produced by:** The Society for Research, Protection, and Promotion of Cultural Heritage VULGUS Skopje

**Project partners:** UNESCO Department, Ministry of Culture of Republic of North Macedonia; Marko Cepenkov Institute of Folklore in Skopje; Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe under the Auspices of UNESCO

## Heritage Scopes

Heritage Scopes is a multimedia exhibit at the Ethnographic Museum, showcasing ethnographic photography and films tracing Republic of North Macedonia's heritage research history. The exhibit also presents contemporary photographers and filmmakers' fresh creations capturing the living heritage of local communities, encompassing carnivals, rituals, and everyday life. Following the exhibit, an electronic music event at Skopje Fortress, featuring Terapija and DJ Kiril Džajkovski, bridges electronic and traditional music.

**Produced by:** The Museum of the Republic of North Macedonia.

**Project partners:** Cinematheque of Republic of North Macedonia; Macedonian Academy of Arts and Sciences; Marko Cepenkov Institute of Folklore in Skopje; Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University; Terapija; Kiril Džajkovski.

## Postcards from Skopje

"Postcards from Skopje" is a collaborative concert at the newly constructed Universal Hall, spotlighting traditional music and dance. This event celebrates Skopje's diverse communities through music, paying homage to the fusion of cultural influences that shaped the distinct "chalgija" sound. This historic collaboration among institutions highlights cooperation among artists from Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, and Romani backgrounds, showcasing the city's vibrant heritage.

**Produced by:** Tanec National Ensemble for Dances and Songs of Macedonia.

**Project partners:** Albanian National Song and Dance Ensemble; Department of Traditional Music and Dance by the Ilija Nikolovski-Luj State Music and Ballet School Centre; Chalgija Sound System, Ljubojna, Džambo Aguševi Orchestra and internationally celebrated artists such as Duke Bojadziev and Ismail Lumanovski.

## 13. How has the city involved, or how does it plan to involve, local artists and cultural organisations in the conception and implementation of the cultural programme?

The inception of Skopje's ambition to become the European Capital of Culture 2028 dates back to 2014, with a pivotal turn in 2019 when robust political backing laid the groundwork for a potent candidacy. This effort aimed to not only position the city on the cultural map but also integrate culture seamlessly into its development strategies. Starting in 2019, an enthusiastic endeavor was set into motion, bringing together local artists and cultural practitioners from Skopje. This collaborative initiative embraced a series of interactive sessions, including joint brainstorming, cooperative work meetings, dynamic workshops, enlightening lectures, and a diverse array of activities. Collectively, these elements converged to sculpt the core essence of the program's overarching concept.

Initiating its journey, the city adopted a comprehensive strategy encompassing surveys tailored for cultural institutions and individuals, comprising artists, cultural professionals, and practitioners. Implemented over the course of 2020 and 2021, these endeavors yielded results that propelled Skopje into the following phase as a robust competitor.

The commitment to inclusivity continued into the second candidacy phase, fostering engagement with various groups and individuals through meaningful discussions. A pivotal step was taken with the launch of a public call, aimed at gathering a diverse range of program proposals. Notably, administrative obstacles were overcome to empower selected cultural producers to autonomously execute the program, while still following common guidelines, especially in marketing.

This commitment to inclusivity reverberated as the city curated exceptional proposals through the public call. These carefully chosen ideas shaped the bedrock of the application book, forming the basis for the program structure. Categorized into four themes—Art4Hope, Togetherness, reCOVering, and CreARTing—each resonates with Skopje's cultural vibrancy and aspirations.

Currently, both local artist and cultural organization are actively engaged in daily initiatives that contribute to the enrichment of Skopje's cultural scene.

## II. European dimension

### 14. Give a general outline of the activities foreseen in view of:

- Promoting the cultural diversity of Europe, intercultural dialogue, and greater mutual understanding between European citizens.
- Highlighting the common aspects of European cultures, heritage, and history, as well as European integration and current European themes.
- Featuring European artists, cooperation with operators and cities in different countries, and transnational partnerships.

*"Skopje is not a film, it is not a thriller in which we guess the main event. It is a concentration of the human struggle for freedom with a result that inspires further struggles and not accepting defeat."* - Jean Paul Sartre

A notable figure in French philosophy and literature conveyed a heartfelt message to the city that weathered the 1963 earthquake, encapsulating the resilience and determination of its inhabitants. Often likened to a phoenix, this city, esteemed for its global unity, is presently striving to showcase its essence through its candidacy for ECoC 2028.

The European Capital of Culture stands as a robust bridge between European values and local heritage, fostering reciprocal exchange. It functions as a stage to illuminate the multiculturalism and inventive spirit of both the Balkans and Europe. ECoC 2028 presents an unparalleled occasion to unveil pioneering art, enrich cultural consciousness, attract fresh audiences, and propel Skopje towards its modernization aspirations. The scope for transformation is vast.

Our ultimate aspiration, encapsulated in the motto **“CULTURE OVER DIVISION,”** forms the cornerstone and potential catalyst for change. The Skopje2028 program leads to a metamorphosis in how people perceive their city and their individual roles in the cultural narrative, forging closer connections to European culture. This encompasses not only a shift in mentality but also enduring alterations in politics, policies, societal concerns, education, and citizen involvement. These facets collectively contribute to situating Skopje on Europe’s cultural panorama as an enticing destination.

With the intent of transformation, we aim to meld Skopje into an even more alluring place for habitation and exploration. We also anticipate these changes will reverberate through the populace, particularly among the youth. We foresee positive transformations emerging within the cultural, urban, and social spheres, some of which have already commenced. The proposed project concepts carry a distinctly European dimension, and we intend to realize them in collaboration with numerous European partners. These initiatives will remain integral to the program, evolving further through additional confirmed European and local partnerships, contingent upon being granted the prestigious title.

- **We’ve harmonized our concept with the European ethos, interlinking it through our four platforms: Art4Hope, Togetherness, rECOvering, and CreARTing;**
- **Embrace the European concept and dimension of Skopje2028;**
- **Engage citizens in both crafting and executing initiatives;**
- **Cultivate elevated creative excellence;**
- **Foster innovation;**
- **Cultivate fresh audiences enriched with robust educational benefits;**
- **Prioritize digital and cutting-edge technologies;**
- **Apply an interdisciplinary approach to all projects and activities;**

Our visionary concept centres on cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, and mutual understanding – the foundations of our mission to foster peace and counter radicalization through intercultural exchange.

Skopje’s history of intercultural, interreligious, and interlinguistic harmony, rooted in ongoing dialogue, enriches our efforts to champion diversity, interculturalism, multilingualism, and a shared European identity.

Our ambitious goals require a balanced synergy of time, energy, resources, and creative space for diverse artistic potential to flourish. Crafting the European Capital of Culture 2028 program is a bold effort. At its core, Skopje2028’s program champions culture’s unifying power over divisions, aligning with the broader European Capital of Culture mission that emphasizes culture as a quintessential European dimension.

Skopje collaborates intensely with European partners, artists, and cultural pioneers from past and prospective European Capital of Culture cities. Foreign artists and producers from diverse European hubs actively contribute to our program. Our vision transcends boundaries, and we foresee this candidacy boosting cultural tourism, enriching our city and nation.

With foresight and diligence, we sustain ongoing processes, with the ultimate ambition of elevating Skopje to the esteemed ranks of European Capital of Culture cities.

An area we’ll focus prominently on is the significance of culture within the framework of European integration. We perceive a nation’s EU accession as more than just a political and economic choice; it also reflects the cultural and civilizational inclinations of its populace. Culture constitutes a component of the negotiation chapters that all aspiring candidate countries must fulfill to attain EU membership status.

Beyond art and culture’s role in addressing societal inequalities, our collaborative program with international partners will focus on the following themes:

- **Enhancing European cities’ resilience through culture.**
- **Cultivating cultural diplomacy in the Western Balkans.**
- **Empowering youth participation through innovative digital tools.**

These themes resonate with numerous European cities and their cultural strategies. Today, Europe and the world grapple with pressing challenges tied to war, energy, climate, migration, and more. These issues impact identity, affiliation, and peaceful coexistence.

Our motto **“CULTURE OVER DIVISION”** stems from Skopje’s multicultural heritage, driving us to rethink and rejuvenate culture based on principles like intrinsic value, diversity’s strength, dialogue’s synergy, and culture’s contribution to development.

**Artistic Excellence & Notable Events:** Acclaimed artists, exhibitions, festivals, conferences, and art residencies collaborate with esteemed European institutions, ensuring Skopje's European prominence.

**Beams of Culture:** Innovative tech crafts digital and visual content, fostering interactive connections between different global cities, facilitating access, exploration, and communication.

**Skopje 2028 Ambassadors:** Our approach humanizes communication, leveraging individuals as carriers. Ambassadors extend globally through strategic partnerships in Europe and beyond.

Skopje is intricately woven into international networks, including EUROCITIES (Associate member), Energy Cities, European Cities Marketing, LUCI, CTIF, ECF, Association of Metropolises of Francophonie (AIMF), Global Parliament of Mayors, European Cycling Federation (ECF), International Fire Protection and Rescue Organization (CTIF), B40 network cities, General Parliament of Mayors, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), Turkish World Union of Municipalities (TDBB), Bloomberg Cities, and B20 network cities. The City of Skopje actively participated in initiatives like the LIKE Network of European Cities and Region for Culture (Les Rencontres), UNECE Forum of Mayors, U20, G20, The Future of Urban Cities, LSE Cities, and the Global Parliament of Mayors, where it holds a position within the Executive Committee.

Through our network of 23 twin cities spanning Europe and other continents, including Bradford, Great Britain (1961), Dijon, Republic of France (1961), Dresden, Federal Republic of Germany (1967), Tempe (Arizona), USA (1971), Roubaix, Republic of France (1973), Wareme, Kingdom of Belgium (1974), Nuremberg, Federal Republic of Germany (1982), Chelif, Algeria (1983), Nanchang, People's Republic of China (1985), Manisa, Republic of Turkey (1985), Suez, Egypt (1985), Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania) USA (2001), Istanbul, Republic of Turkey (2003), Ljubljana, Republic of Slovenia (2007), Podgorica, Montenegro (2008), Zaragoza, Kingdom of Spain (2008), Zagreb, Republic of Croatia (2011), Belgrade, Republic of Serbia (2012), Tirana, Republic of Albania (2016), Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (2017), Athens, Greece (2018), Konya, Turkey (2022), and Izmir, Turkey (2023).

Within the scope of our collaboration with twin cities, noteworthy partnerships include:

- Dijon, Republic of France (1961) – Featuring numerous solo and group exhibitions by our artists;
- Dresden, Federal Republic of Germany (1967) – Engaging in multi-faceted cooperation and artist exchanges, highlighted by exhibitions;
- Tempe (Arizona), USA (1971) – Annual high school student exchanges centred on culture, gastronomy, tradition, and education;
- Roubaix, Republic of France (1973) – Facilitating high school student exchanges and collaborative workshops;
- Wareme, Kingdom of Belgium (1974) – Collaborative involvement in international art colonies;
- Nuremberg, Federal Republic of Germany (1982) – Multiple cultural collaborations, including street art, art colonies, and workshops during artist exchanges;
- Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania) USA (2001) – Active participation in international art colonies;
- Ljubljana, Republic of Slovenia (2007) – Artist exchanges within international art colonies, coupled with high school student exchanges;
- Podgorica, Montenegro (2008) – Artist exchanges spanning international art colonies, workshops, and writers' residencies;
- Zaragoza, Kingdom of Spain (2008) – Vibrant international art colonies;
- Zagreb, Republic of Croatia (2011) – Offering curator training, art colonies, and workshops;
- Belgrade, Republic of Serbia (2012) – Hosting curator training, art colonies, and workshops;
- Tirana, Republic of Albania (2016) – Promoting Macedonian language book releases in Albania, alongside art colonies;
- Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (2017) – Showcasing Macedonian language book releases and engaging in international art colonies;
- Athens, Greece (2018) – Solidified through a Cooperation Agreement, involving international art colonies, workshops, and writers' residencies.

Numerous cultural entities in Skopje have actively participated in numerous international projects and networks, particularly within the European cultural sphere. This assertion is substantiated by Skopje's noteworthy achievement of ranking ninth among all European cities for the number of projects funded through the Creative Europe program (Culture sub-program) during 2014-2020.

Starting from 2017, Skopje has actively collaborated with the CreArt Project, backed by the Creative Europe program. By becoming a part of the CreArt cities network, Skopje has introduced fresh visual arts initiatives, fostering international partnerships and exchanges. This engagement also facilitates Skopje-based artists and curators' involvement in program activities across partner cities. Notably, the Youth Cultural Centre, a city cultural institution, holds full membership in Liveurope, the esteemed network of European concert halls.

In 2023, Skopje, alongside its collaborators, has been chosen for the third instalment of the CreArt3 project under the Creative Europe program 2021-2027. Additionally, the city of Skopje engages in initiatives funded by various European Union programs, including Horizon 2020, ECHO, and IPA Programme.

Outlined on the next page are projects wherein the city is a partnering entity, receiving funding or co-funding from European Union programs:

**CreArt**, led by Valladolid (Spain), unites medium-sized European cities to amplify the social, economic, and cultural contributions of visual arts to local communities. Through an enduring European Exchange program, emerging creators gain training and promotion opportunities: collective exhibitions, artist-in-residence programs, workshops, European conferences, and local actions like the European month of creativity. CreArt nurtures European collaboration, enriching activities from local to European scales for public entities, artists, managers, and citizens. It's a shared space, enhancing creativity and Europeanism.

**WELLBASED** aims to establish, execute, and assess six urban initiatives focused on alleviating energy poverty and its effects on citizens' health and wellbeing. The project involves twenty partners from ten countries, with coordination led by the Las Naves Foundation in Spain. Pilot cities include Valencia (Spain), Haarlem (the Netherlands), Leeds (Great Britain), Edirne (Turkey), Obuda (Hungary), and Jelgava (Latvia). The City of Skopje will develop a program modeled after the pilot cities, benefiting from shared experiences and contributing to the exchange program. Learn more at [www.wellbased.eu](http://www.wellbased.eu).

**MAchUP**, funded by the EU, unites three leading cities (Valencia, Dresden, Antalya) and four followers (Ostend, Herzliya, Skopje, Kerava). The goal is to reshape urban models for social inclusion, prosperity, and livability. Innovative solutions in energy, mobility, and ICT sectors will set a benchmark for other cities, promoting renewables, sustainable mobility, and tech investment. MAchUP empowers smart communities, sparks local economies, and serves as a replicable urban transformation model driven by citizens and stakeholders. <http://www.matchup-project.eu>

### **Re-Construct - Re-Cycle and Re-Use of Construction and Demolition Waste**

Led by the City of Skopje in collaboration with PE Deponia Drisla, the Municipality of Nova Gorica, and the Northern Coastal Regional Agency DOO-Nova Gorica, this initiative focuses on enhancing Skopje's circular economy capabilities and construction waste reutilization. The project involves identifying and addressing illegal landfills while promoting the repurposing of processed rubble.

EU project "**ROCK - Regeneration and Optimization of Cultural Heritage in Creative and Knowledge Cities.**" While concluded in 2021, it stands as a significant cultural effort. ROCK, funded by Horizon 2020, represents a pioneering effort where cultural heritage intertwines with creative industries, leveraging innovative methods to ensure sustainability. Learn more at: <https://rockproject.eu/>

Much like words form the chapters of a book, Skopje's streets compose the epic tale of the capital—infusing it with life, inscribing its triumphs and trials, and etching the marks of history's dance alongside the cultural blend and unity among its inhabitants. Skopje, cultural kin of Europe, paints its identity onto the urban canvas through 25 central streets christened after renowned European cities and countries: Dubrovnik, Athens, Brussels, Budapest, Bucharest, Warsaw, Vienna, Dresden, Copenhagen, Ljubljana, Oslo, Prague, Rome, Stockholm, Helsinki, Petrich, Vukovar, Lerin, Paris, Sofia, The Hague, and more. Each street stands as a permanent emblem of European culture, weaving an indelible narrative across the city. These streets weave a tapestry that melds and preserves the city's soul, recounting extraordinary tales, and leaving behind a legacy cherished by generations.

Skopje, joined by the Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes Academic Region in France, the French Embassy, the French Institute in Skopje, and the National Agency for European Programmes and Mobility, have birthed a partnership. This alliance thrives on collaboration and the exchange of teaching staff, students, and innovative pedagogical practices, bridging Macedonian and French secondary schools. Within the embrace of the Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes Academic Region lies a trinity of academies: Clermont-Ferrand, Lyon, and Grenoble.

In the upcoming near term, Skopje will play host to a series of highly significant events that converge the values of unity. Organizing the event "Promoting International Cooperation, Cultural Understanding & Peace," Skopje's Culture Diplomacy initiative aims to bring together more than 100 esteemed individuals from international politics, business, art, and academia.

November 2023 will witness the Skopje Summit of the Global Parliament of Mayors, an assembly of 100 mayors from around the globe. This notable gathering stands as a testament to Skopje's prowess in hosting and organizing significant international events.

From August 30 to September 6, 2023, the European Volleyball Championship will take place in Skopje. A Memorandum of Cooperation, in collaboration with the Macedonian Volleyball Federation and the Agency for Promotion and Support of Tourism in Macedonia, underscores the event's anticipation to draw sports enthusiasts, journalists, and sports delegations. In July 2025, Skopje will proudly host the esteemed European Youth Olympic Games, organized by the city. With EU support, this event presents an opportunity to enhance infrastructure and capacity, thus benefitting emerging athletes. The participation of over 4000 young athletes from 50 European countries is foreseen. A Memorandum of Cooperation has been signed with the Macedonian Olympic Committee and the European Olympic Committee.

## 15. Can you explain your overall strategy to attract the interest of a broad European and international public?

Our greatest advantage lies in the exceptional capacity of our artists, creatives, and cultural entities to curate an exceptional program infused with a robust European essence. This prowess serves as our trump card, poised to captivate both European and global audiences. Distinguished international performers and top-tier artistic events integrated into our program are poised to magnetize a diverse range of local and international audiences, whether domestic or abroad.

While our primary focus remains on fostering engagement within our geographic and cultural proximity, which includes former Yugoslavian and neighboring countries such as Kosovo, Albania, Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria, our outreach efforts extend far beyond these borders. Guided by a meticulously crafted plan, an integral facet of our expansive marketing and communication strategy, we are prepared to permeate the entirety of Europe with our cultural offerings.

Central Pillars of Our International Engagement Strategy:

**Innovative Approach:** As we navigate the era of digital culture, our commitment to innovation stands resolute. By seamlessly blending cultural, entertainment, and educational content, we unveil a distinctive approach that resonates with foreign audiences seeking unique experiences.

**Leveraging Digital Media:** Our virtual presence emerges as the cornerstone of international visibility. Given the pervasive influence of digital media, especially among the youth, harnessing the power of social networks and online platforms becomes imperative.

**International Collaborations:** Skopje's cultural institutions and organizations are deeply entrenched within international networks and alliances. Leveraging these affiliations, we harness the existing ties that local cultural actors have with foreign counterparts. A targeted action plan, extending until 2028, empowers eight city cultural institutions to collaboratively promote the project on the global stage.

**Global Cultural Ambassadors:** Distinguished figures encompassing the realms of culture, academia, and sports, residing and working across European and other foreign territories, are poised to play a pivotal role in amplifying our message through interactions with the international media. The International Relations Unit within the Skopje2028 Foundation orchestrates and coordinates their impactful endeavors.

**Engaging the Diaspora:** Republic of North Macedonia's widespread diaspora spans continents from Europe to North America and Australia. This diverse community, particularly its second and third-generation members, maintains a strong bond with their homeland. Moreover, the economic migration surge since 2009, notably to European countries like Germany, has woven a tapestry of cultural needs among intellectuals and migrants. This unique blend of expatriates, equipped with a profound connection to their roots, serves as powerful ambassadors capable of fostering genuine connections and promoting the essence of Skopje2028 to a global audience.





## 16. To what extent do you plan to develop links between your cultural programme and the cultural programme of other cities holding the European Capital of Culture title?

During this subsequent phase, we have further cultivated our relationships with shortlisted cities across the globe, as well as various institutions that lend their support in the realm of culture. We have convened meetings to deliberate and establish strategies for collaborative endeavours in the forthcoming years, identifying shared elements within our cultural agendas.

The candidacy of the City of Skopje for the European Capital of Culture 2028 title gains support from various cities, both those vying for the title themselves and those that currently hold the European Capital of Culture designation:

- In 2021, Skopje signed a letter of intent with the Slovak city of Trenčín, the European Capital of Culture for 2026. The two cities have established areas of collaboration that encompass the European dimension, inclusion and participation, environmental aspirations, personalization of cultural engagement within the region, the formulation of artistic and cultural programs, and the enhancement of capacities and communication. The specifics of the collaborative projects will be elaborated upon during the selection phase.
- In 2022, Skopje signed a letter of intent with the French candidate city Rouen, the European Capital of Culture for 2028. This collaborative effort encompasses several areas of cooperation, including the European dimension, inclusion and participation, environmental goals, personalization, and identification of cultural contributors within the region, as well as the development of artistic and cultural programs, and the enhancement of capacities and communication. Additionally, the collaboration extends to specific projects such as Roman Fleuve, (Re)sources, Seine monumental, and Scouting Skopje.
- During the year 2022, Skopje signed a letter of intent with the French candidate city of Clermont-Ferrand, slated for the European Capital of Culture in 2028. This collaboration encompasses a range of domains, including the European dimension, inclusion and participation, environmental aspirations, personalization of cultural stakeholders within the region, development of an artistic and cultural program, and the reinforcement of capacities and communication. The specifics of the collaborative endeavours are set to be comprehensively outlined in the subsequent selection phase.
- In the year 2022, Skopje signed a letter of intent with the Czech candidate city of České Budějovice, slated for the European Capital of Culture title in 2028. The two cities have outlined their collaborative efforts across various realms, encompassing the European dimension, inclusion and participation, environmental aspirations, personalization of cultural entities within the region, creation of an artistic and cultural program, and the reinforcement of capacities and communication. Furthermore, a joint project linked to our socialist history and historical legacy is to be jointly designed during the selection phase. This project will also involve collaboration within the ambit of initiatives such as Scouting Skopje, ARS BIOLOGICA, SPACE ODYSSEY, ART, CITY, REGION, LITERARY QUARTER, and THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED (2028) projects.
- During the year 2022, Skopje signed into a collaboration agreement with the Portuguese candidate city of Braga, slated for the European Capital of Culture in 2027. The collaborative endeavour centers around a joint project called “Supracasa,” which is an Artists-In-Residence Programme. This comprehensive initiative is designed by Braga’s ECoC team and entails a long-term program of multidisciplinary artistic residencies. The focus of “Supracasa” lies in facilitating the participation of their neighbours from Northern Africa, the Balkans, Ukraine, Russia, and the Caucasus. As part of this collaboration, Skopje has extended an offer to its Portuguese counterpart, proposing the Scouting Skopje mutual project—a mobile artists/creators in residence program scheduled for the years 2023 to 2029. The specifics of these two projects’ collaboration will be expounded upon during the selection phase.
- During the year 2022, Skopje established a collaborative partnership with the Norwegian city of Bodo, a candidate for the title of European Capital of Culture in 2024. The primary objective of this collaboration is to jointly organize cultural, communal, educational, and communication activities. These initiatives are intended to have a significant impact on both the Skopje 2028 project and the legacy projects and institutions associated with Bodø2024.
- In the year 2022, Skopje signed a letter of intent with the Croatian city of Rijeka, which held the title of European Capital of Culture in 2022. The two cities have outlined areas of collaboration, encompassing a European dimension, inclusivity, participation, environmental goals, personalized engagement of cultural individuals within the region, the development of artistic and cultural programs, and the enhancement of capacities and communication. The specifics of their joint projects are slated to be elaborated upon during the selection phase.
- During the year 2022, Skopje signed a letter of intent with the Serbian city of Novi Sad, which held the title of European Capital of Culture in 2021. The two cities have defined realms of collaboration, encompassing the European dimension, inclusion, participation, environmental aspirations, personalized involvement of cultural individuals within the region, crafting of artistic and cultural programs, as well as strengthening capacities and communication. The specifics of their collaborative initiatives are set to be meticulously outlined in the subsequent selection phase.
- In 2023, Skopje signed a letter of intent with Maribor, a Slovenian city that held the title of European Capital of Culture in 2012. This collaboration entails engagement with the Institute for Media Communications, the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, and the Maribor Slovene National Theatre. Within the realm of artistic expression, encompassing music, dance, and drama, the collaboration aims to evoke the concept of prosperous authors, facilitating

cooperation among diverse national and ethnic groups within the Balkan region. Additionally, the Maribor Puppet Theatre, in conjunction with the Theatre for Children and Youth, will present performances tailored for the youngest audience members.

- In 2023, a letter of intent was signed between Skopje and the City of Sarajevo, outlining their commitment to collaboration. The two cities have delineated areas of cooperation that involve enhancing the European dimension, enriching the cultural landscape, and nurturing significant connections that transcend borders.

- With utmost enthusiasm, the Municipality of Jesenice pledges its unwavering support to Skopje2028. As kindred spirits in the pursuit of cultural excellence, we are thrilled to stand by your side on this remarkable journey. Through shared aspirations, creativity, and collaboration, our alliance envisions a tapestry of cross-cultural connections, weaving our communities together in a narrative of unity. The Municipality of Jesenice is honored to play a part in shaping the vibrant chapters of Skopje's cultural evolution in 2028 and beyond.

- With resounding enthusiasm, the Municipality of Tirana extends its unwavering support to Skopje2028. Bound by a shared passion for cultural advancement, we are excited to stand alongside you on this transformative journey. Through our collaborative efforts, we aim to foster a tapestry of cultural exchange and shared creativity that will transcend boundaries and resonate far beyond our cities. The Municipality of Tirana is proud to contribute to the vibrant mosaic of Skopje's cultural landscape in 2028 and beyond, embracing the power of unity through the arts.

- Bradford, the twinned city of the UK's City of Culture 2025, expresses its endorsement for Skopje's aspiration to be designated as the European Capital of Culture for 2028. This collaboration encompasses various dimensions, including the exchange of artists, joint cultural initiatives, art-oriented visits, captivating performances, engaging art exhibitions, and an array of cultural events. This partnership is set to unfold between 2024 and 2028, fostering a vibrant cultural exchange and enhancing both cities' artistic landscapes.

Letters of intent as expressions of support are received from universities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), national institutions, federations, and institutes, as outlined below:

- The European Network of Information Centres for the Performing Arts (ENICPA) is a specialized network encompassing European experts in the domains of performing arts information, documentation, and collections. Comprising 17 member organizations spanning 15 diverse European nations, ENICPA contributes to fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange in this field.

- The Faculty of Fine Arts at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje holds the distinction of being the Republic of North Macedonia's pioneering institution of its kind. This faculty encompasses a comprehensive array of studies, spanning fine arts, art pedagogy, arts and crafts, design, visual culture, and various other disciplines.

- Based in Skopje, the NGO Union of Macedonian Professional Associations in the Creative Industries (UMPAKI) plays a pivotal role in advocating, fostering, and safeguarding culture and heritage. This union achieves its mission through active engagement and the orchestration of diverse activities.

- The Goethe-Institute Skopje's letter of intent aims to establish a foundation for forthcoming collaboration, primarily focused on orchestrating impactful cultural, communal, educational, and communicative activities. This partnership holds significance for both the ECoC Goethe-Institute project and the Skopje 2028 initiative.

- The Federation for European Storytelling (FEST) is a global alliance comprising organizations, networks, and associations engaged in the realm of oral storytelling. With a presence across 28 diverse countries, FEST boasts 99 members who stand as representatives of national, regional, or local entities such as professional storytelling associations, festival coordinators, storytelling training hubs, local governance bodies, academic institutions, colleges, universities, cultural centres, and libraries. Their shared emphasis lies in nurturing the practice of oral storytelling.

- The Institute for Macedonian Literature at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje is a publicly funded establishment dedicated to conducting scholarly research and providing advanced educational endeavours in the domains of history, Macedonian literature, and culture.

- NGO HAEMUS - Center for Scientific Research and Cultural Promotion, is an entity engaged in scholarly research and the advancement of Balkan Peninsula cultures across the realms of archaeology, culture, history, and art.

- NGO "Classroom eight 8" - Skopje, a civic organization of artists situated in Republic of North Macedonia.

- University American College Skopje is a private higher education institution that blends the finest aspects of American and European educational traditions. Its establishment is rooted in the belief that education enhances the lives of all individuals, recognizing their inherent equality.

- Established in 1964, the NI Museum of Contemporary Art (MoCA) in Skopje stands as a public institution that originated from a multitude of artistic contributions bestowed upon the city by creators and organizations worldwide.

- QENDRA MULTIMEDIA, located in Pristina, Kosovo, functions as a cultural entity primarily dedicated to contemporary theatre and literature.

- NGO Cet Platforma – Skopje operates as a non-profit organization engaging in various domains including fostering civil society progress, advocating for and safeguarding human rights, promoting moral and civic principles, enhancing inter-ethnic harmony, empowering youth in the community, upholding media liberties, rights, and benchmarks, as well as contributing to economic advancement.
- The NI Memorial House of Todor Proeski in Krushevo stands as a public institution and a tribute to Todor Proeski, a celebrated singer and philanthropist who holds a significant place in the contemporary history of Republic of North Macedonia.
- The NI National Opera and Ballet in Republic of North Macedonia serves as a public establishment encompassing the National Opera and Ballet. With its robust organizational and technical capabilities, the institution provides versatile event spaces. It boasts two stages, with seating capacities of 811 and 200 respectively, accommodating a range of performances.
- The NGO Association of Artists Macedonian Center of International Theatre Institute/Production in Skopje is dedicated to the global advancement of local Macedonian contemporary performing arts, encompassing theatre, opera/musical theatre, dance, and performance.
- AKI-Association for Creative Industries-Economic Chamber of Republic of North Macedonia is dedicated to nurturing and bolstering the Creative Industries. We wholeheartedly recognize the immense significance of endeavours that embrace and amplify cultural diversity, artistic ingenuity, and community involvement. The potential influence of Skopje 2028 as a European Capital of Culture harmonizes seamlessly with our foundational principles and ambitions. In light of the aforementioned, we extend our complete endorsement for Skopje 2028's candidacy for European Capital of Culture and commit to collaborating, pooling resources, and actively participating in the realization of this extraordinary undertaking.
- Creative Placemakers (Ireland) is a distinguished creative development agency that has garnered multiple awards for its expertise in conceptualizing, strategizing, designing, and executing strategic creative interventions.
- Einkofi Productions Ehf (Iceland) is a self-reliant arts organization with a global reach, adept at interlinking music, art, design, technology, literature, performance, and education. They possess proficiency in Creative Europe and Nordic/International collaboration, capable of initiating and facilitating funding, strategy, development, and execution of creative ventures.
- The French Institute of Skopje is a cultural institution dedicated to fostering the appreciation of the French language and cultural richness. It focuses on enhancing cultural interchange and collaboration while also providing assistance to education and research endeavours.
- NGO Macedonian 2025 is a non-political "think & do" tank established by Macedonian expatriates, with an international scope. Its primary objective is to catalyze sustainable economic development aimed at enhancing prospects for citizens, businesses, and foreign investors.
- Fascholschule Dortmund University of Applied Arts, located in Dortmund, Germany, stands among the ten largest universities of applied sciences in the country. The institution provides a diverse range of over 80 study programs encompassing fields such as computer science, engineering, business, social sciences, architecture, and design.
- Adriapol Institute, situated in Albania, is dedicated to the development and execution of projects that embrace a social perspective on entrepreneurial initiatives, seeking innovative solutions for sustainable growth.
- The TARTU CENTRE FOR CREATIVE INDUSTRIES acts as a regional hub for the development of creative sectors. It operates as a coordinator for creative industries in the Tartu and South Estonia region, offering services such as information dissemination, training programs, and legal and economic consultations tailored to support creative entrepreneurs.
- The ATO Centre, located in Bitola, Republic of North Macedonia, serves as a hub for Contemporary Art & Culture. This center is dedicated to organizing a range of events within the performing arts and theatre realm.
- The "Sloboda nema cenu" Citizens' Association, based in Novi Sad, Serbia, is an NGO focused on increasing public consciousness about human trafficking. They achieve this through the organization of events such as art exhibitions, street art performances, and workshops.
- The Association for Social, Cultural, and Creative Development "ZORA" is an NGO located in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The organization operates across various domains, including promoting civil society advancement, safeguarding human rights, fostering the inclusion of youth in society, and supporting the creative industries.
- The collaboration between MI Production in Republic of North Macedonia and Mexico will come to fruition by actively participating in the Skopje2028 initiative, wherein a collaborative project will be undertaken.
- MGI in Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia, will engage in collaboration through active involvement in the Skopje2028 program, aiming to bring to life a joint project titled "Skopje GameDev Conference."
- Createch CCI Cluster stands as Bulgaria's inaugural cluster dedicated to cultural and creative industries (CCI). They played a pivotal role in organizing the CreaTech Summit SEE 2023, which successfully unfolded in March 2023 at Toplocentrala.

- KEA European Affairs, situated in Brussels, Belgium, functions as an international consultancy and research center with a specialization in cultural, audiovisual policy, and matters pertaining to sports, culture, and creative industries (CCI).
- b.creative, a worldwide network catering to cultural and creative entrepreneurs, is headquartered in Brussels, Belgium. This international non-profit association (AISBL) is dedicated to offering policy guidance aimed at increasing awareness of cultural and creative assets among regions, organizations, and individuals. Its primary objective is to harness the economic and social potential of culture, encompassing heritage, for development. b.creative gave its support to Skopje2028 with full commitment to facilitate exchanges and collaborations between cultural and creative entrepreneurs, to foster their development and growth and to spark societal changes.
- International University Europa Prima, situated in Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia, is a privately owned higher education institution. Its academic offerings encompass a range of disciplines, including music, film, theatre, and contemporary dance.
- The Academy of Arts Novi Sad in Serbia extends its support for collaboration in executing various activities as part of the Skopje2028 program.
- The Big Brothers Big Sisters of Bulgaria Association, situated in Plovdiv, Bulgaria (associated with Plovdiv ECoC), is a non-profit entity dedicated to providing volunteer mentoring services to children and young individuals facing fewer opportunities.
- The ITTI Institute in Plovdiv, Bulgaria functions as a HUB aimed at establishing and advancing a national innovation infrastructure. It focuses on disseminating novel knowledge, fostering technological entrepreneurship, transferring knowledge and technologies, and promoting the practical application of innovative products within the market.
- The Creative Industry Agency (AIK) Tirana, Albania is an institution subordinate to the Municipality of Tirana, which enables development and promotion of the Creative and Cultural Sector.
- In the unfolding narrative of cultural innovation, Rome City of Film proudly extends its support to Skopje2028. This collaboration is a poignant storyline, binding our cities in a common quest for cinematic excellence. As the narrative unfolds, we envision a tapestry woven with threads of creativity, interwoven stories, and shared experiences. With each frame and each event, we collectively script a tale of vibrant cultural landscapes and cross-border connections. Our resolute support echoes the theme of unity in the rich tapestry of cinematic narratives, uniting Rome and Skopje in a plot destined for greatness.
- Film Centre Bitola - gave its full support to Skopje 2028. Aligned in our dedication to cinematic excellence, we are excited to collaborate in implementation of projects in the field of film and culture in general.
- Macedonian Association of Film Producers.
- New Horizons, Poland - extends its unwavering support to Skopje 2028. Aligned in our dedication to fostering artistic innovation, collaboration, share resources and actively engage in the realization of this remarkable endeavour.
- ZRS Bistra Ptuj, Slovenia - extends its support to Skopje2028. Through our partnership we will create a connection between scientific research and the education sphere. We will support the part of creative industries based on natural and cultural heritage.
- AIPA, Slovenia - supports Skopje 2028 in the part of celebration and promotion of cultural diversity, artistic innovation, and community engagement.
- UNESCO City of Rome, Italy - With great enthusiasm, Rome City of Film stands behind Skopje2028. As kindred spirits in the realm of cinema and creativity, we wholeheartedly endorse Skopje's aspirations. Through this alliance, we aim to cultivate a stronger global cinematic community, fostering innovation, exchange, and the magic of storytelling. Our unwavering support is a testament to our shared commitment to shaping vibrant cultural landscapes and nurturing the art of film. Onward together, forging a bright future for both our cities and the world of cinema.
- Regional Fund BCC - stand united in supporting Skopje2028. Aligned in our dedication to cinematic excellence and cross-border collaboration, we gave our support for initiation and development for cooperation, as well as in promotion of cultural diversity, artistic innovation, and community engagement.
- The Creative Industries Agency of Tirana extends its firm support to Skopje2028. Aligned in our dedication to nurturing artistic innovation, we eagerly join hands for this transformative journey. Together, our collaboration envisions a vibrant canvas of cultural exchange and imaginative exploration, weaving a narrative that transcends borders and amplifies creative voices. The Creative Industries Agency of Tirana is honored to contribute to Skopje's dynamic cultural landscape in 2028, fostering connections and fostering the flourishing of shared creative endeavors.
- Regional Development Agency of Northern Primorska, Nova Gorica, extends its unwavering support to Skopje2028. Aligned in our commitment to fostering cultural growth, we eagerly embrace the opportunity to collaborate on this remarkable journey.
- Slovenian Philharmonic - lends its steadfast support to Skopje2028. Aligned in our commitment to the power of music and culture, we are honored to stand in unity for this remarkable journey. The Slovenian Philharmonic is thrilled to contribute to Skopje's cultural symphony in 2028 and beyond, fostering connections that showcase the enduring beauty of music and the arts.

- KEA European Affairs – gave its support to Skopje2028. As an organization we recognize the immeasurable value of initiatives that celebrate and promote cultural diversity, artistic innovation, and community engagement.
- Association of Macedonia film producers MZFP Skopje - gave its full support to Skopje 2028. Aligned in our commitment to cinematic excellence, we eagerly unite for this transformative endeavor. We will work together to stimulate collaboration in the field of film production, encouraging and facilitating collaboration between producers and other film professionals.
- Regional Development Agency of Northern Primorska Ltd. Nova Gorica – supports Skopje2028 with its experience in the field of sustainable businesses and communities through digital support, strategic management and coaching, and education and acts as a connector between public bodies, institutions, and stakeholders.
- UNESCO Terrassa City of Film – supports Skopje2028 with the commitment to foster collaborative projects and cultural exchange, such as artist exchange, mutual cultural initiatives, performances, exhibitions, that will reflect a genuine desire to enhance intercultural dialogue and artistic innovation.
- Macedonian Golf Federation - the mutual collaboration between the Macedonian Golf Federation and the City of Skopje exemplifies a dynamic partnership aimed at fostering sports development and community engagement. Through shared efforts, they work together to promote golf as a recreational and competitive activity, enriching the city's sports landscape and providing residents with opportunities for physical activity and skill enhancement. This collaboration underscores the city's commitment to supporting diverse sports and recreational pursuits, contributing to a healthier and more active community.
- European Federation of School Sports - the partnership between the European Federation of School Sports and Skopje2028 signifies a commitment to promoting youth sports and education in Skopje. This collaboration seeks to harness the power of sports to foster personal development, teamwork, and healthy lifestyles among the city's youth. Through joint initiatives and programs, they aim to enhance school sports, encourage participation in physical activities, and provide opportunities for young athletes to excel on both national and international stages. This partnership aligns with Skopje2028's vision of inclusivity and youth empowerment, making it a valuable addition to the city's cultural and sporting landscape.

## III. Outreach

### 17. Explain 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.

The engagement of the local population and civil society has been a cornerstone of the preparation for Skopje2028, ensuring a collective approach that reflects the city's diverse perspectives and aspirations. Throughout the application phase, their input has been instrumental in shaping the program's direction, priorities, and goals.

During the application process, various town hall meetings, public consultations, and community forums were organized to gather insights and ideas from citizens across different neighbourhoods. These interactions allowed residents to express their vision for Skopje's cultural future, sharing their expectations and preferences for the European Capital of Culture initiative.

Civil society organizations have played a pivotal role by providing expertise, feedback, and advocating for specific cultural interests. Collaborative workshops and seminars were held, allowing these organizations to contribute their insights into the city's cultural landscape, as well as recommendations for the program's thematic strands.

As the Skopje2028 program transitions from planning to implementation, the involvement of the local population and civil society remains central. A series of engagement initiatives, such as public exhibitions, interactive installations, and open calls for artistic projects, are planned to facilitate ongoing participation. These activities will serve as platforms for citizens and civil society members to actively contribute to the program's execution, ensuring that their voices continue to shape the cultural narrative of Skopje.

Additionally, volunteer programs and community partnerships will be established to provide opportunities for direct involvement in various events, projects, and activities. Citizens will have the chance to actively participate as event hosts, guides, performers, and collaborators, fostering a sense of ownership and connection to the Skopje2028 experience. This becomes especially evident within the Togetherness and rECOvering program strands.

The collaboration between the local population, civil society, and the Skopje2028 team will be underpinned by transparent communication channels, regular updates, and continuous feedback loops. This collaborative spirit ensures that the year of Skopje2028 is not just a top-down cultural program but a shared celebration of culture, creativity, and unity, where the people of Skopje are both the audience and active contributors.

Our fundamental methodological approach could be described as the implementation of “massive, small changes,” as defined by Kelvin Campbell, an urbanist. This approach involves leveraging the collective impact of numerous small ideas and actions to create significant change. Through this approach, we aim to strike a harmonious balance between bottom-up and top-down strategies. By engaging citizens, we identify current challenges and collaboratively devise practical solutions. Skopje2028 serves as a unifying force, motivating citizens to actively engage in addressing daily issues. We are innovating new models of citizen self-organization through micro-projects within municipalities and city neighbourhoods.

In the realm of citizen engagement, we are crafting a specialized volunteer program that not only actively involves participants in executing the cultural agenda but also positions them as ambassadors of ECoC. This initiative holds particular significance for engaging vulnerable social groups, which often pose challenges in terms of outreach and are typically considered underrepresented in cultural activities. Leveraging Skopje’s established volunteer practices in other domains, the Skopje2028 project offers a valuable avenue for individuals to acquire skills and competencies relevant to cultural initiatives. Volunteers have already played an active role in various project undertakings. Notably, they took part in conducting two surveys on Skopje’s candidacy for the ECoC 2028 title during the Zemjotres #9 festival (May 2021) and the FIRSTBORN GIRL Festival for Feminist Culture (June 2021).

To measure the citizens’ opinions towards the Skopje2028 project, we executed a “Survey of the citizens of the city of Skopje for the cultural offer and the needs and opportunities offered by the status of European capital of culture” in March 2021, receiving responses from 246 participants. The survey illuminated global and national concerns that the ECoC programme could address, including environment, climate change, crime and corruption, poverty, and economic inequality.

Our candidacy for the esteemed title of Skopje European Capital of Culture 2028 underscores culture’s pivotal role in the city’s development and serves as a catalyst for its growth. This recognition is shared not only by the city but by every resident of Skopje. The city’s cultural institutions have engaged in research to fathom citizens’ perspectives on the candidacy, which has been favourably received. Citizens anticipate numerous advantages, including enriched cultural content, an array of events, international guests, exhibitions, performances, and more.

The Skopje European Capital of Culture 2028 Foundation will continue to conduct periodic research to assess citizens’ expectations, changes, and benefits across various cultural domains over an extended period. Moving forward, all upcoming public tenders to select projects will adopt a “bottom-up” approach through open calls, fostering increased citizen involvement. We are dedicated to collaborating extensively with local entities and individuals, particularly from peripheral areas of the city. Our communication strategy emphasizes online dialogues with citizens to ensure their voices are heard and incorporated.

Our program places greater emphasis on cultural events and enhancing access to art and culture for all citizens, rather than focusing solely on infrastructure projects. Engaging citizens in the preparation and execution of the Skopje2028 initiative also contributes to fostering tolerance, openness, and active citizenship.

The independent cultural scene holds significant importance, aligning with the cultural development strategy of the City of Skopje. This scene, encompassing artists and cultural workers, operates within the private sector and the civil sector, as well as through private organizations and individual activities. The independent scene’s unique models of management and funding are integrated into the Skopje2028 program. It has actively participated in the entire program creation process and will continue to play a role in project implementation.



[www.skopje2028.mk](http://www.skopje2028.mk)



@skopje2028official



Skopje 2028

Each of Skopje’s ten municipalities will integrate cultural events and projects into their annual budgets as part of the Skopje 2028 program.

Inter-municipal collaborative projects contributing to the program include:

**Pampurche:** This project involves workshops and an exhibition centred on the Pampurche train. Its aim is to foster positive development, enhance physical and motor skills, rhythm appreciation, artistic values, and environmental awareness, while encouraging creative imagination.

**Quart-Art:** Focusing on the quality of life in each municipality, this initiative pairs one Macedonian and one foreign artist to create works inspired by Skopje’s neighborhoods. It promotes intercultural dialogue and emphasizes shared aspects of European culture, heritage, and history.

**Goji Berries:** A children’s feature film addressing urban lifestyles, family commitment, and societal values. It conveys the importance of love as a driving force within families and society.

Additionally, the municipalities, alongside neighbouring areas, collaborate on the “Legal Walls” project launched in 2021 as part of Skopje 2028. This project facilitates active street art by providing designated spaces for domestic and international artists to create purposeful art, with the concept evolving over time.

## 18. Explain how you intend to create opportunities for participation of marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

We are dedicated to creating inclusive opportunities for the participation of marginalized and disadvantaged groups as an integral part of the Skopje 2028 project. Our commitment is based on the understanding that cultural enrichment should be accessible to all citizens, regardless of their social or economic background. To achieve this, we have developed a comprehensive strategy that encompasses various initiatives:

**Targeted Outreach and Engagement:** We will collaborate with local NGOs, community centers, and social support organizations that work directly with marginalized and disadvantaged groups. Through these partnerships, we will identify individuals and communities that could benefit from cultural engagement.

**Tailored Programs and Activities:** We will design cultural programs and activities specifically tailored to address the needs and interests of marginalized groups. These initiatives will be sensitive to their cultural contexts and preferences, ensuring inclusivity and meaningful participation.

**Education and Workshops:** Collaborating with educational institutions, we will organize workshops and educational sessions that introduce marginalized groups to cultural experiences and help them develop skills and knowledge in various art forms. Accessibility Considerations: We will prioritize accessibility in terms of physical spaces, ensuring that cultural venues and events are easily accessible for individuals with disabilities or mobility challenges.

**Cultural Sensitivity Training:** Our staff, volunteers, and partners will undergo cultural sensitivity training to ensure that all interactions and programs are respectful and accommodating of diverse backgrounds.

**Empowerment through Art:** We recognize the transformative power of art in empowering individuals. Through creative workshops and activities, marginalized groups can find a platform for self-expression, confidence building, and personal development.

**Collaborative Art Projects:** We will encourage collaborative projects that bring together individuals from different backgrounds to create art that reflects their experiences and perspectives. These projects foster understanding and connections.

**Participation in Decision-Making:** Members of marginalized groups will be included in decision-making processes related to cultural programming, ensuring that their voices are heard and their preferences are considered.

**Affordable and Free Opportunities:** We will strive to provide affordable or free access to cultural events and activities, reducing financial barriers for participation.

**Communication and Awareness:** We will actively communicate our commitment to inclusivity and share success stories of marginalized individuals and groups engaging in cultural activities, thus raising awareness and inspiring broader participation.

By implementing these strategies, we aim to create an environment where every member of the community feels welcome, valued, and empowered to participate in the cultural transformation of Skopje through the Skopje 2028 project.

Skopje2028 is a testament to our unwavering commitment to inclusivity, acknowledging that the growth of individuals translates to progress for the entire community. Recognizing the fluid nature of marginalization tied to evolving social dynamics, we adopt an inclusive approach that fosters unity among all citizens, including marginalized groups. Our mission revolves around promoting mutual respect, assistance, and equality, aiming to cultivate a cultural program that engages every member of society, dismantles barriers, and nurtures a shared sense of humanity.

Our program places a strong emphasis on active involvement from artists belonging to marginalized communities, ensuring their representation and active participation in Skopje2028's cultural undertakings. Guided by our principle of **"CULTURE OVER DIVISION"**, we're dedicated to making cultural enrichment accessible to all. We're proactively forging partnerships with non-governmental organizations, associations, and individuals who champion inclusivity and lend their support to marginalized communities in our city.

We recognize the unique challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community due to traditional norms and biases. Our objective is to foster an environment of acceptance and celebrate diversity. Our commitment extends to incorporating this community in our cultural events, advocating for their rights, and offering a platform for their artistic expression.

Skopje's proactive social welfare policy extends its care to diverse marginalized groups. Our collaboration with social programs strengthens the connection between public cultural institutions and social organizations, fostering social integration and mitigating intolerance.

Persons with disabilities, one of the most vulnerable groups, will also find their place within Skopje2028. Through our initiatives, we're determined to shift their role from passive observers to active participants in cultural life. This effort provides a distinctive opportunity to enhance their social inclusion, celebrating diversity and enriching our collective cultural tapestry. Ultimately, the essence of the Skopje2028 project is grounded in unity, respect, and inclusivity. It's a platform where marginalized voices find resonance, where barriers are dismantled, and where culture flourishes for everyone, irrespective of their background or circumstances.

With a specific focus on individuals facing challenges as a marginalized group, we have initiated a sub-program called "Art-for-Disability" under the Togetherness strand, encompassing a wide array of cultural and social initiatives spanning various age groups, from school children to seniors. This sub-program comprises several projects:

- Facilitating open public dialogues on issues related to the challenged in all ten municipalities of the city.
- Collaborating with the deaf and hard of hearing, visually impaired, speech-impaired, and learning challenged individuals to develop digital solutions catering to their needs.

- Establishing diverse art workshops, meetings, and seminars to engage the challenged in theater, dance, music, and other artistic expressions.
- Fostering networking and collaborations for talented children and youth with challenges, enabling them to pursue careers in theater, music bands, dance groups, and more, at local, national, and international levels.

Further projects within this sub-program, defined in the second round of the bidding process through a public tender open to all, include:

“Are you crazy?” - A professional theater performance in sign language.

“Salvation for melting pot” - An initiative fostering culture over social divisions.

“The Autonomous Festival of Women (AFZh)” - A platform addressing marginalized topics such as violence against women, women’s labor rights, women’s health care, and women’s roles in various domains.

“Inclusion” - A short film festival themed “Minorities-inclusion.”

“M O R I D E J” - A Roma cabaret featuring esteemed vocal and instrumental artists presenting famous Roma hits along with traditional ballet.

“REACT Gate project” - A cross-border collaboration focusing on creative industries in Albania, Republic of North Macedonia, and Kosovo.

“The Spectrum of Colors” - A captivating theater play portraying diverse LGBTQ+ stories of love, identity, and acceptance.

Throughout the planning and execution of this program section, we concentrate on three pivotal activities:

Ensuring active participation of the challenged and disadvantaged individuals in all phases of planning, preparation, and implementation.

Forging connections and fostering collaboration between the challenged and professional cultural entities.

Developing innovative solutions to enhance their inclusion in both physical and digital cultural and societal spheres.

Our mission is rooted in enhancing the quality of life for all residents of Skopje by establishing a comprehensive social protection system through active involvement of public, private, and civil sectors. We’re open to inter-municipal and regional cooperation, as well as knowledge exchange with twin cities and European practices, recognizing that art and culture speak a universal language. Our vision entails meeting the needs of marginalized groups, offering seamless, efficient, and transparent access to social protection, while also bolstering their direct engagement within society and expanding the array of services provided by authorities.

Skopje stands as a city championing social justice, inclusion, and safety for every citizen, ensuring a high quality of life from childhood to old age. The prioritization of safeguarding the most socially disadvantaged citizen groups remains a cornerstone of Mayor Danela Arsovska’s program.





The City of Skopje, as an independent local government entity, oversees 23 secondary schools within its jurisdiction. Embracing multiculturalism, the city adopted the Strategy for inter-ethnic integration in education and civic involvement (2019-2024), aiming to foster understanding among young people from diverse backgrounds. This aligns with the broader goal of promoting cultural unity while respecting differences.

Quantitatively, Skopje boasts a substantial audience base, particularly among children and youth. However, several qualitative challenges persist, such as unequal cultural opportunities, minority neglect within minorities, and a lack of inter sectoral collaboration. These issues underscore the need for improvement.

The culture strategy's initial steps for youth engagement are centred on the "Skopje - Big Creative Classroom" initiative. In the 2023 Action Plan, four measures are outlined to initiate change. Cross-sectoral cooperation between education and culture, nurturing creativity in schools, supporting student innovation, and promoting informal cultural education form the basis for these measures.

Activities include planning collaborations, hosting workshops, facilitating educational tours, organizing debates, fostering student projects, and creating resources for cultural literacy. The aim is to catalyse engagement, build bridges between education and culture, and cultivate an inclusive and culturally enriched environment for Skopje's citizens.

## Overall Strategy for Audience Development with a Focus on Education and School Participation for Skopje2028

The Audience Development Strategy for Skopje2028 seeks to create an inclusive cultural experience that engages diverse audiences and fosters a strong sense of community participation. Central to this strategy is the active involvement of educational institutions, particularly schools, to ensure the cultural enrichment of both students and educators. By linking cultural programming with education, we aim to cultivate a lifelong appreciation for arts and culture among the younger generation, contributing to the city's overall social and cultural development.

### Key Components of the Strategy:

- 1. Curriculum Integration:** Forge a strong partnership with educational authorities to integrate cultural and artistic content into the school curriculum. Develop specialized educational materials that align with the Skopje2028 program, enabling teachers to seamlessly incorporate cultural themes into various subjects.
- 2. School Outreach:** Initiate an outreach program targeting schools across all city municipalities. Engage with teachers and school administrators to showcase the benefits of cultural participation and how it can enrich students' learning experiences.
- 3. Student Workshops and Programs:** Organize interactive workshops, performances, and creative sessions led by artists, musicians, writers, and performers. These sessions will encourage hands-on participation, creativity, and a deeper understanding of cultural expressions.
- 4. Cultural Passport for Students:** Introduce a "Cultural Passport" initiative that offers students access to various Skopje2028 events and venues. Students can accumulate stamps by attending different cultural activities, fostering excitement and engagement.
- 5. Teacher Training:** Provide professional development opportunities for teachers, equipping them with the tools to incorporate cultural experiences into their teaching methods effectively. This training will enhance their ability to connect classroom learning with real-world cultural encounters.
- 6. Collaborative Projects:** Foster collaborations between cultural institutions and schools to create joint projects that merge artistic endeavours with educational goals. This could involve art installations, performances, exhibitions, and other interactive events.
- 7. Student Ambassadors:** Designate student ambassadors who will serve as advocates for Skopje2028 within their schools. These ambassadors can promote upcoming cultural events, encourage student participation, and provide feedback on the program's effectiveness.
- 8. Digital Learning Resources:** Develop an online platform with multimedia resources, virtual tours, and educational content related to Skopje2028. This digital repository will serve as a valuable tool for both teachers and students.
- 9. Inclusive Accessibility:** Ensure that cultural venues and activities are accessible to students with disabilities. Collaborate with local organizations to create inclusive experiences that cater to diverse needs.
- 10. Evaluation and Impact Measurement:** Regularly assess the impact of the audience development strategy through surveys, feedback from teachers and students, and tracking participation rates. Use this data to refine and improve the strategy over time.

By integrating education and school participation into the Audience Development Strategy for Skopje2028, we aim to nurture a generation of culturally aware and engaged citizens who will contribute to the vibrant cultural fabric of the city for years to come.



# SK(ids)O(f)PJE 2028

## Youth subprogram / Meet the Creative Industries

Meet the CI is our subprogram envisions a thriving combination of youthful innovation and the city's rich legacy, opening up new avenues for creative expression and interaction. This initiative intends to stimulate a dynamic array of projects that breathe life into the city's cultural landscape, with a focus on inspiring young visionaries.

This subprogram is specifically designed to engage children from kindergarten and primary schools, fostering their creativity and imagination. Through tailored activities and initiatives, we aim to inspire and empower the youngest minds to explore their artistic potential and contribute to a brighter future.

We look to the kids to infuse their unique ideas and creative energy into a year-long celebration that will echo for decades to come as we celebrate diversity, heritage, and innovation.

Young minds' vitality, fuelled by their infinite imagination, has the potential to transform the continent's landscape and drive progress in line with major European agendas.

Young people's inventiveness serves as a source of inspiration for Europe's vibrant future as we weave their skills into the fabric of top priorities. Through their artistic creations, our many backgrounds form a united palette, strengthening our oneness and common understanding.

As young people imagine changes that are environmentally beneficial, sustainability is given a fresh perspective. By bridging differences, artistic collaboration promotes harmony. By enabling young people to integrate their creativity into European goals, we establish a fabric of innovation, harmony, and development.

The inventive energy of our kids becomes a driving force as we address diversity, inclusivity, sustainability, mental health and many other urgent challenges. Their artistic expression crosses barriers, elevates minority viewpoints, and promotes economic growth in the creative industries. A greener future and a more cohesive society are also benefits of their creative solutions. Weaving a vibrant tapestry of good impact and long-lasting change, we combine youthful imagination with Europe's objectives.

### **1. Revive Skopje**

Unleash the creative spirit of Skopje's youth with the ground-breaking ReviveSkopje project. Through the fusion of innovative 3D printing technology and imaginative young minds, we're embarking on a journey to breathe new life into our beloved city. Picture this: as young participants engage in collaborative brainstorming and artistic exploration, their ingenious ideas take form as intricate 3D designs. These creations will adorn Skopje's urban landscapes, infusing them with the vibrancy, optimism, and fresh perspectives that only the youth can bring. Let's shape a city of boundless possibilities.

### **2. Hope craft - Urban Animation Renaissance**

HopeCraft beckons Skopje's youth to embark on a collective voyage, harnessing the captivating medium of animation to reshape our urban landscape. Through collaborative workshops and inspired sessions, participants craft narratives that transcend fiction, painting vivid stories rooted in authenticity and aspiration. These stories are more than tales; they're instruments of hope that touch hearts and elevate our community spirit. HopeCraft aspires to transcend animation's realm; it aims to craft a lasting impact. By channelling youthful enthusiasm, the project stands as a resilient bulwark against the emigration of our future leaders. Through dynamic visuals, we empower Skopje's young torchbearers to shape a city aligned with their dreams.

### **3. Nature's palette**

In a world seeking positivity, this project breathes life into urban spaces through vibrant murals that celebrate both the environment and the human spirit. "Nature's Palette" invites artists and enthusiasts to collaboratively reimagine public spaces and parks as canvases of inspiration. Guided by the colours of nature and the brushes of creativity, participants will craft murals that echo the vitality of our planet and the hope we hold for a brighter future. More than just art, these murals become beacons of hope for all who encounter them. They radiate the promise of harmony between humanity and nature,

evoking feelings of connection and optimism. Through each stroke, “Nature’s Palette” aspires to rejuvenate minds, restore spirits, and cultivate a shared commitment to nurturing both our surroundings and our dreams.

#### **4. NFT Kaleidoscope**

NFT Kaleidoscope, a project designed to empower Skopje’s youth through the realm of digital creativity and NFTs. Through workshops and artistic exploration, young talents will craft their own digital artworks, culminating in an exclusive NFT exhibition that showcases their innovation and artistic vision.

#### **5. Resonate Youth**

Through guided sessions led by experienced music therapists, young participants explore the healing potential of melodies and rhythms. Whether through active music-making or receptive listening, each session is a stepping stone towards enhanced emotional expression, stress reduction, and improved mental clarity. Resonate Youth is not just about music; it’s about fostering a sense of belonging and self-discovery. By engaging with music in a therapeutic context, participants can navigate the complexities of adolescence, find solace in sound, and build invaluable coping skills.

#### **6. Glass Gem**

Young creators sculpt wearable art with the luminous beauty of glass. This project invites Skopje’s youth to explore the enchanting world of glass art, crafting unique jewelry pieces that mirror their imagination and artistic expression. Guided by skilled artisans, participants will experiment with glass fusion techniques, transforming vibrant hues and textures into wearable treasures. Through hands-on workshops, they’ll learn to manipulate glass into intricate designs, turning molten material into dazzling adornments.

#### **7. Stitching Minds**

People say sewing can be almost meditative. In a world where mental well-being is essential, this project offers a creative platform to address, explore, and cope with these challenges. “Stitching Minds” invites participants to engage in patchwork workshops guided by skilled artisans and mental health professionals. Through fabric, patterns, and stitches, individuals express their emotions, stories, and struggles. As the patchwork pieces come together, they symbolize the process of healing and growth. Through this project, we’re not only raising awareness about mental health but also offering an avenue for healing and self-expression. Artists and young people will create a vibrant quilt of support, compassion, and hope, turning challenges into opportunities for growth and connection.

#### **8. Harmony in motion**

Guided by compassionate mentors, young participants embark on a transformative journey where movement becomes a powerful outlet for self-expression and healing. Through dance workshops, discussions, and creative collaborations, they explore the intersection of movement and emotions, shedding light on mental health challenges in a safe and supportive environment. Harmony in Motion not only equips youth with dance skills but also nurtures empathy, self-awareness, and a deep understanding of mental well-being. This project envisions a harmonious blend of artistic expression and mental health advocacy, fostering resilience, empowerment, and open dialogue among young minds.

#### **9. Flower Bites**

Flower Bites is an engaging youth project that introduces children to the concept of slow food and the delightful world of edible flowers. Guided by experienced mentors, young participants embark on a journey of discovery, learning to appreciate the importance of mindful eating and the beauty of incorporating edible flowers into their diet. Through hands-on activities and cooking salads and cakes with edible flowers, interactive workshops, and garden visits, they gain a deeper understanding of the farm-to-table journey and the significance of savouring flavours from nature. By nurturing their connection to sustainable food practices and the environment, Flower Bites not only encourages healthy eating habits but also instills a lifelong appreciation for the harmony between nature and nourishment.

#### **10. Shadow theatre**

Shadow Theatre combines the art of shadow theatre with the magic of light design. This project empowers youth to craft compelling narratives using shadow puppets and creative light manipulation. Guided by mentors, participants will learn puppetry, light choreography, and storytelling, culminating in an illuminating showcase that blends shadows and light into captivating performances.

#### **11. Hear the Plants – Botanical Garden/Skopje**

“Hear the Plants” is an immersive project that introduces youth to the captivating blend of botanical gardens and sound design. Participants will explore a local botanical garden, using their ears as guides to capture the sounds of nature. Guided by experts, they’ll learn sound recording and editing techniques, crafting unique soundscapes that reflect their botanical experiences. The project culminates in a public showcase, inviting audiences to experience the beauty of plants through the art of sound. This project nurtures creativity, technical skills, and a deeper connection to the natural world.

#### **12. Sketching Skopje’s Stories**

Sketching Skopje’s Stories is an innovative and captivating youth project that blends the worlds of comics, drawings, imagination, and Skopje’s rich cultural heritage. Designed to inspire young minds and bridge generational gaps, this project seeks to empower local youth to explore their creative potential while preserving and celebrating the cultural tapestry of Skopje. The project will offer a series of workshops covering topics like basic drawing techniques, comic creation, storytelling, and the history of Skopje. Skilled artists and cultural experts will facilitate these sessions.

#### **13. KidTech Innovators**

KidTech Innovators - Skopje is a groundbreaking youth initiative that merges the realms of robotics, innovation, and the

dynamic cityscape of Skopje. This project is designed to ignite the spark of creativity and technical prowess among young minds, fostering a culture of innovation and technological advancement while showcasing Skopje as a hub of young talent. The project will feature workshops led by robotics experts and engineers where participants will learn about robotics components, programming, and hands-on construction of robotic systems.

#### **14. WoodRevive**

WoodRevive is an inspiring project that bridges the wood industry, young participants, and design expertise to breathe new life into old wood treasures. In this hands-on initiative, children will be invited to bring their forgotten wooden items from home – whether toys, furniture, or decor – and work alongside skilled industrial designers and architects. Through innovative guidance, these young minds will learn to reimagine, repurpose, and transform their belongings into fresh, functional creations. By fostering creativity, teamwork, and sustainable practices, WoodRevive not only teaches children the value of resourcefulness but also encourages a deeper connection to craftsmanship and environmental responsibility. This project embodies the essence of collaboration, craftsmanship, and community, resulting in a showcase of unique creations that hold both sentimental and design value.

#### **15. Thinking with your hands**

Thinking with your hands is an enchanting project that invites young participants to embark on a journey of artistic exploration with origami and paper sculptures. Children are encouraged to bring cherished old papers from home – whether pages from books, newspapers, or colorful scraps – which they will then transform into intricate paper artworks. Guided by skilled designers and artists, these young creators will learn the art of folding, shaping, and breathing new life into discarded materials. Through this hands-on experience, “Thinking with your hands” not only nurtures children’s creativity but also imparts essential lessons about sustainable practices and the limitless potential of repurposed materials.

#### **16. Sustainable Sewing Lab**

Aimed at both kids and marginalized artisans, this initiative invites young participants to contribute old and forgotten fabrics from their homes. Guided by a talented designer from marginalized backgrounds, these materials will be ingeniously transformed into unique, upcycled creations through the art of sewing. This collaborative effort not only renews discarded materials but also rejuvenates the spirits of both the young creators and the marginalized artisans, instilling a sense of value, dignity, and craftsmanship. Stitching Stories goes beyond art; it’s about weaving connections, celebrating diversity, and nurturing the potential for beauty in unexpected places.

#### **17. Real Faces**

RealFaces is an inspiring photography project designed for kids, where the focus is on authenticity, self-expression, and celebrating the unique beauty of each individual. In a world often dominated by filters and edits, this initiative empowers young photographers to embrace their friends’ true essence. By encouraging self-acceptance and allowing everyone to shine as they are, RealFaces fosters a sense of confidence and happiness in their own skin. Through this process, kids learn not only about the art of photography but also about the importance of embracing diversity, friendship, and self-love. This project is a testament to the power of embracing imperfections and finding beauty in authenticity.

#### **18. Tale-telling**

Project that empowers kids to become storytellers of their own worlds through the lens of digital editing. Guided by their creativity, participants embark on a captivating journey of crafting narratives using various digital tools. From blending visuals to manipulating audio elements, this initiative encourages young minds to explore their imagination and bring their stories to life. By gaining digital literacy skills, participants not only develop a unique artistic voice but also learn to communicate ideas effectively in the digital age.

#### **19. Sculpting Dreams**

Sculpting Dreams is a unique youth project that channels the boundless creativity of kids into the art of soap carving. Guided by professionals, young participants embark on a captivating journey of transforming humble bars of organic soap into sculptures. With expert guidance, they learn the delicate techniques and detailing that soap carving demands, while also discovering the joy of sculpting with their own hands. This initiative not only fosters artistic expression but also imparts patience, precision, and a sense of achievement. Sculpting Dreams is where imagination comes to life, as young sculptors transform ordinary soap into extraordinary works of art, leaving them with tangible evidence of their creativity and the pride that comes with it.

#### **20. Virtual Wardrobe**

Virtual Wardrobe is an innovative workshop designed to empower youth with the art of digital fashion creation. Guided by a mentor, young participants delve into the realm of virtual textiles, patterns, and designs, learning to craft unique garments using digital tools. Through hands-on sessions, they explore the fusion of technology and fashion, gaining valuable skills in digital illustration and design. This creative journey not only ignites their imaginations but also equips them with essential digital literacy for the future. As young fashion visionaries, participants embrace the limitless possibilities of the digital realm, designing their unique styles and setting trends in the virtual fashion landscape.

#### **21. Video Games Playground**

The overall goal of the project is to promote culture and creative industries, especially the potential of video games for employment and career path among young people, and get a wider range of benefits in cultural and economic welfare. Through an interdisciplinary approach that involves a series of workshops and lectures, a public call and several screenings will aim to introduce young people to the new technological tools and processes of creating creative digital art products and develop entrepreneurial spirit and skills and encourage them to be mindful consumers, caring about their impact on the environment. The main target are children between 7 and 14 years old from different cities, backgrounds and nationalities.

Therefore, the project activities will be held in several municipalities in Skopje and cities in N.Macedonia (Tetovo, Gostivar, Kicevo, Sveti Nikole, Strumica and Delcevo) and we expect around 500 children to directly benefit the project. Also, an asset to the project is the collaboration with several associations/companies such as the Macedonian Gaming Development Association MAGDA-Bitola, Association for sustainable development and environmental protection GO GREEN from Skopje and Montpellier 2028.

The foundation of our audience development strategy is built upon five primary objectives:

## 1. Interculturalism Approach

Building upon the lessons learned from the limitations of “multiculturalism”, our strategy pivots towards embracing interculturalism as the central cultural paradigm. This shift entails a departure from mere multiculturalism towards fostering intercultural harmony. Our aim is to minimize ethnic-based segregation, ensuring equal opportunities for all and championing inclusivity, particularly addressing challenges related to disabilities. Additionally, we seek to encourage cross-sectoral cooperation and collaborative efforts between institutions rather than exclusive practices. The incorporation of regional dynamics, cultural collaborations, and engagement with our twin and friendly cities will serve as powerful showcases of the inclusive spirit of interculturalism. In line with this goal, we aspire to participate in initiatives such as the Council of Europe’s Intercultural Cities program.

## 2. Diversification of Spaces

Our strategy is dedicated to the rigorous exploration and rejuvenation of unconventional venues, including well-known spaces yet to be utilized for the enrichment of children and young individuals. Our commitment extends to revitalizing forgotten spaces, reimagining them as integral components of our cultural landscape. Every municipality within Skopje holds the potential for repurposed cultural endeavors. Embracing diverse cultural expressions compels us to expand our cultural domain and enhance artistic environments. Notable sites such as KALE Fortress, the Old Bazaar, Skupi’s archaeological site, Havzipasa’s lodgings, the Skopje Aqueduct, Matka Canyon, Saraj sports and recreation center, and the Gazi Baba forest, among others, take the spotlight. This approach enables us to connect with audiences across various city sectors, regions, and settlements, simultaneously promoting these spaces and nurturing audience awareness.

## 3. Embracing Openness, Collaboration, and Co-Production

Our strategy places a strong emphasis on fostering an environment of openness, collaboration, and co-production within the framework of the Skopje2028 programme. We actively encourage and facilitate various forms of partnerships, joint ventures, and creative alliances that can contribute to the overall cultural landscape. We are committed to ensuring that cultural institutions are accessible to all cultural stakeholders, enabling them to harness the available capacities and resources in an optimized manner. The inclusivity of this approach extends to welcoming participation not only from cultural entities but also from civil and private sectors, recognizing that their involvement is integral to the realization of our goals. By pursuing these collective efforts, our objective is to bring to life the fundamental tenets of multiculturalism. In doing so, we create a platform that welcomes and embraces a multitude of viewpoints and voices, thereby enhancing the richness and depth of our cultural fabric.

## 4. Urban culture

### Fostering Urban Culture: Embracing Contemporary Expressions

**Introduction:** In the heart of Skopje’s cultural vision lies the recognition of urban culture as a dynamic force that connects European cities as intellectual and artistic hubs. Our mission is to amplify the resonance of new art movements and cultural waves that often remain underappreciated or overlooked. By championing urban expressions, we create a platform that resonates with young people and breathes life into unconventional art forms.

### Embracing Contemporary Expressions

#### Divers Art Movements:

- We celebrate a range of urban art movements such as graffiti, street art, and hip-hop, acknowledging their relevance in modern cultural discourse.
- By providing a space for these expressions, we break down barriers between traditional and contemporary art forms.

#### Street Identity:

- We recognize the significance of street identity in shaping urban culture and individuality.
- Through exhibitions, workshops, and performances, we shed light on the stories and inspirations behind street identity.

#### Youth-Centric Engagement:

- We engage with the youth by promoting art forms that resonate with them, like parkour, street dance, and freestyling.
- By nurturing their creativity, we empower the next generation of cultural pioneers.

#### Children’s Street Culture:

- We understand that children’s street culture is a canvas of youthful innocence and imagination.
- Through interactive installations, workshops, and storytelling, we celebrate the vibrancy of this unique culture.

**Urban Fiction:**

- Urban fiction is a powerful tool to tell stories of diverse lives and experiences within our city.
- We encourage literary expressions that capture the pulse of urban life, allowing voices to be heard and stories to be shared.

**Cultivating Urban Interaction****Public Art Installations:**

- We turn urban spaces into open-air galleries by inviting artists to create captivating public art installations.
- These installations not only beautify the city but also foster dialogue around urban culture.

**Street Festivals:**

- We host street festivals that showcase the diversity of urban expressions, bringing together artists, performers, and enthusiasts.
- These festivals are a testament to the vibrant tapestry of urban culture and its ability to unite communities.

**Collaborative Workshops:**

- We facilitate workshops that bridge the gap between traditional and contemporary art forms.
- By encouraging collaborations between artists from different backgrounds, we promote cultural fusion.

**Interactive Urban Tours:**

- Urban culture comes to life through immersive guided tours that explore street art, historical landmarks, and hidden cultural gems.
- These tours offer an alternative perspective on our city's identity and creative spirit.

**Conclusion:** Our dedication to urban culture encapsulates Skopje's progressive ethos. Through amplifying unconventional artistic expressions, we wholeheartedly embrace the fluidity of modern culture. Our initiatives span exhibitions, workshops, festivals, and immersive encounters, cultivating a cultural ecosystem rooted in diversity, inclusivity, and cooperation. In the heart of Skopje, streets transform into canvases while alleys reverberate with the rhythms of hip-hop. We extend an open invitation to be part of the celebration of our city's dynamic urban culture. Join us as we weave a vibrant tapestry of creativity, unity, and innovation.

**5. Empowering Educational Institutions**

Primary and secondary schools hold a crucial role in realizing the overarching goals outlined earlier. Both students and educators are vital partners in collaboration with cultural stakeholders to execute all initiatives. The City of Skopje is actively engaged in a significant initiative aimed at promoting and advancing interethnic integration within the educational sphere. This initiative encompasses joint classes for students from diverse ethnic backgrounds and offers free courses in the Macedonian, Albanian, and Turkish languages. In the academic year 2022/23, a total of 1425 joint teachings were facilitated by 58 teachers. These collaborative teachings spanned 17 different subjects and engaged 1048 students across 7 secondary schools. As part of the Skopje2028 project, this initiative will be extended to encompass all 23 public secondary schools.

The "One Society for All" program represents a fundamental effort with the principal objective of fostering a united and tolerant society. Through the support of comprehensive programs that work in tandem with educational measures, social policies, and continued cultural development, this initiative aims to empower young individuals to transcend ethnic constraints and mutual biases. By cultivating an environment of open communication, young people are encouraged to embrace mutual respect and understanding. This program underscores that while valuing one's cultural heritage is essential, there's equal importance in appreciating the diverse cultural values of others. The program's foundation rests upon the multicultural fabric of the country.

**1. New approach and offer**

Skopje2028 marks a crucial moment for the cultural evolution of our city. Our new approach is anchored in innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability, aiming to transform Skopje into a vibrant European cultural capital that leaves a lasting legacy. Our offer is a comprehensive strategy that blends tradition and modernity, local and global, while celebrating the rich tapestry of our diverse community.

**Approach:****Holistic Cultural Transformation:**

- We will reimagine Skopje's cultural landscape by curating a diverse range of events, exhibitions, and performances that encompass visual arts, music, theater, literature, and more.
- The focus will be on creating immersive experiences that engage all senses and evoke emotional connections to art and culture.

**Innovation and Technology:**

- Technology will be seamlessly integrated into our cultural events, enhancing audience engagement and interaction.
- Virtual reality, augmented reality, and interactive installations will breathe new life into traditional art forms, making them accessible to a wider audience.

**Cultural Districts:**

- We will establish vibrant cultural districts throughout the city, each with a distinct thematic focus and artistic vibe. These districts will serve as creative hubs where artists collaborate, experiment, and inspire each other, fostering a sense of artistic community.

**Community Co-creation:**

- Local communities will actively participate in the planning and execution of cultural projects that reflect their unique identities and histories.
- By involving citizens in co-creation, we ensure that Skopje2028 is a celebration of their stories, traditions, and aspirations.

**Sustainability and Legacy:**

- Environmental sustainability will be a core consideration in all our endeavors, from event planning to infrastructure development.
- The legacy of Skopje2028 will extend beyond the year itself, leaving behind eco-friendly installations and initiatives that contribute to the city's long-term sustainability.

**Global Connections:**

- Skopje2028 will foster international collaborations that bring artists, experts, and cultural enthusiasts from around the world to our city.
- By creating a platform for global exchange, we enrich our cultural scene and promote Skopje as a thriving cultural capital.

**Offer:****Cultural Passport:**

- A digital cultural passport will grant citizens access to a diverse array of cultural experiences across the city's districts.
- From exhibitions to workshops, passport holders will explore Skopje's cultural tapestry and discover hidden artistic gems.

**Virtual Gallery Tours:**

- Experience art from the comfort of your home with immersive virtual gallery tours and interactive exhibitions.
- Through cutting-edge technology, art becomes accessible to all, transcending physical limitations.

**District Passes:**

- District-specific passes offer unlimited access to events, workshops, and performances within a chosen cultural hub.
- Immerse yourself in the artistic energy of your preferred district and uncover its unique stories.

**Sustainable Initiatives:**

- Participate in eco-friendly workshops and initiatives that promote sustainable living and environmental consciousness.
- Skopje2028 is committed to nurturing a green legacy for future generations.

**Global Artist Residencies:**

- Witness international artists at work as they collaborate with local talents during artist residencies.
- Engage in cross-cultural dialogues and witness the creative process firsthand.

Our approach encompasses diverse projects tailored to different target groups, fostering inclusivity and cultural engagement. Projects designed for children and youth aim to inspire creativity and self-expression. The Children City Park offers a unique entertainment space, while activities like alternative education, environmental learning, and sports initiatives nurture holistic development. Our activities extend to seniors through dancing, sports, and cultural projects, along with innovative engagement opportunities for disabled individuals. Socially disadvantaged groups receive support to boost self-esteem and social status, fostering communication and dialogue.

Inclusion of minorities, including Albanians, Roma, Serbs, Turks, Bosnians, and Aromanians, celebrates their rich cultural heritage and traditions, encouraging integration processes.

Cultural exchange is our core interest, manifested through various projects. The official mayor's program until 2025 prioritizes connecting all target groups with culture. Parks inspired by the City Park will be established in five locations, fostering accessibility and community engagement.

Amusement parks, including Luna Park, cater to all age groups. The NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) youth group gains enhanced integration through collaborations with various institutions.

Investments in education facilities are a city-wide need, with plans for a modern city library in Aerodrom. The existing library "Braka Miladinovci" will be upgraded, and reading rooms in city municipalities will serve as spaces for learning and research. Sports habits among young people are encouraged through gymnasiums and fitness zones in schools, including provisions for people with disabilities. A dedicated mobile app and website offer easy access to information, services, and events for young people. The establishment of a Youth Council, debate clubs, and training initiatives further empowers young individuals. Efforts continue to popularize the iconic Skopje aqueduct and its surroundings, showcasing the city's historical heritage.

**Conclusion:** Skopje2028 presents an unprecedented opportunity for our city to shine as a beacon of cultural innovation and inclusivity. Our new approach and offer invite every citizen to embark on a journey of artistic discovery, community engagement, and sustainable growth. Through Skopje2028, we set the stage for a new era of cultural evolution, uniting tradition and modernity in a harmonious celebration of our city's vibrant and European identity.

# V Management

## 20. City budget for culture over the last 5 years

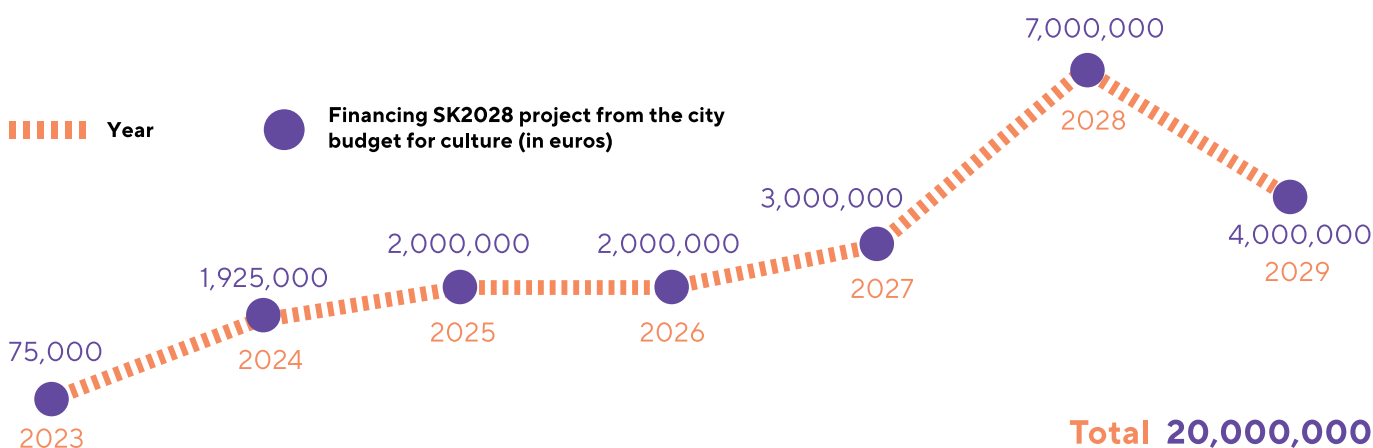
Year	Annual city budget for culture (in euros)	Annual budget for culture in the city (in % of the total annual budget for the city)
2019	6,789,961	7.82%
2020	6,648,251	6.93%
2021	7,415,067	7.28%
2022	6,505,477	7.51%
2023	8,955,301	8.10%

The table contains publicly available information detailing the budget allocated to cultural activities within the city from 2019 to 2022. These figures indicate the proportion of the total budget that was utilized for cultural purposes. The allocated funds were utilized to support cultural programs and initiatives conducted by public institutions operating under the City's jurisdiction. Additionally, they were used to finance the independent cultural sector, associations, as well as individuals of legal and natural status. These disbursements were carried out through annual open public calls.

Regarding the ongoing fiscal year of 2023, which remains unfinished, the table displays the estimated cultural activity budget expressed as a percentage of the overall projected budget for the City of Skopje.

The decrease in the City's cultural funding in 2020 was influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the suspension of regular programs by City cultural institutions for months. As local authorities, we intend to establish numerous networking opportunities (such as matchmaking, training sessions, conferences, workshops, cultural gatherings, etc.) that will promote the exchange of information, knowledge, and ideas among diverse stakeholders, organizations, and fields by favouring an environment of sociability and conviviality. All local and regional leaders should commit to persistently striving for greater resource efficiency, resilience, inclusivity, and collaborative engagement with citizens to comprehend their requirements. Furthermore, innovative solutions should be sought for addressing local challenges.

## 21. In case the city is planning to use funds from its annual budget for culture to finance the European Capital of Culture project, please indicate this amount starting from the year of submission of the bid until the European Capital of Culture year.



The City is providing a sum of 20,000,000 euros intended for the operational expenses of Skopje2028. The depicted funds of 20,000,000 euros, distributed over different years, will be utilized for program-related activities. The funds will be additional, and they are related to the annual cultural programme of the city.



## 22. Which amount of the overall annual budget does the city intend to spend for culture after the European Capital of Culture year (in euros and in % of the overall annual budget)?

Compared to previous years, the City's budget significantly increased in 2023. The share of culture in the City's total budget once again approached the limit of 10%. In the years ahead, we are planning to keep the trend of continuous growth of the budget. The additional increasing will be after 2028 influenced by implementing the most successful Skopje2028 projects and it will become part of regular funding form in the City and state budgets.

Between 2024 and 2028, provisions are designated for executing program activities aimed at promoting culture and enhancing cultural awareness. Additionally, resources are allocated for carrying out capital investments that indirectly impact cultural matters. Throughout the budget implementation, ongoing monitoring and evaluation will be conducted in alignment with the Skopje2028 program. Significant investments will manifest as culture-supportive contributions and will become visible within two years following project completion. These contributions are expected to constitute a minimum of 15% of the total budget, nearly double the figure from 2019. This approach seeks to establish concrete cultural sustainability grounded in tangible outcomes and empirical data.

An idea worth dedicating time and resources to within this administration is the establishment of the groundwork for a forthcoming Cultural Innovations Fund. Through a consistent growth in the cultural budget, we are simultaneously fostering job creation and driving economic progress. This primarily addresses a pressing European concern: youth unemployment.

This approach enables us to continually enhance the city's reputation within the European and global cultural domains.

## 23. The overall operating budget for the title year

Total income to cover operating expenditure (in euros)	From the public sector (in euros)	From the public sector (in %)	From the private sector (in euros)	From the private sector (in %)
128.548.540	125.548.540	97,67%	3.000.000	2,33%

The proposed budget of 128.548.540 euros designated for organizing Skopje2028 might seem substantial, but it is both pragmatic and feasible, accurately mirroring the project's aspirations.

The majority of the budget is sourced from the public sector (97.67%), owing to the diminished capabilities of the private sector. The latter is still grappling with the repercussions of the global economic and energy crises, which significantly debilitated the local economy's potential. In the case of contributions from the private sector, we are committed to integrating the business community into cultural activities, fostering reciprocal promotion and mutual engagement.

The estimated operational expenses encompass financial provisions that will be obtained from the state, financial support from the City of Skopje, funds from city municipalities allocated through their respective budgets and yearly programs, as well as financial contributions from the private sector.

We intend to execute the gathering of funds from the private sector utilizing diverse marketing strategies. Moreover, we will motivate existing and potential entrepreneurs, along with business accelerators, to embrace a fresh, innovative approach to investing in culture.

## 24. Income from the public sector

### What is the breakdown of the income to be received from the public sector to cover operating expenditure?

Income from the public sector to cover operating expenditure	in euros	%
National Government	100,400,000	79.97
City	20,000,000	15.93
10 municipalities	5,000,000	3.98
EU (excluding the Melina Mercouri Prize)	148,540	0.12
Other	-	-
Total	125,548,540	100

Under the guidance of the new government leadership, the significance and national value of securing the title have been duly recognized. As a result, the budget allocation for this pivotal selection phase, aimed at submitting our application to be designated as the European Capital of Culture 2028, has been significantly bolstered.

The lion's share of the funds, totalling 79.97%, stems from the central government, specifically the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. This substantial contribution is facilitated through close collaboration with key ministries, including the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of Economy, the Agency for Promotion and Support of Tourism, and the Fund for Innovation and Technological Development. Their active financial participation and collaborative efforts in shaping the budget framework serve as a resounding testament to their unwavering support for the city's candidacy. Beyond its financial contribution, the Ministry of Culture is furnishing spaces for the Skopje2028 team, as well as offering their unutilized premises for future use. These spaces will undergo renovations to accommodate exhibitions, workshops, and educational activities for the citizens of Skopje.

The President of North Macedonia wholeheartedly endorses Skopje2028, recognizing its profound significance in elevating our city's cultural landscape. This initiative not only showcases our artistic diversity but also enhances our global presence. By supporting Skopje2028, we affirm our commitment to fostering cultural exchange, unity, and prosperity for our nation and the entire European community.

Subsequently, funding from the city's treasury comprises 15.93%, while contributions from the city's municipalities account for 3.98%. An additional 0.12% represents funds co-financed by the EU through the Creative Europe program. These funds are allocated for the CreArt3 network of cities dedicated to artistic creativity, with the initiation of program activities scheduled for 2024.

In the pursuit of executing the Skopje2028 program, a proactive approach will be adopted to secure funding from various European sources. This includes engaging with programs such as Creative Europe, Interreg ADRION, Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF), and other competitive funding opportunities. Recognizing the profound significance of the city's role, this critical phase posed a challenge in fully comprehending the inherent value of the title.

During this pivotal period, a collaborative and united front was forged, involving key figures such as the Mayor of the City of Skopje, the Prime Minister of the Republic of North Macedonia, the city's municipalities, and other essential stakeholders. This collective effort aimed to pool investments and resources, capitalizing on synergies to uphold and reinforce the project's cultural policies.

Within the framework of Skopje2028, the City's municipalities are primed to undertake program activities. To ensure the smooth execution of these initiatives, cooperative memoranda have been established, signifying the municipalities' active support for the City's candidacy. Notably, it's important to mention that the budget projection does not include allocations for the Melina Mercouri Award.

The principal backers of the project are the City and the State, with a focus on joint financing. An estimated allocation of five million euros is expected to be contributed by all ten municipalities within the City. These funds are earmarked primarily for the execution of activities within the respective territories of these municipalities. On an annual basis, these municipalities will allocate the specified financial resources through their dedicated culture-related budgets and programs. These resources will be utilized to facilitate the implementation of program activities at the municipal level.

For effective coordination and implementation, each municipality has appointed a representative to oversee their involvement in the Skopje2028 project. These representatives will collaborate with a dedicated program implementation team established by the Skopje2028 project foundation, ensuring a cohesive and synchronized approach.

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

In 2014, the concept of pursuing the ECoC title was introduced by the City of Skopje. Since 2015, the City Council of Skopje has consistently allocated financial resources through endorsed programs aimed at supporting public institutions and cultural initiatives that contribute to Skopje's aspiration to become the European Capital of Culture, known as Skopje2028. Upon receiving the ECoC City of Culture 2028 title, the Council of the City of Skopje will enact a Decision ensuring that, regardless of political shifts in the city's decision-making structures, the funding for the Skopje2028 program will be upheld in line with the projected budget.

Following positive legal regulations, budgets for financing programs, including the Skopje2028 initiative, are approved during the current year, specifically in December 2023, for the subsequent fiscal year of 2024. This approval process occurs through the City of Skopje's Council.



The commitment to facilitate the execution of the ECOC2028 project is underscored by the endorsement of a memorandum of cooperation with the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Furthermore, each of the ten municipalities has signed a memorandum of cooperation, outlining their active involvement and dedication to the successful realization of the Skopje2028 project.

The journey toward the European Capital of Culture title initiates a city-wide transformation, opening doors to enhanced urban development opportunities. This comprehensive endeavor empowers public authorities to reorient their approach to nurturing culture. Simultaneously, as an aspiring EU member, this pursuit serves as an evaluative avenue for our nation and city to demonstrate their readiness and capabilities for EU integration.

Given the project's unifying role, its significance, and the global recognition it bestows upon both the city and the nation, our aim is to optimize the advantages stemming from this candidacy.

This candidacy provides a framework for unified action across all levels of municipal governance, transcending political divisions with a shared objective. It's essential that all governing bodies perceive the European Capital of Culture as a collaborative, non-partisan endeavor for the city's benefit.

This candidacy acts as a catalyst for fostering cooperation between diverse levels of municipal administration, transcending political disparities in pursuit of a shared cultural goal. It's imperative that all governing bodies view this title exclusively as a reflection of cultural aspirations.

## 26. Income from the private sector

**What is the fund-raising strategy to seek support from private sponsors?**

**What is the plan for involving sponsors in the event?**

Considering the less favourable financial circumstances, both locally and globally, resulting from the events of the past three years, including the pandemic, worldwide economic crisis, and a military crisis, the City of Skopje, as a candidate for the European Capital of Culture for 2028, will face huge challenges in the process of raising financial resources from the private sector.

Due to these factors, we have chosen to prioritize a fundraising strategy targeting the private sector. This approach is intended to secure sustainable and pragmatic funding sources for the Skopje2028 project. The strategy comprises several distinct and sequential steps that collectively form a cohesive and comprehensive approach as follows:

✓ Within the fundraising process, we will draw upon a diverse range of funding sources, employing various models that take into account the unique attributes of our community and cater to the needs of all targeted groups.

✓ Conducting research and market analysis for potential sponsors entails gathering statistical data concerning various business sectors and individuals. This approach aims to identify optimal methods for motivating and engaging them in investments.

✓ Engaging a broader spectrum of businesses across diverse sectors to contribute smaller amounts of funds constitutes a measure that encourages widespread participation without imposing significant financial strain. This approach ultimately gives a higher cumulative income.

✓ Directing our efforts towards attracting major corporations, as well as engaging individual owners. By targeting these significant players in the business landscape, we aim to secure substantial contributions that can greatly impact the success of our initiative.

✓ Media campaign and publicity – leveraging a dedicated media campaign and publicity efforts, we will launch a distinct promotional initiative aimed at fundraising. Within this phase, we will use a range of accessible public resources, encompassing media platforms, prominent figures, city representatives, artists, entrepreneurs, and professionals from the creative industries, as well as the real and financial sectors. The focal point of this campaign will be to raise awareness across all target groups regarding the import of the Skopje2028 project, emphasizing the advantages it holds for the city and its residents.

✓ Transparency – the complete fundraising procedure will be accessible on the official website. Every contribution will be showcased on the website, accompanied by details about the origin and sum of funds. A dedicated segment for fundraising will be featured on the official Skopje2028 website, enabling all interested parties to monitor the progress of fundraising and identify key contributors. To acknowledge supporters, we will establish a ranking system with different level, including gold, silver, and bronze levels, based on the magnitude of donations or donors.

✓ Moreover, within this section, individuals, notably the citizens of Skopje, will have the opportunity to observe the allocation of funds and their utilization. The collected funds will be categorized according to their origin and intended purpose. Given that a majority of activities will assume the form of projects, each project will be categorized based on donors or funding

sources. This approach facilitates tracking the implementation of funds on a project-specific level, fostering increased visibility and dissemination of the projects themselves.

✓ Donor promotions – involve providing every donor with dedicated advertising exposure within relevant activities. This acknowledgment will extend to both the preparatory stages of the project and throughout the entirety of program execution.

✓ Elevated City-wide Presence through Fundraising Branding – Our endeavour involves showcasing all those who have embraced this initiative with prominent branding that bears the visual identity of the Skopje2028 project. This measure aims to heighten awareness regarding the importance of contributing to fundraising efforts, effectively amplifying the impact of the entire initiative.

✓ We will organise a drive to donate art pictures and books, by involving all artists and writers, through joint exhibition and poetry, to celebrate art and donate in the name of art. We will organise a comprehensive campaign to encourage the contribution of art pieces and books, actively engaging artists and writers across the spectrum. This collective effort will culminate in a collaborative exhibition and poetry event, serving as a celebration of artistic expression and a platform for making donations in the name of art. This approach aims to not only promote creativity but also foster a sense of community engagement and support for cultural initiatives.

✓ Engaging the Diaspora through Art Auctions and Book Sales – We will actively involve the diaspora by organizing auctions and sales of donated art paintings and books. This initiative encourages their personal contribution to cultural enrichment, ultimately supporting the realization of Skopje2028 program activities.

✓ Charity events, with the sale of works created at several types of organised workshops. Facilitating the sale of artworks crafted during diverse organized workshops, organizing charity events that involve the sale of artworks produced through a variety workshops. This approach not only serves as a platform for promoting creative endeavour's but also provides a new way for generating funds that contribute to cultural initiatives, enhancing the prospects of implementing the Skopje2028.

✓ We will also secure financial support from the private sector within the tourism industry. It's imperative that the ECoC event is perceived and positioned as a forthcoming economic and tourism surge, offering advantages to the entire nation. Simultaneously, accommodation establishments, restaurants, shopping hubs, and exploration sites will be encouraged to capitalize on this opportunity, aiming to amplify their gains during the project's active implementation phase.

✓ Regional Challenge Fund (RCF) - as part of our strategy entails creating a mechanism that facilitates swift and uncomplicated access to companies. This access will be facilitated through collaborations with the Chambers of Commerce. This initiative serves as a means to incentivize and support businesses within the region to contribute to our goal.

✓ Macedonia 2025 - acting as a Platform for a Prosperous Future, presents an inclusive approach designed to unite all relevant stakeholders and promote a shared sense of coherence regarding paramount priorities that underpin sustained, long-term growth and the prosperity.

✓ We will actively involve prominent telecommunications operators and reputable banking institutions in our strategy. By incorporating their participation, we aim to leverage their resources and influence to contribute significantly to the successful implementation of substantial cultural events and celebrations. Through these partnerships, we seek to support the implementation of the most significant cultural manifestations, fostering a dynamic synergy that enhances the cultural landscape of our initiative.

✓ The Skopje2028 project stands as a unique way to spotlight, actualize, and substantiate its inherent attributes, including its ingenuity, innovations, and intellectual capacities. It offers an invaluable opportunity for production firms to showcase their capabilities to international visitors and evaluators, thereby positioning themselves prominently for future external collaborations and undertakings. For businesses aspiring to serve as benefactors, the initiative serves as a gateway to a vast network of professionals, initiatives, and projects, enhancing their influence and engagement. Additionally, gaming and animation studios/companies can harness the initiative to gain access to young creative talents, effectively addressing their future workforce needs and strengthening their industry presence.

✓ Engaging IT companies in our strategy involves creating opportunities for their employees to acquire insights and expertise. This can be achieved through the provision of complimentary tickets for events, diverse visits, workshops, and similar activities. The primary objective is to encourage development of soft skills, an aspect for which IT firms consistently allocate resources and time for training. This collaborative approach ensures mutual benefits, whereby both the IT companies and the Skopje2028 initiative achieve their desired outcomes.

✓ Transport system – engaging firms to facilitate an exceptional level of professionalism in hosting international guests and participants. For their convenience, we intend to provide transportation services utilizing branded ECO vehicles, aligning with the practices of renowned world brands that have historically adopted such sophisticated transportation approaches in major cultural undertakings.

✓ Our strategy encompasses the provision of opportunities for the placement of advertising through branded stands,

specifically designed capsules that serve as interactive points of engagement. These capsules offer a multifaceted platform for promotional activities, allowing sponsors and collaborators to effectively communicate their brand messages and offerings to a diverse audience. This approach not only enhances the visibility of our partners but also enhances the overall visitor experience by integrating innovative and outstanding branding elements within the Skopje2028 project.

✓ Our strategy involves forging a harmonious connection between cultural experiences and culinary delights, spotlighting the fusion of culture with gastronomy. Through this integration, we aim to celebrate and showcase the richness of Macedonian cuisine, including its exquisite wines, traditional brandies, and mastic flavours. This approach creates a synergistic platform where cultural events and artistic expressions are complemented by the sensory pleasures of local flavours. By highlighting the authentic culinary offerings of Macedonia, we not only enhance visitor experiences but also contribute to the broader cultural narrative of Skopje2028.

✓ Our strategy aims to establish a user-friendly, innovative, and expansive promotional platform. This platform will serve to all private companies, even those with a modest grasp of marketing strategies, to seamlessly align with their marketing objectives. This platform represents an ideal, effective, pragmatic and cost-efficient, way for the companies aiming to efficiently implement their marketing ambitions on a daily basis.

## 27. Operating expenditure

Please provide a breakdown of the operating expenditure

Programme expenditure (in euros)	Programme expenditure (in %)	Promotion and marketing (in euros)	Promotion and marketing (in %)	Wages, overheads and administration (in euros)	Wages, overheads and administration (in %)	Unforeseen expenses (in euros)	Unforeseen expenses (in %)	Total of the operating expenditure
90.394.948	72	17.576.796	14%	15.065.825	12%	2.510.971	2%	125.548.540

Through the presentation of the operating budget data within the table, our objective is to underscore our unwavering focus on the program itself. Our foremost commitment revolves around the advancement and execution of cultural initiatives, for which we have allocated a significant 72% of the overall budget. This allocation is strategically aimed at attracting a substantial number of international participants, visitors, and tourists, demonstrating our determination to foster a vibrant cultural atmosphere that resonates on a global scale.

In crafting our budget for operational expenses, we reached an understanding that management costs should not impede the allocation for program development or promotion/marketing endeavors. Our cost framework has been meticulously designed to support the seamless execution of the program, equitable compensation for all professionals engaged in the project, and robust promotion efforts both domestically and internationally.

Regarding the allocation of 2% contingencies, we firmly believe in their necessity to enable swift response to unforeseen circumstances. Recent global events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and a looming economic crisis, underscore the importance of being prepared for potential challenges. Additionally, emerging geopolitical uncertainties emphasize the need to address possible future scenarios that may arise before 2028.

It's important to emphasize that if none of the outlined contingencies come to fruition, the funds earmarked for them will be reallocated to specific program components. This strategic redirection aims to bolster and expand the budget dedicated to the program, further enhancing the comprehensive financial strategy already presented.

## 28. Budget for capital expenditure

What is the breakdown of the income to be received from the public sector to cover capital expenditure in connection with the title year?

Have the public finance authorities (city, region, State) already voted on or made financial commitments to cover capital expenditure? If not, when will they do so?

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

In preparation for the forthcoming candidacy and the extending period of 2024 to 2028, the financial framework outlined in the City of Skopje Mayor's program, in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and the municipal bodies of the City of Skopje, encompasses projections for capital investments.

Capital projects	Type of project	Amount in euros	Percentage	Year of realization	Investors
Children City Park	Construction	26,000,000	58.43	2024-2028	The City and the State
4 mega parks	Construction	6,000,000	13.48	2024-2025	The City of Skopje in cooperation with the municipalities
Botanical garden	Construction	1,500,000	3.38	2024-2026	The City of Skopje
Universal Hall	Reconstruction	2,000,000	3.38	2024-2026	The State and the Ministry of Culture
Open-air arena	Construction	2,000,000	4.49	2024-2027	The City of Skopje
Swimming pool	Construction	1,000,000	2.25	2024-2027	The City of Skopje, Municipality of Suto Orizari
House of Culture	Construction	2,000,000	4.49	2024-2027	The City of Skopje, Municipality of Aerodrom
Cinema and Theatre	Construction	2,000,000	4.49	2024-2027	The City of Skopje, Municipality of Aerodrom
Construction of a new library	Construction	2,000,000	4.49	2024-2027	The City of Skopje
Braka Miladinovski Library	Reconstruction	500,000	1.12	2024-2025	The City of Skopje
<b>Total</b>		<b>44,500,000</b>	<b>100</b>		

The budget presented, which designates earmarked financial resources for capital investments, has undergone the necessary approval process for implementation. Importantly, their implementation will not compromise the budget allocation outlined for the execution of the candidacy program.

Stubbornly, the inclusion of the specified capital projects is essential for achieving a comprehensive and successful realization of the cultural program outlined in the application book. The reconstruction of the Universal Hall, a vital component, will provide additional space necessary for hosting concerts and events throughout the Skopje2028 initiative.

The Universal Hall is a symbol of Skopje, a symbol of solidarity, an object built after the catastrophic earthquake as a permanent symbol of international human solidarity, in whose construction more than 35 countries in the world participated. An object, which was widely known for its acoustics, in which many world-known famous people performed. The reconstruction of the Universal Hall will be completed between 2025 and 2026 and it will be a new multimedia space with several halls, where concerts, theatre performances, workshops for children, exhibitions and conferences will be held.

Contrary to concerns, the inclusion of these specified capital projects is integral to the comprehensive realization of the entire cultural program outlined in the application book. One crucial project is the renovation of the Universal Hall, a pivotal undertaking. This refurbishment will provide an additional venue, essential for accommodating concerts and events central to the Skopje2028 initiative. The Universal Hall holds immense cultural significance, representing Skopje's resilience and international collaboration. It was conceived after a devastating earthquake as a symbol of global unity, with contributions from over 35 countries. This iconic structure, renowned for its acoustics and history of hosting world-renowned artists, is scheduled for reconstruction between 2025 and 2026. It will emerge as a state-of-the-art multimedia hub with multiple halls. These versatile spaces will serve as venues for concerts, theatre performances, children's workshops, exhibitions, and conferences, exemplifying the multifaceted cultural engagement of Skopje2028.

Given our city's commitment to combatting pollution, the creation of mega parks within municipality boundaries and the establishment of a new botanical garden will transform Skopje into an exemplar of ecological and sustainable urban living. These green havens will not only offer residents new recreational spaces but also serve as venues for open-air arena program activities. Nurturing the well-being of our youngest residents is a shared obligation. Ensuring the well-being of the youngest is our responsibility. Through development of the Children City Park, we aspire to offer them a more joyous and carefree childhood experience.

Recognizing the financial constraints of the municipalities within the City of Skopje and the fundamental principle that every citizen of the city deserves equal opportunities to engage in cultural enrichment, literature, and thus enhance their quality of life, the City of Skopje is committed to executing a series of additional capital projects by 2028. These endeavours include the establishment of an open-air arena, the construction of a swimming pool in the Municipality of Suto Orizari, a district predominantly inhabited by the Roma population, the creation of a theatre and cinema within the Municipality of Aerodrom, alongside the introduction of a new library and the revitalization of the pre-existing "Braka Miladinovci" Library.

## 29. Organisational Structure.

Please give an outline of the intended governance and delivery structure for the implementation of the European Capital of Culture year.

Upon receiving a favourable response following the second panel, the establishment of the Skopje 2028 Foundation will be promptly initiated. This foundation will operate in accordance with the Law of Associations and Foundations and will be overseen by the Mayor of Skopje, serving as its Chairperson. Its primary responsibility will be to develop the necessary cultural infrastructure for the successful implementation of the ECOC2028 program.

To ensure openness and inclusivity, the Foundation will extend its reach to both public and private participants. Its institutional support will encompass city, regional, and governmental authorities, fostering a collaborative environment. The Mayor of the City of Skopje automatically is a part of the Skopje2028 Board.

The project activities of ECOC28 will align with the city's strategic documents and harmonize with the Strategy for Cultural Development of Skopje. Beyond the funds already allocated, the Foundation will have the flexibility to finance its projects through various avenues, such as public and private funds, donations, and sponsorships. Fundamental to its operation is strict adherence to legal frameworks, including the Law on Associations and Foundations, the Law on Public Procurement, and all regulations related to the realization, production, co-production, and promotion of the ECOC2028 program.

Skopje2028 will be structured as an autonomous foundation, with members selected via unanimous decisions by the City Council. If the city's candidacy receives a positive outcome, the Foundation will ensure continuity and stability by constructing a comprehensive structure, minimizing political influence. This strategic approach safeguards artistic and organizational autonomy, fostering transparency and clarity within its operational environment.

From 2024 to 2028, the organization will prioritize streamlined decision-making processes, robust governance, and a focus on achieving its goals while upholding the principles of independence.

Outline of the intended governance and delivery structure for the implementation of the Foundation of the European Capital of Culture year:

#### 1. Skopje2028 Board:

- Chairperson: Provides overall leadership and strategic direction.
- Vice-Chairperson: Supports the Chairperson's responsibilities.
- Members: Representatives from key cultural, governmental, and community organizations.

#### 2. CEO

#### 3. Artistic Advisory Board:

- Artistic Director: Oversees the artistic vision and programming.
- Curators and Experts: Renowned individuals in various artistic disciplines.
- Cultural Leaders: Representatives from local cultural institutions and organizations.

#### 4. Finance and Operations Committee:

- Financial Director: Manages budgeting, funding, and financial aspects.
- Operations Manager: Handles logistical and operational coordination.
- Legal Advisor: Ensures compliance with regulations and contracts.

#### 5. Outreach and Engagement Team:

- Communication Director: Leads communication, marketing, and public relations.
- Community Liaison: Connects with local residents and stakeholders.
- Engagement Coordinator: Organizes community events and involvement.

#### 6. International Relations Committee:

- International Director: Manages relationships with other cities and partners.
- Diplomatic Representatives: Collaborates with foreign embassies and consulates.
- Cultural Exchange Coordinator: Facilitates cross-cultural collaborations.

#### 7. Sustainability and Impact Task Force:

- Sustainability Officer: Focuses on environmental and social impact.
- Impact Assessment Specialist: Measures the cultural and economic influence.
- Green Initiatives Coordinator: Implements eco-friendly practices.

#### 8. Legacy and Documentation Team:

- Archivist: Collects and preserves documentation of the program.
- Historian: Chronicles the program's history and impact.
- Legacy Coordinator: Plans for the long-term influence and benefits.

#### 9. Local Partnerships Group:

- Business Liaison: Collaborates with local businesses and sponsors.
- Educational Representatives: Engages schools and universities.
- Cultural Organizations: Ensures the involvement of local cultural groups.

This board structure is designed to provide effective leadership, representation, and coordination for the implementation of the European Capital of Culture year. It includes various committees and teams responsible for different aspects of the program, ensuring a well-rounded approach to cultural, financial, operational, and community-related matters. The titles and roles mentioned can be adapted to the specific needs and circumstances of the city hosting the event.

The Skopje2028 Board holds a crucial role in overseeing and guiding the implementation of the European Capital of Culture year. Its responsibilities encompass strategic leadership, decision-making, and ensuring the successful execution of the program.

Here's an outline of the **Board Committee's** key responsibilities:

#### 1. Strategic Direction:

- Formulating the overall strategic vision and goals for the European Capital of Culture year.
- Defining the thematic focus, artistic approach, and objectives that align with the city's cultural identity and European values.

#### 2. Program Oversight:

- Together with the Artistic Board approving the final program of events, exhibitions, performances, and cultural initiatives.
- Ensuring that the program reflects diversity, inclusivity, and high artistic quality.

**3. Budget and Funding:**

- Overseeing the budget allocation for various aspects of the program.
- Approving funding sources, sponsorship agreements, and financial plans.

**4. Partnerships and Collaboration:**

- Establishing collaborations with local, national, and international partners, including cultural institutions, governments, sponsors, and communities.
- Ensuring effective communication and coordination among partners.

**5. Risk Management:**

- Identifying potential risks and challenges that could impact the success of the program.
- Developing contingency plans and strategies to address unforeseen issues.

**6. Decision-Making:**

- Making key decisions related to program elements, budget allocation, and strategic direction.
- Resolving any disputes or disagreements that may arise during the planning and execution stages.

**7. Monitoring and Evaluation:**

- Monitoring the progress and performance of different program components.
- Evaluating the impact of the program on cultural, social, and economic aspects.

**8. Public Relations and Communication:**

- Representing the European Capital of Culture program in public appearances, press releases, and media events.
- Promoting the program's objectives, achievements, and cultural contributions.

**9. Legacy and Sustainability:**

- Ensuring that the program's impact continues beyond the designated year.
- Overseeing the planning of legacy projects and initiatives that leave a lasting cultural, social, and economic legacy.

**10. Reporting to Stakeholders:**

- Reporting regularly to stakeholders, including government officials, cultural institutions, partners, and the public.
- Keeping stakeholders informed about progress, challenges, and successes.

The Skopje2028 Board role is pivotal in providing leadership, strategic vision, and effective governance to ensure the European Capital of Culture year fulfills its objectives and leaves a positive, lasting impact on the city and its cultural community.

The **CEO** is chosen by the Skopje2028 Board.

The CEO assumes a pivotal role in the orchestration of the European Capital of Culture journey. Their responsibilities can be summarized as follows:

**Strategic Vision:** The CEO takes the lead in shaping the overarching vision and mission for the European Capital of Culture program. They craft a narrative that aligns with the city's cultural identity and embodies the values of the event. **Operational Leadership:** Like a director guiding a theatrical performance, the CEO oversees the day-to-day operations of the program. They ensure that plans are executed efficiently, deadlines are met, and resources are allocated judiciously. **Team Coordination:** The CEO acts as a conductor, harmonizing the efforts of the diverse teams involved in the program. They nurture a collaborative environment, fostering synergy among artists, partners, organizers, and stakeholders. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Similar to a protagonist connecting with allies, the CEO engages with various stakeholders. They build relationships with government officials, sponsors, cultural institutions, and community members, ensuring alignment with the program's objectives. **Financial Stewardship:** The CEO manages the financial landscape, making decisions that impact the program's financial health. They secure funding, oversee budget allocation, and ensure fiscal responsibility. **Innovation and Adaptation:** Just as a protagonist faces challenges, the CEO anticipates obstacles and navigates uncertainties. They innovate solutions, adapting to changing circumstances and ensuring the program's success. **Program Evaluation:** Like a protagonist reflecting on their journey, the CEO evaluates the program's progress and impact. They analyze data, feedback, and outcomes to gauge the effectiveness of the initiatives. **Public Representation:** The CEO assumes the role of the program's ambassador, representing it in public forums, media engagements, and press releases. They articulate the program's vision, achievements, and cultural contributions. **Legacy Planning:** Similar to a protagonist contemplating their legacy, the CEO envisions how the program's impact will endure beyond its designated year. They develop strategies for lasting cultural, social, and economic legacies. **Reporting and Accountability:** The CEO provides regular updates to stakeholders, government entities, and the public. They ensure transparency by reporting progress, challenges, and successes of the program. In the narrative of the European Capital of Culture, the CEO stands as a guardian of the program's essence, weaving together creativity, strategy, and leadership to craft a compelling and enduring story.

The **Artistic Advisory Board** plays a crucial role in shaping the artistic vision and content of the European Capital of Culture program. Its members are experts in various artistic disciplines and contribute their insights to ensure the program's artistic excellence and alignment with the city's cultural identity. Here's an overview of the Artistic Advisory Board's responsibilities:

**1. Artistic Vision:**

- Contributing to the development of the overarching artistic vision and thematic focus of the program.
- Ensuring that the program reflects the cultural diversity and creative spirit of the city.

**2. Curatorial Guidance:**

- Offering expertise in curatorial practices for exhibitions, performances, installations, and artistic presentations.
- Advising on the selection and curation of specific artistic works and projects.

**3. Program Content:**

- Reviewing and evaluating proposed artistic projects and initiatives to ensure they align with the program's objectives and quality standards.
- Providing recommendations for innovative and thought-provoking content.

**4. Artistic Quality:**

- Assessing the artistic quality and cultural significance of proposed projects, ensuring they meet high standards of creativity and expression.
- Enhancing the program's impact by curating a diverse range of artistic experiences.



## 5. Collaboration and Partnerships:

- Collaborating with local and international artists, cultural institutions, and partners to foster artistic collaborations.
- Recommending partnerships that enhance the program's artistic and cultural depth.

## 6. Emerging Talents:

- Identifying and supporting emerging artists who contribute fresh perspectives and innovative approaches to the program.
- Encouraging the inclusion of new and experimental artistic voices.

## 7. Cultural Diversity and Inclusion:

- Ensuring that the program reflects a wide range of artistic genres, styles, and cultural backgrounds.
- Promoting inclusivity and representing the city's diverse artistic landscape.

## 8. Public Engagement:

- Advising on ways to engage the public with the artistic content, including interactive experiences, workshops, and discussions.
- Enhancing audience participation and appreciation of the arts.

## 9. Innovation and Experimentation:

- Encouraging artistic experimentation and unconventional approaches to engage audiences and challenge norms.
- Promoting the integration of new technologies and interdisciplinary art forms.

## 10. Legacy and Impact:

- Considering the long-term impact of artistic initiatives on the city's cultural scene beyond the designated year.
- Advising on legacy projects that leave a lasting artistic influence.

The Artistic Advisory Board's expertise contributes to the overall artistic excellence and cultural significance of the European Capital of Culture program. Their guidance ensures that the program offers a dynamic and diverse range of artistic experiences that resonate with both local audiences and visitors.

**The Artistic Director**, is like to a masterful storyteller, holds the creative reins of the European Capital of Culture program for Skopje2028. Their responsibilities can be summarized as follows:

**Conceptual Vision:** The Artistic Director shapes the program's creative vision, weaving a narrative that resonates with the city's identity and European values. They craft a thematic framework that guides the artistic expression throughout the journey. **Curatorial and Selection:** Like a curator assembling an art collection, the Artistic Director selects and curates a diverse range of cultural events, performances, exhibitions, and initiatives. They ensure a tapestry of artistic excellence and innovation. **Collaborative Partnerships:** The Artistic Director collaborates with artists, creators, cultural institutions, and international partners. They establish synergistic partnerships that enrich the program and amplify its impact. **Artistic Excellence:** Similar to a conductor guiding a symphony, the Artistic Director ensures that each artistic element meets high standards of quality and originality. They nurture the artistic community and encourage boundary-pushing creativity. **Thematic Cohesion:** The Artistic Director unifies the program's elements under the thematic umbrella, ensuring that each event contributes to the cohesive narrative. They create an immersive experience that resonates with audiences. **Inclusivity and Diversity:** Just as protagonists in a tale come from various walks of life, the Artistic Director champions' inclusivity and diversity. They ensure representation of different voices, cultures, and perspectives in the program. **Creative Direction:** The Artistic Director provides creative direction to artists and collaborators, guiding them in translating the thematic vision into tangible artistic expressions. They nurture creativity while maintaining alignment with the overarching narrative. **Audience Engagement:** Similar to an author engaging readers, the Artistic Director considers the audience's experience. They design events and exhibitions that engage, challenge, and inspire participants, fostering a meaningful connection. **Experimentation and Innovation:** The Artistic Director encourages experimentation and innovation, fostering an environment where artists can explore new mediums, forms, and ideas that push artistic boundaries. **Legacy and Impact:** Just as stories leave a lasting impact, the Artistic Director plans for the program's legacy. They conceive projects and initiatives that resonate beyond the program's duration, leaving a cultural legacy for future generations. In the narrative of the European Capital of Culture, the Artistic Director is the guardian of creativity, weaving together artistic expressions, cultural exploration, and transformative experiences that bring the program's story to life.

**The Finance and Operations Committee** holds a critical role within the Skopje2028 initiative, overseeing various aspects that are crucial for the program's success. Here are the key responsibilities of the committee:

**Financial Oversight:** The committee is tasked with monitoring the financial health of Skopje2028. This includes reviewing budgets, financial reports, and ensuring that financial resources are allocated appropriately to support the program's initiatives. **Budget Management:** The committee plays a pivotal role in the development and management of budgets for different projects and activities. They ensure that financial plans align with the program's goals and adhere to established financial guidelines. **Resource Allocation:** It's the committee's duty to allocate financial resources effectively to different projects, ensuring that the program's initiatives are adequately funded and have the necessary resources to succeed. **Risk Management:** The committee identifies potential financial risks and challenges that may arise during the program's implementation. They develop strategies to mitigate these risks and ensure the program's financial sustainability. **Compliance and Accountability:** The committee ensures that financial transactions and activities are carried out in compliance with legal and regulatory standards. They also uphold a high level of transparency and accountability in financial matters. **Financial Reporting:** The committee prepares and presents financial reports to the relevant stakeholders, including the Steering Committee and other key partners. These reports provide insights into the program's financial performance and its alignment with set targets. **Operational Efficiency:** Beyond financial matters, the committee also assesses operational processes and efficiency. They make recommendations for improvements to streamline operations and enhance the overall effectiveness of the program. **Internal Controls:** The Skopje2028 Board establishes and maintains internal controls to safeguard the program's financial assets and prevent financial mismanagement. **Vendor and Contract Management:** They oversee the selection and management of vendors, ensuring that contracts are well-negotiated, meet legal requirements, and align with the program's objectives. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The Skopje2028 Board continuously monitors the financial and operational aspects of Skopje2028. This includes evaluating the effectiveness of financial strategies, identifying areas for improvement, and adapting approaches as needed. In essence, the Finance and Operations Committee serves as a steward of Skopje2028's financial resources, guiding prudent financial decisions, ensuring compliance, and optimizing operational efficiency. Their role is pivotal in maintaining the program's financial health, enabling successful implementation, and contributing to the realization of its cultural and artistic goals.

**The Outreach and Engagement Team** is a vital component of the Skopje2028 initiative, responsible for connecting with

diverse audiences, fostering meaningful interactions, and creating a sense of belonging within the community. Their role encompasses various tasks and responsibilities:

**Community Engagement:** The team initiates and maintains engagement with local communities, residents, and stakeholders. They organize events, workshops, and activities that encourage participation, collaboration, and a sense of ownership in the Skopje2028 journey. **Stakeholder Collaboration:** The team collaborates with various stakeholders, including cultural organizations, local businesses, educational institutions, and government bodies. They facilitate partnerships that contribute to the program's success and enhance its impact. **Public Relations:** The team manages public relations efforts, crafting and disseminating messages that effectively communicate Skopje2028's mission, objectives, and achievements to the wider public and media. **Social Media and Digital Presence:** They oversee the program's digital presence, including social media platforms, website, and online content. This involves sharing updates, engaging stories, and interactive content that resonate with audiences. **Communication Channels:** The team establishes effective communication channels to ensure that information flows smoothly between Skopje2028 and its stakeholders. This includes newsletters, email campaigns, and other direct communication methods. **Cultural Inclusivity:** The team ensures that outreach efforts reflect the cultural diversity of the community. They design initiatives that respect and celebrate various cultural backgrounds, fostering inclusivity and promoting intercultural understanding. **Feedback Collection:** The team gathers feedback from community members, stakeholders, and participants to assess their needs, preferences, and suggestions. This input helps shape program activities and ensures alignment with community interests. **Event Coordination:** They organize and execute events that bring people together to experience the cultural richness of Skopje2028. These events could include festivals, exhibitions, performances, and interactive experiences. **Education and Awareness:** The team facilitates educational initiatives that raise awareness about the cultural significance of Skopje2028. These initiatives could involve workshops, lectures, and educational materials that enrich participants' understanding. **Evaluation of Impact:** The team assesses the impact of outreach and engagement efforts by measuring participation levels, gathering feedback, and analyzing the overall community sentiment toward Skopje2028. **Adaptive Strategies:** Based on feedback and evolving community needs, the team adjusts outreach strategies to ensure that Skopje2028 remains relevant, engaging, and aligned with the interests of the community. **Building a Sense of Belonging:** Through their efforts, the Outreach and Engagement Team fosters a sense of belonging among community members, making them feel invested in and connected to the success of Skopje2028. Ultimately, the team's responsibilities are centered on building bridges between Skopje2028 and the community it serves, creating a vibrant cultural dialogue that enriches the lives of residents, stakeholders, and participants.

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**The International Relations Committee** plays a crucial role in the Skopje2028 initiative, focusing on building strong connections, fostering global collaborations, and promoting cultural exchange on an international scale. Their responsibilities encompass a wide range of activities aimed at enhancing Skopje's cultural presence and reputation on the global stage:

**Strategic Partnerships:** The committee identifies, establishes, and nurtures strategic partnerships with international cultural organizations, institutions, and entities. These partnerships facilitate cross-border collaborations and enrich the cultural landscape of Skopje2028. **Cultural Diplomacy:** They promote cultural diplomacy efforts by representing Skopje2028 in international cultural events, conferences, and forums. This enhances the city's image as a cultural hub and fosters positive relations with other countries. **Artistic Exchanges:** The committee facilitates artistic exchanges by inviting international artists, performers, and cultural practitioners to participate in Skopje2028 events. This fosters cross-cultural artistic dialogues and enriches the program. **International Programming:** They contribute to the development of the program by curating international content, performances, exhibitions, and workshops that bring diverse cultural experiences to Skopje's residents and visitors. **Cultural Showcases:** The committee organizes cultural showcases and exhibitions that highlight Skopje's cultural heritage, contemporary art scene, and innovative cultural projects to an international audience. **Cultural Ambassadors:** They collaborate with cultural ambassadors who represent Skopje2028 internationally, creating a network of

advocates who share the city's cultural narrative and achievements. **Cultural Agreements:** The committee negotiates and establishes cultural agreements, exchange programs, and collaborations with other cities, regions, and countries, facilitating cultural exchange and joint initiatives. **Promotion of Skopje2028 Abroad:** They promote Skopje2028's activities, events, and initiatives through international media, cultural platforms, and promotional campaigns, increasing global awareness of the program. **International Funding:** The committee explores opportunities for international funding, sponsorships, and grants that can support Skopje2028's initiatives and enhance the program's scope and impact. **Cultural Research:** They conduct research on international cultural trends, practices, and innovations to inform Skopje2028's programming and ensure its alignment with global cultural developments. **Cultural Exchange Programs:** The committee designs and implements cultural exchange programs that enable Skopje's artists, cultural practitioners, and institutions to collaborate with their international counterparts. **Hosting International Delegations:** They host international delegations, cultural experts, and dignitaries to showcase Skopje's cultural achievements, share best practices, and explore opportunities for collaboration. **Cultural Diplomacy Strategy:** The committee develops a comprehensive cultural diplomacy strategy that outlines Skopje's cultural goals, priorities, and initiatives in the international arena. **Tracking Impact:** They assess the impact of international collaborations, partnerships, and initiatives on Skopje's cultural landscape, as well as the broader socio-economic benefits for the city.

Through these responsibilities, the International Relations Committee helps Skopje2028 establish a global cultural presence, strengthen international ties, and contribute to a vibrant cultural exchange that enriches the city's identity and contributes to its lasting legacy.

**The Sustainability and Impact Task Force** assumes a vital role within the Skopje2028 initiative, focusing on ensuring the long-term sustainability of cultural activities while measuring and maximizing the program's positive influence on various aspects. Their responsibilities encompass a spectrum of activities aimed at embedding sustainable practices and assessing the tangible and intangible effects of Skopje2028:

**Sustainability Strategy:** The task force develops a comprehensive sustainability strategy that outlines environmentally conscious practices, resource management, and reduction of the program's ecological footprint. **Green Initiatives:** They identify and implement green initiatives, such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and sustainable transportation options, to minimize the environmental impact of Skopje2028 events and operations. **Cultural Heritage Preservation:** The task force ensures that cultural activities respect and preserve the city's historical and architectural heritage, contributing to the sustainable conservation of Skopje's identity. **Community Engagement:** They foster community engagement by involving local residents, businesses, and organizations in sustainable practices, ensuring that the benefits of Skopje2028 extend to the broader community. **Social Impact Assessment:** The task force evaluates the social impact of Skopje2028, measuring factors such as community cohesion, cultural participation, and inclusivity to ensure positive societal outcomes. **Economic Impact Analysis:** They assess the economic benefits generated by Skopje2028, including job creation, tourism revenue, and local business growth, contributing to the city's economic sustainability. **Cultural Diversity:** The task force promotes cultural diversity and inclusivity within Skopje2028's activities, fostering a rich tapestry of artistic expressions that reflect the city's multicultural fabric. **Education and Awareness:** They develop educational programs and awareness campaigns that empower attendees and participants to adopt sustainable practices and make informed choices. **Legacy Planning:** The task force strategizes for the post-event period, ensuring that Skopje2028 leaves a lasting legacy by embedding sustainable practices within the city's cultural fabric. **Metrics and Reporting:** They establish metrics and measurement methods to track the progress and outcomes of sustainability efforts, providing transparent reporting to stakeholders. **Collaboration with Partners:** The task force collaborates with partners, including local authorities, businesses, and organizations, to create a unified approach to sustainability that extends beyond the program's duration. **Innovation and Best Practices:** They explore innovative approaches and best practices in sustainability, infusing fresh ideas into Skopje2028's operations and events. **Public Advocacy:** The task force advocates for sustainability by raising awareness about the importance of adopting eco-friendly practices among Skopje2028's attendees, participants, and the broader public. **Continuous Improvement:** They continuously review and refine sustainability strategies based on data and feedback, adapting to changing circumstances and emerging opportunities. **Stakeholder Engagement:** The task force engages with various stakeholders, including local communities, experts, and sustainability advocates, to gather insights and ensure a holistic approach.

By fulfilling these responsibilities, the Sustainability and Impact Task Force contributes to the legacy of Skopje2028 as an environmentally responsible, socially impactful, and economically sustainable cultural program that benefits both the present and future generations of the city and its residents.

**The Legacy and Documentation Team** holds a crucial role in ensuring that the impact of the Skopje2028 initiative extends beyond its designated timeframe, leaving a lasting legacy for the city and its cultural heritage. This team is entrusted with the responsibility of capturing, preserving, and sharing the rich narrative and outcomes of Skopje2028 for current and future generations. Their responsibilities encompass a range of activities aimed at creating a meaningful and enduring legacy:

**Documentation and Archiving:** The team diligently documents all aspects of Skopje2028, including events, performances, exhibitions, and community engagement activities. They gather visual, audio, and written materials to create an archive that chronicles the cultural journey. **Oral Histories:** The team captures the personal stories and experiences of participants, artists, volunteers, and attendees, capturing the human element of Skopje2028 and its impact on individuals and communities. **Digital Platforms:** They establish and maintain digital platforms, websites, and social media channels to showcase Skopje2028's history, achievements, and ongoing initiatives, ensuring accessibility to a global audience. **Legacy Projects:** The team collaborates with artists, experts, and community members to develop legacy projects that reflect the essence of Skopje2028 and contribute to the city's cultural landscape beyond the program's conclusion. **Educational Resources:** They create educational resources, such as documentaries, books, and interactive materials, which offer insights into Skopje2028's themes, artistic endeavors, and cultural impact. **Exhibitions and Displays:** The team curates exhibitions and displays that highlight the journey and accomplishments of Skopje2028, ensuring that the city's residents and visitors can experience the program's essence firsthand. **Engagement Programs:** They design engagement programs that encourage public participation in preserving and celebrating Skopje2028's legacy, fostering a sense of ownership among community members. **Collaboration with Institutions:** The team collaborates with cultural institutions, museums, libraries, and universities to ensure the integration of Skopje2028's legacy materials into their educational and cultural offerings. **Long-Term Impact Assessment:** They assess the long-term impact of Skopje2028 on cultural, social, and economic aspects,

providing evidence of the program's influence on the city's development. **International Cultural Exchange:** The team establishes connections with other cultural initiatives and cities, sharing Skopje2028's story and fostering cross-cultural collaboration. **Public Engagement:** They engage with the public through exhibitions, talks, workshops, and interactive events that encourage dialogue about the significance of Skopje2028's legacy. **Participatory Documentation:** The team involves the community in documenting their experiences, perspectives, and contributions to Skopje2028, fostering a collective memory of the program. **Cultural Preservation:** They ensure that Skopje2028's impact on cultural preservation and revitalization is captured, underscoring its role in safeguarding the city's cultural heritage. **Strategic Partnerships:** The team collaborates with relevant organizations and stakeholders to enhance the impact and reach of Skopje2028's legacy efforts. **Continuous Reflection:** They reflect on the evolving nature of Skopje2028's legacy and adapt their strategies to ensure its relevance and resonance over time.

By fulfilling these responsibilities, the Legacy and Documentation Team contributes to Skopje2028's lasting impact, preserving its narrative, enriching the city's cultural fabric, and inspiring future generations to embrace creativity, unity, and cultural heritage.

**The Reporting to Stakeholders** responsibility involves the crucial task of providing transparent, comprehensive, and timely updates about the progress, achievements, challenges, and impact of the Skopje2028 initiative to various stakeholders, including government officials, cultural institutions, partners, and the general public. This responsibility ensures that all interested parties are well-informed and engaged in the journey of Skopje2028. Here's an overview of the key aspects of this responsibility:

**Progress Updates:** Regularly providing detailed updates on the implementation of Skopje2028, highlighting milestones achieved, events organized, and key developments. **Achievement Highlights:** Sharing noteworthy accomplishments, artistic achievements, and positive outcomes resulting from the program's activities. **Challenges and Solutions:** Communicating openly about challenges faced during the program's implementation and outlining the strategies and solutions employed to overcome them. **Financial Transparency:** Disclosing financial information, including budget allocation, funding sources, expenditures, and financial decisions made by the Foundation. **Impact Assessment:** Presenting comprehensive assessments of Skopje2028's impact on cultural, social, economic, and community aspects, supported by data, evaluations, and case studies. **Public Engagement:** Engaging with the public through various channels, such as town hall meetings, forums, and online platforms, to solicit feedback, answer questions, and address concerns. **Stakeholder Involvement:** Encouraging stakeholders to participate in the dialogue by sharing their perspectives, ideas, and suggestions for improving the program's implementation and impact. **Media Relations:** Interacting with the media to ensure accurate and balanced coverage of Skopje2028, providing press releases, interviews, and relevant information to journalists. **Timely Reporting:** Adhering to a predetermined reporting schedule to ensure that stakeholders receive regular updates and stay informed about the program's ongoing activities. **Transparency in Decision-Making:** Clearly communicating the decision-making processes, criteria, and rationale behind key strategic and artistic decisions made by the Foundation. **Communication Channels:** Utilizing a variety of communication channels, including official websites, social media, newsletters, press releases, and public events, to reach a diverse range of stakeholders. **Feedback Integration:** Incorporating feedback received from stakeholders into the program's planning, implementation, and future initiatives, demonstrating a commitment to responsiveness and collaboration. **Cultural and Social Impact:** Articulating how Skopje2028 has contributed to the enrichment of cultural life, social cohesion, community engagement, and artistic innovation in the city. **Legacy Planning:** Communicating the Foundation's plans for the post-title year, including legacy projects, ongoing cultural initiatives, and strategies to continue fostering artistic and cultural development. **Transparency in Governance:** Providing insights into the governance structure, decision-making roles, and responsibilities of different bodies within the Foundation.



All positions within the leadership category as indicated by the organizational chart, involving leadership responsibilities, will be subject to national and international recruitment processes. Similarly, for roles within the Artistic Board Advisory and the Artistic Pillar, all positions will be filled through national and international calls for applications.

By fulfilling the responsibility of Reporting to Stakeholders, the Skopje2028 initiative demonstrates its dedication to accountability, openness, and the meaningful engagement of stakeholders, fostering a sense of ownership and collective pride in the city's cultural journey.

## 30. Contingency planning. What are the main strengths and weaknesses of your project? How are you planning to overcome identified weaknesses?

To ensure the utmost efficiency in the execution of our project, we placed significant emphasis on meticulous project planning, particularly within the realm of risk management. This involved a comprehensive assessment of our strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, which informed our strategies for an unimpeded project journey. In this pursuit, risk anticipation was rooted in risk prevention, drawing upon the insights and expertise of partnering entities and past ECoC2028 candidacies that had been accomplished with success.

In the initial stages, we embarked on a SWOT analysis, with a distinct objective of transforming our perceived weaknesses and threats into future assets and strengths. By undertaking this process, we were poised to harness our full potential while navigating challenges head-on.

The risks identified have been thoughtfully categorized:

**Political Risks:** The Skopje2028 Board undertakes the responsibility of overseeing political risks. This entails addressing any potential challenges arising from political dynamics and ensuring alignment with the project's objectives.

- **Measures:** In the pursuit of becoming a European Capital of Culture, Skopje recognizes the significance of navigating political risks. By implementing a strategic framework of measures that prioritize stakeholder engagement, due diligence, transparency, and flexibility, Skopje will proactively address potential political challenges. These measures will fortify the city's ability to weather political uncertainties and maintain its course toward realizing a successful and transformative ECoC journey.
- **Level of Effect:** Medium
- **Probability:** Low

**Economic Risks:** Economic factors fall under the purview of the CEO. These encompass a vigilant evaluation of economic conditions and potential impacts on the project, with a focus on maintaining financial sustainability.

- **Measures:** Addressing economic risks is a critical component of ensuring the success of the ECoC initiative in Skopje. By implementing a range of economic risk mitigation measures, such as financial analysis, diversified funding sources, cost management, and sustainability planning, Skopje will navigate economic challenges while achieving its cultural and artistic goals. These measures will contribute to the long-term financial sustainability and positive impact of the ECoC journey.
- **Level of Effect:** Medium
- **Probability:** Medium

**Program Risks:** The Artistic Director and the CEO share the responsibility of managing program risks. Their roles encompass the mitigation of challenges that could affect the program's execution and artistic integrity.

- **Measures:** Managing program risks is a proactive approach to safeguard the successful implementation of the ECoC initiative in Skopje. By implementing measures (Regular Monitoring and Reporting, Cross-Functional Collaboration, Risk Communication, Stakeholder Engagement, Regular Reviews and Adjustments, Lessons Learned Documentation), Skopje will anticipate and address potential challenges, ensuring that cultural initiatives, events, and activities unfold smoothly while delivering the intended impact. Effective program risk management contributes to the overall success and legacy of Skopje's ECoC journey.
- **Level of Effect:** Medium
- **Probability:** Medium

**Sustainability, Evaluation, and Monitoring Risks:** This category, encompassing project sustainability, evaluation, and monitoring, is entrusted to the CEO and the Skopje2028 Board. They work in tandem to ensure the project's long-term viability and effectiveness through diligent assessment and monitoring.

- **Measures:** Managing sustainability, evaluation, and monitoring risks is pivotal to ensuring that Skopje's ECoC journey creates lasting positive impacts. By implementing measures (Regular Evaluation Milestones, External Evaluation Experts engagement, Data Collection and Analysis, Establishing Feedback Loops, Continuous Monitoring, Public Reporting), Skopje will establish a foundation for ongoing success, continuous improvement, and meaningful cultural engagement that extends well beyond the designated year. Effective management of these risks will contribute to the legacy and significance of becoming a European Capital of Culture.
- **Level of Effect:** Low
- **Probability:** Low

**Organizational Risks:** Organizational considerations are overseen by the CEO. This involves the identification and management of risks associated with the project's internal structure and operations.

- **Measures:** We will implement measures such as Establishment of Effective Governance Structure and Clear Communication Channels, Definition of Team Clear Role, Regular Team Meetings and Performance Monitoring, the project will maintain efficient operations, optimize internal coordination, and overcome challenges that may arise within the organizational framework.
- **Level of Effect:** Medium
- **Probability:** Low

Through this structured approach to risk management, we aim to fortify our project against potential pitfalls while fostering an environment of innovation and adaptability. By assigning specific responsibilities and implementing preventive measures, we aspire to steer the project towards success and fulfillment of its transformative goals.

## Key Strengths

- ✓ **Abundant Cultural Environment:** Skopje boasts a rich cultural landscape encompassing an array of theaters, museums, concert halls, galleries, and a vibrant cultural calendar. Its festival scene, historical sites, artistic traditions, individual creatives, and cultural monuments contribute to a thriving cultural atmosphere.
- ✓ **Diverse Educational Institutions:** The presence of esteemed institutions such as the School of Theology, Macedonian Orthodox Seminary "St. Kliment Ohridski," and Madrasa "Isa Beg" lends an educational and spiritual dimension to the city.
- ✓ **Sacred Architecture:** Skopje's cultural fabric is enriched by its churches and mosques, including notable landmarks like the monastery of St. Andrej, Isa Beg Mosque, Sultan Murat Mosque, and Mustafa Pasha Mosque.
- ✓ **Artistic Associations and Colonies:** Flourishing associations of artists and arts colonies add to the creative tapestry of the city.
- ✓ **Nurturing Art Education:** Skopje is home to institutions like the Secondary School of Arts and College of Arts, University of Skopje, fostering the growth of artistic talents.
- ✓ **Showcasing Cultural Heritage:** The city proudly showcases its unique cultural heritage, enhancing its allure for tourists.
- ✓ **Natural Beauty and Conservation:** Skopje's natural charm is highlighted by the protected area of Matka Canyon and the VRELO cave, offering unique natural landscapes.
- ✓ **Vibrant Culinary Scene:** The city's size allows for a rich culinary experience, complementing its extensive tourist offerings.
- ✓ **Favorable Climate:** Skopje enjoys a favorable climate, boasting a high number of sunny days ideal for open-stage events and cultural activities.
- ✓ **Distinctive Branding Vision:** With a plan to rebrand itself, akin to Berlin's iconic bear, Skopje aims to establish its unique identity and recognition.
- ✓ **Interwoven Cultures:** Skopje embraces inter culturalism, with Albanians, Roma, Serbs, Turks, Bosnians, Romanians, Armenians, and various national minorities coexisting harmoniously.
- ✓ **Strategic Location:** The city's strategic location affords excellent connectivity to Europe and the world, with the airport just 24 km away.
- ✓ **Ample Accommodation:** Skopje offers sufficient accommodation capacities to cater to its diverse range of visitors.
- ✓ **Strategic Action Plan:** The presence of a well-structured strategic action plan contributes to efficient urban development.
- ✓ **Green Spaces:** Abundant parks and green spaces enhance the city's aesthetic and recreational appeal.
- ✓ **Investment Prospects:** Ten investment capital projects underscore Skopje's commitment to growth and development.
- ✓ **Cultural Infrastructure:** The city possesses a robust cultural infrastructure, encompassing a multitude of cultural venues and facilities.
- ✓ **Geographic Diversity:** Situated between two mountains and encompassing diverse natural and archaeological features, Skopje's geographic diversity adds to its charm.
- ✓ **Inclusive Audiences:** Skopje's multi-ethnic environment ensures a diverse audience base, enhancing the cultural exchange and vibrancy of its events and initiatives.

Through these diverse strengths, Skopje stands as a city poised to cultivate an enriching cultural journey that engages both its residents and visitors alike.

## Challenges and Weaknesses

- ✓ **Limited European Recognition:** Skopje's cultural presence remains inadequately recognized in the broader European context, posing a challenge for establishing its cultural identity on a wider stage.
- ✓ **Art Management Gaps:** Challenges persist in art management, including shortcomings in city marketing and branding, a scarcity of cultural managers, decentralized cultural processes, and a lack of business acumen in cultural organizations. The city's cultural landscape also witnesses limited individual initiatives from other cultural players and lacks a comprehensive strategic plan.
- ✓ **Audience Development Constraints:** A struggle to cultivate robust audience interest in art and culture is evident, compounded by inadequate presentation in certain museums and art galleries.
- ✓ **Fragmented Collaboration:** Communication and collaboration between government institutions and municipalities need improvement to enhance the city's cultural synergy.
- ✓ **Economic Hurdles:** Skopje faces socio-economic obstacles characterized by low living standards and purchasing power, which can impact the growth of cultural participation.

- ✓ **Global Cultural Isolation:** The city encounters limited international cultural collaboration, which affects the global exchange of cultural ideas and initiatives.
- ✓ **Infrastructure Limitations:** Insufficient infrastructure presents hurdles in the realm of art management, encompassing issues such as midday closures of museums, gaps in city marketing and branding, a shortage of cultural managers, the centralization of cultural procedures, and a deficiency in business acumen within cultural institutions.
- ✓ **Audience Engagement Gap:** Despite its cultural richness, Skopje grapples with fostering public interest in art and culture, partly attributed to underwhelming museum and art gallery presentations.
- ✓ **Societal Concerns:** The city faces social issues such as Europe's largest Roma ghetto, comparatively low wages in Bulgaria and the EU, a lingering socialist legacy, inflated self-esteem, and an overreliance on historical achievements.
- ✓ **Communication and Cooperation Lapses:** Within the cultural landscape, limited unity among cultural groups hinders effective communication and cooperation.
- ✓ **Artistic Program Constraints:** The city confronts artistic program constraints stemming from the perspective of artists, potentially influencing the diversity and quality of cultural offerings.
- ✓ **Skill Shortage:** A shortage of technical staff with professional experience and expertise in the cultural realm poses a challenge for the execution of cultural initiatives.
- ✓ **Youth Apathy:** Apathy among young individuals toward cultural enrichment is noticeable, resulting in a lack of cultural upgrading among this demographic.

In the midst of these challenges, Skopje's journey toward becoming a cultural hub involves addressing these weaknesses through strategic interventions, fostering collaboration, and empowering its cultural community to elevate the city's artistic narrative.

## Regenerate

The overarching aim of SK 2028 is to transform our weaknesses into future strengths. Risks, acting as markers of weaknesses, serve as guides for change compared to the existing status quo. This proactive approach aims to eradicate the current shortcomings of Skopje 2028, thereby enhancing its current state.

## Opportunities:

- ✓ **Marketing** (expansive media representation, cultural attaché presence in Macedonian embassies across Europe, tapping into the tourism potential of our rich heritage, showcasing Skopje's ancient living identity in Europe).
- ✓ **Cultural Projects** (active citizen involvement in all cultural effort).
- ✓ **Cultural Infrastructure Evolution** (establishment of creative industries, fostering innovation).
- ✓ **Promotion of Cultural Institutions' History** (participation in international fairs, enhancing arts education for citizens).
- ✓ **Exploration of New Resources** (innovative cultural events, diverse sports activities, a plethora of cultural venues, attracting European funding).

## Threats:

- ✓ **Communication** (dialogue gaps between cultural institutions, civil society, and potential audience).
- ✓ **Social Dynamics** (brain drain, shifting demographics, prevailing negativity).
- ✓ **Resource Constraints** (global economic downturns and decentralized city management).
- ✓ **Audience Engagement** (waning interest in culture, societal divisions affecting cultural engagement).
- ✓ **Political Climate** (the current government's disregard for the City of Skopje's cultural strategy).





SKOPJE 2028

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## 31. Marketing and communications.

Please provide an outline of the city's intended marketing and communications strategy for the European Capital of Culture year.

**Inspiration and Navigational Tool:** Our guiding light in the marketing and communications strategy for Skopje2028 is "**CULTURE OVER DIVISION.**" This theme will not only inspire our messaging but also serve as our navigational tool as we journey through the European Capital of Culture year.

**Values of Openness and Mutuality:** Our communications policy is deeply rooted in the values of openness and mutuality. We measure our success not only by the extent of media coverage but also by fostering collaborative activities between local and European artists. We track metrics such as exposure numbers and the outcomes of interactions between local cultural institutions. Additionally, we closely monitor audience sentiment and engagement on social media platforms. Our approach is multilateral, encouraging recipients to engage with each other. Roles can be fluidly interchanged among all participants, reflecting our commitment to transcending barriers and using culture as the unifying force.

**Alignment with Sustainability Objectives:** In terms of sustainability, our communications strategy is intricately aligned with the objectives outlined in various development strategies, ensuring the medium- and long-term growth of Skopje:

- **Cultural Strategy 2021-2030**
- **Tourism Strategy 2020-2023**
- **Municipal Development Plan 2021-2025**
- **Climate change Strategy – Resilient Skopje**

These strategies serve as the basis for our communications marketing strategy, providing insights into both internal and external communication challenges. We address internal deficits, such as bridging communication gaps between cultural institutions and their audience, and external opportunities, particularly in the realm of tourism. Our strategy, therefore, follows a dual approach: culturally educating our citizens and attracting cultural tourists.

**Unifying Spirit and Vibrancy:** Our vision is to cultivate a vibrant and spirited atmosphere alongside the local population. This collective energy will be our most powerful welcoming message to both potential and current visitors from Republic of North Macedonia and Europe. It's an energy that knows no boundaries, transcends rules, and embraces all nationalities and differences.

**Holistic Approach:** We adopt a holistic approach that encompasses all marketing and communication tools at our disposal. This comprehensive strategy ensures that our messaging is coherent, impactful, and resonates deeply with our diverse audience.

By infusing our communications strategy with the themes of unity, sustainability, and cultural richness, we aim to create a transformative and memorable European Capital of Culture year in Skopje2028.

Rephrasing of the city's intended marketing and communications strategy for the European Capital of Cultured year 2028:

**Establishing a Strong Brand Identity:** Craft a comprehensive brand strategy that mirrors Skopje's cultural essence, values, and aspirations as the European Capital of Culture. Create an enchanting and adaptable logo, color scheme, typography, and visual elements resonating with the target audience.

**Audience Segmentation:** Identify and categorize target audiences based on demographics, preferences, and behaviors. Customize communication and messaging platforms to effectively connect with distinct audience segments.

**Multi-Channel Communication:** Leverage a diverse array of communication channels, encompassing:

- Traditional media (TV, radio, print)
- Digital media (social media, website, mobile apps)
- Outdoor advertising (billboards, banners, signage)
- Email marketing and newsletters
- Collaborations with influencers and cultural advocates

**Content Creation and Storytelling:** Devise a content strategy focused on storytelling and emotive engagement. Construct a content calendar integrating diverse formats such as articles, videos, infographics, interviews, and event previews.

**Social Media Engagement:** Establish and uphold active social media profiles on platforms pertinent to the target audience (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.). Share captivating content, behind-the-scenes glimpses, artist profiles, and user-generated material.

**Event Teasers and Countdown:** Generate excitement through teaser campaigns offering sneak peeks into forthcoming events. Initiate countdowns to significant events, prompting audiences to engage and plan their attendance.

**Community Involvement:** Engage citizens in the promotional journey by urging them to share their narratives, memories, and links to Skopje's culture. Organize contests, challenges, and interactive campaigns that involve the community.

**Cultural Partnerships:** Collaborate with cultural establishments, artists, and creatives to co-craft content and initiatives. Highlight the synergy between Skopje 2028 and the local cultural landscape.

**International Outreach:** Harness diplomatic networks and embassies to extend the reach of Skopje 2028 internationally. Participate in cultural events and forums abroad, showcasing the wealth of Skopje's cultural heritage.

**Media Relations:**

- Cultivate relationships with local and national media outlets.

- Arrange press conferences, media briefings, and exclusive previews to engage journalists.

#### **Interactive Website and Mobile App:**

- Develop an accessible, informative website dedicated to Skopje 2028.
- Create a mobile app for real-time event updates, interactive maps, and personalized schedules.

#### **Data Analytics and Measurement:**

- Utilize data analytics tools to track engagement metrics, reach, and audience sentiment.
- Regularly analyze the effectiveness of different communication strategies, adapting as needed.

#### **Legacy Communication:**

- Devising a plan to communicate the enduring impact of Skopje 2028 beyond the title year.
- Showcase legacy projects, ongoing cultural endeavors, and international collaborations.

#### **Crisis Communication Plan:**

- Establish a comprehensive plan to address potential crises or controversies transparently and promptly.
- Provide guidelines and protocols for managing sensitive situations.

#### **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

- Continuously monitor the performance of marketing and communication strategies.
- Conduct regular assessments to gauge the strategy's efficacy and make enhancements.

Through meticulous implementation of these elements, Skopje can formulate a comprehensive marketing and communications strategy that effectively engages audiences, promotes its cultural richness, and leaves a lasting impression during its European Capital of Culture year.

## Target group strategy

**Cultural Enthusiasts: Segment:** Individuals who have a strong interest in arts, culture, and heritage. **Strategy:** Offer a diverse range of high-quality cultural events, exhibitions, performances, and workshops that cater to various art forms, appealing to their passion for cultural experiences.

**Local Community: Segment:** Residents of Skopje and the surrounding region. **Strategy:** Engage the local community by involving them in participatory cultural projects, workshops, and events that celebrate their own culture and encourage a sense of ownership in the ECoC2028.

**Tourists and Visitors: Segment:** Domestic and international tourists exploring Skopje. **Strategy:** Highlight Skopje's cultural richness as a major tourist attraction. Showcase iconic landmarks, unique cultural experiences, and immersive events that make Skopje a must-visit destination.

**Youth and Students: Segment:** Young people, students, and emerging artists. **Strategy:** Offer innovative and interactive cultural activities, workshops, and mentorship programs that resonate with their interests and aspirations, fostering a connection to art and culture.

**Creative Professionals: Segment:** Artists, performers, writers, and cultural professionals. **Strategy:** Provide platforms for collaboration, networking, and skill enhancement through artistic workshops, residencies, symposiums, and creative hubs, attracting and nurturing creative talent.

**Families and Children: Segment:** Families, parents, and children. **Strategy:** Curate family-friendly cultural events, performances, and exhibitions that offer educational and entertaining experiences for all ages, fostering a love for culture from a young age.

**International Audiences: Segment:** Cultural enthusiasts and professionals from Europe and beyond. **Strategy:** Leverage Skopje's strategic location and cultural offerings to attract international audiences. Promote the European Capital of Culture year through diplomatic channels, cultural networks, and international events.

**Marginalized Communities: Segment:** Marginalized communities, including refugees, minorities, and disadvantaged groups. **Strategy:** Implement inclusive and accessible cultural programs that empower marginalized communities, fostering social inclusion and promoting cultural diversity.

**Media and Influencers: Segment:** Media outlets, journalists, bloggers, and cultural influencers. **Strategy:** Forge partnerships with media organizations and cultural influencers to amplify the reach and impact of Skopje 2028's cultural events, generating buzz and media coverage.

**Government and Institutions: Segment:** Local and national government officials, cultural institutions, and educational bodies. **Strategy:** Collaborate with government bodies and institutions to secure funding, support, and cooperation for the successful implementation of ECoC 2028's initiatives.

**Businesses and Corporations: Segment:** Businesses, corporations, and sponsors. **Strategy:** Establish partnerships with businesses to secure sponsorships, funding, and resources that contribute to the financial sustainability of the ECoC 2028 program.

By tailoring your strategies and communication efforts to these specific target groups, you can effectively engage diverse audiences and ensure a wide-ranging and impactful experience throughout the European City of Culture Skopje 2028.

## Partners and Stakeholders

**Engage in Collaborative Dialogue:** Foster an environment of open and transparent communication by initiating regular meetings, workshops, and forums with partners and stakeholders. Encourage them to share their insights, ideas, and concerns, fostering a sense of collaboration and co-creation.

**Customized Communication:** Recognize the diverse needs and interests of different partners and stakeholders. Tailor our communication approach to address their specific requirements, ensuring that the information provided is relevant and valuable to their roles and objectives.

**Clear Project Updates:** Regularly provide clear and concise updates on the progress of the Skopje2028 project. We are

keeping the partners and stakeholders informed about key milestones, achievements, and challenges, giving them a comprehensive understanding of the project's development.

**Two-Way Communication:** Encouraging partners and stakeholders to share their feedback, suggestions, and concerns. Creating channels where they can easily provide input and ask questions, promoting a sense of ownership and involvement in the project.

**Collaborative Planning:** Involving partners and stakeholders in the planning process for events, initiatives, and programs. Seeking their input on strategies, content, and execution, demonstrating that their perspectives are valued and integrated into decision-making.

**Highlighting Impact:** Regularly communicate the positive impact and outcomes of the project. Sharing stories, case studies, and data that showcase how the Skopje2028 initiative is benefiting the community, culture, economy, and society.

**Recognition and Acknowledgment:** Widely recognizing the contributions of partners and stakeholders. Highlight their involvement through various communication channels, such as press releases, social media, and event acknowledgments, demonstrating gratitude for their support.

**Collaborative Content Creation:** Collaborate with partners and stakeholders to co-create content that highlights their involvement and showcases the project's objectives. This could include joint articles, interviews, videos, and multimedia content.

**Dedicated Communication Channels:** Establishing dedicated communication channels for partners and stakeholders, providing them with exclusive access to project updates, resources, and collaboration opportunities. This can create a sense of community and foster deeper engagement.

**Feedback and Improvement Loop:** Regularly seek feedback from partners and stakeholders on the communication process itself. Use their insights to refine and improve the communicational approach, ensuring that it remains effective and aligned with their needs.

**Responsive Support:** Be readily available to address any queries, concerns, or issues raised by partners and stakeholders. Provide timely and accurate responses, demonstrating your commitment to their involvement and engagement.

**Celebrate Achievements Together:** When the project achieves significant milestones or successes, celebrate them collectively with partners and stakeholders. Organize events, ceremonies, or acknowledgments that acknowledge their contributions and reinforce the collaborative spirit.

By implementing this communicational approach, we can establish strong partnerships, foster meaningful stakeholder engagement, and ensure a united effort towards the success of the Skopje2028 initiative.

Through substantial partnership agreements, we have forged connections with a diverse array of organizations and networks, garnering substantial support from cities across Europe and around the world that share our vision of positioning Skopje as the European City of Culture for 2028. As we progress, we are committed to further expanding our international partnership network. Some of these valued partners include:

- The municipality of Skopje, as well as municipal, regional, and national institutions, forming the backbone of local support.
- Cultural institutions in Skopje and throughout Macedonia, uniting forces to collectively champion culture.
- Ambassadors, cultural attaches, and foreign cultural institutes within Macedonia, as well as Macedonian institutions, with customized communication approaches tailored to the languages of our diverse target groups.
- For our national and particularly European communication efforts, we will strategically focus on specific target areas and groups, recognizing the challenge of reaching over 400 million people across the EU 27.
- Individual artists and independent artist groups, who contribute significantly to our socio-cultural landscape.
- Tourism organizations, tour operators, and logistic companies that aid in spreading the cultural experience.
- The business community, investors, and sponsors, including international companies headquartered in Skopje and the wider region, bolstering our financial foundation.
- Establishing the "From Skopje for Skopje Culture" foundation and its corresponding website to strengthen our local cultural support network.
- Professional and trade organizations, chambers of commerce, and trade unions, which bring distinct perspectives and connections.
- Local, national, and European media outlets that serve as crucial conduits for broadcasting our cultural narrative.
- Key opinion leaders such as influential bloggers and travel journalists, contributing to our visibility on a broader stage.
- Past, present, and future European Capital of Culture candidates and city contenders, fostering solidarity among cultural advocates.
- European partners and networks comprising cultural operators in Skopje, expanding our reach across borders.
- European artists, specialists, and institutions involved in our projects, enriching our cultural offerings.
- EU institutions, vital in strengthening our European cultural ties.
- Local establishments including restaurants, hotels, cafés, café galleries, bookstores, and various service-related businesses that actively contribute to our cultural ecosystem.
- Public and private transportation companies, including taxi services, facilitating seamless movement for our audience.
- National entities, both within our homeland and abroad, contributing to our cultural journey.

Through these strategic partnerships and stakeholder collaborations, our communications strategy gains a multifaceted dimension that resonates with diverse audiences, propelling our message of cultural richness and unity far and wide.

## Local and regional level

At the local and regional levels, our communications toolkit is a canvas that brings our cultural narrative to life, painting a vibrant picture of Skopje's journey as the European City of Culture for 2028. Just as a skilled artist selects a palette of colors to evoke emotions, we've carefully chosen an array of communicational tools to connect deeply with our community and neighboring regions and Skopje2028 program. Let's delve into this palette of tools:

**Community Workshops and Town Halls:** Imagine the atmosphere of an artist's studio – a place where ideas flow freely. Through community workshops and town halls, we create a similar space for dialogue. These gatherings bring citizens, artists, cultural institutions, and local leaders together to shape our cultural narrative collaboratively.

**Local Media Partnerships:** Just as an artist collaborates with fellow creators, we partner with local media outlets. Together, we craft stories, share event updates, and amplify the voices of local artists. Our partnership with these outlets ensures that our cultural narrative resonates in every corner of the city and the region.

**Interactive Cultural Exhibitions:** Picture a gallery where art speaks for itself. In our case, we curate interactive cultural exhibitions that offer immersive experiences. These exhibitions celebrate our heritage, showcase contemporary works, and invite visitors to step into the world of Skopje's cultural identity.

**Cultural Festivals and Fairs:** Just as a community gathers to celebrate an artist's exhibition, our city comes alive with cultural festivals and fairs. These events showcase the diverse talents of our local artists, musicians, dancers, and craftsmen, fostering a sense of unity and pride.

**Local Artist Collaborations:** Like artists collaborating on a mural, our local artists team up to co-create captivating cultural experiences. Through joint projects, performances, and exhibitions, they infuse their unique perspectives into the collective canvas of Skopje's cultural journey.

**Cultural Ambassadors Program:** Just as renowned artists represent their craft, we appoint cultural ambassadors who embody Skopje's spirit. These ambassadors bridge the gap between the city and its residents, conveying our cultural message and engaging the community in meaningful ways.

**Citywide Art Installations:** Just as public art installations transform urban spaces, we adorn our city with captivating art installations. These visual spectacles invite passersby to pause, reflect, and connect with Skopje's cultural narrative on a visceral level.

**Cultural Heritage Tours:** Like an artist guiding viewers through their artistic journey, we offer cultural heritage tours. These immersive experiences allow residents and visitors to delve into Skopje's historical gems, learning about its rich past and cultural evolution.

**Local Artistic Residencies:** Similar to artists participating in residencies, we host local artistic residencies that foster creativity and cross-disciplinary collaboration. Artists from different backgrounds converge to exchange ideas, breathe life into new projects, and weave an enriched cultural fabric.

**Local Art Contests and Exhibitions:** Just as art contests bring out hidden talents, we organize local art contests and exhibitions. These platforms empower emerging artists to showcase their creativity, building a sense of accomplishment and belonging within the local arts scene.

In this masterpiece of communication, each tool is a brushstroke that contributes to a collective narrative of culture, unity, and transformation. Just as artists take pride in their creations, we take pride in the connections we forge, the stories we share, and the profound impact our cultural journey has on every resident and region we touch.

As the foundational step of our communication plan for Skopje2028, our primary focus is to garner the unwavering support of our local citizens. We are committed to actively engaging them, inviting them to become integral participants in the grand tapestry of the ECoc event. Our aim is to cultivate a sense of ownership, encouraging citizens to contribute ideas, provide valuable feedback, and step forward as enthusiastic volunteers. We aspire for them to become not just passive recipients, but passionate senders of the cultural message we're weaving.

Our strategy revolves around tailoring our approach to address the diverse interests of different target groups within the local population. We understand that each group requires a unique touch, a specialized communication that resonates with their individual passions. Through personal interactions and direct engagement, we intend to tap into the essence of what captivates each group's imagination.

To bring our message closer to the hearts of our citizens, we're crafting an array of small happenings and events that will serve as vibrant threads in the cultural fabric of Skopje. These moments will be our bridge, connecting us with the people on an intimate level. Whether it's through immersive workshops, interactive exhibitions, or lively discussions, we are creating spaces where conversations flourish, ideas bloom, and a shared enthusiasm for Skopje2028 takes root.

Our ultimate aspiration is to kindle a fire within our citizens, igniting a passion that drives them to share the beauty and significance of Skopje2028 with friends and family both here and abroad. Through their personal endorsements, we aim to extend our reach far beyond, creating a global network of cultural ambassadors who carry the spirit of Skopje's cultural renaissance with them.

In essence, our approach revolves around making every citizen an active participant, a contributor, and an advocate. By fostering a sense of belonging, sparking their creativity, and empowering them as cultural messengers, we are laying the foundation for a vibrant, united, and dynamic cultural journey.

To orchestrate a symphony of offline communication, media, and advertisements, we'll harness the power of digital tools like websites and social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. These modern instruments will ensure that the vibrant beats of Skopje's cultural rhythm resound through every corner of the city, keeping our citizens well-informed and engaged.

**Websites as Virtual Cultural Hubs:** Our website will be a virtual sanctuary where citizens can delve into the heart of Skopje's cultural narrative. It will serve as a comprehensive guide, showcasing event schedules, artist profiles, interactive maps, and behind-the-scenes glimpses. With a user-friendly interface, visitors can navigate the rich tapestry of Skopje 2028 with ease.

**Instagram: Captivating Visual Chronicles:** Instagram, a digital canvas for visual storytelling, will be our window into the world of Skopje's cultural journey. Through captivating photos and videos, we'll unveil the city's hidden gems, share snippets of

performances, and introduce the faces behind the art. Citizens can follow our account to witness the unfolding of Skopje's European Capital of Culture year in vivid detail.

**Facebook: Community Engagements and Conversations:** Facebook will be our digital town square, where conversations and engagements flourish. Here, citizens can join groups, participate in discussions, and express their thoughts on Skopje 2028. We'll share event updates, broadcast live performances, and encourage citizens to share their own stories and experiences, fostering a sense of belonging.

**Digital Ad Campaigns: Sparking Curiosity:** Through targeted digital ad campaigns, we'll ignite curiosity among citizens. Strategic placement of ads on social media platforms will ensure that information about upcoming events, exhibitions, and cultural initiatives reaches the right audience at the right time. These campaigns will be a gateway to a world of artistic wonders waiting to be explored.

**Virtual Tours and Teasers: Navigating the Cultural Journey:** Our digital tools will offer virtual tours and teasers, granting citizens a sneak peek into what Skopje 2028 has in store. Interactive virtual tours of upcoming venues, exhibitions, and installations will build anticipation and excitement, encouraging citizens to mark their calendars for the cultural adventures ahead.

**Live Streaming: Bridging Distance and Time:** Live streaming on social media platforms will bridge geographical gaps, allowing citizens to experience events and performances in real-time. From intimate artist conversations to grand spectacles, live streams will bring the magic of Skopje 2028 directly to the screens of citizens, creating a sense of togetherness.

**User-Generated Content: Citizen Contributors:** Our digital platforms will also be platforms for citizen participation. We'll encourage citizens to share their own photos, videos, and stories related to Skopje 2028. By showcasing their contributions, we'll highlight the genuine enthusiasm and pride that our citizens feel for their city and its cultural journey.

In the age of digital connectivity, these tools will be our bridges to the hearts and minds of Skopje's citizens. They'll transform digital landscapes into vibrant canvases that depict the unfolding chapters of Skopje 2028. Through websites, Instagram, Facebook, and other digital avenues, we'll ensure that the cultural symphony of Skopje reaches every ear, sparking inspiration and fostering a sense of unity among our citizens.

## Digital Communications Strategy

The power of the internet, with its widespread access, affordability, and reliability in Skopje compared to other European cities, will serve as a cornerstone of our communications plan. Recognizing this unique advantage, we are determined to integrate a robust digital dimension into our strategy, weaving it seamlessly into the fabric of our communications approach. While our current digital strategy outlines our intentions, we acknowledge the dynamic nature of this realm, anticipating further innovations by the time 2028 arrives.

Our digital strategy, intricately woven into our artistic program, hinges on three key pillars: digital platforms, social media engagement, and innovative IT solutions.

### Digital Platforms:

All Skopje2028 activities will find a digital home on our website, presented in at least two foreign languages (English, French). This virtual hub will not only provide information but will be interactive, enabling visitors to leave comments, share photos, and utilize engaging tools. A special feature will allow visitors to curate their own Skopje2028 highlight catalog. As part of Skopje2028's legacy, our existing cultural calendar platform will evolve into an enduring tool, uniting activities across levels and forging a virtual European Capital of Culture. This platform will continue to serve as an archive beyond 2028. Centralized ticketing services and a comprehensive "one-stop-shop" for events and products, interconnected with tourism offerings, will grant visitors effortless access to our program. A digital application is in development, set to link all cultural institutions, providing event information and guiding attendees through the day's schedule.

### Social Networks:

Our prime engagement avenue with diverse target groups will be through social media. In addition to our website, our vibrant social media presence offers direct avenues for interaction and broader engagement, encompassing followers from Macedonia and beyond. We will regularly share diverse content, including videos, photos, news, interviews, quizzes, open discussions, volunteer insights, webinars, and more.

We will harness the capabilities of platforms like Foursquare, Facebook Places, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, and YouTube. Strategic hashtags like #cultureunderdivision and #skopje2028 will anchor educational and interactive social campaigns, harmonizing with evolving technological trends 2024-2028.

### IT Innovations:

Collaboration with the business sector and local authorities will extend free Wi-Fi access to numerous public spaces. Innovations will introduce smartphone applications and QR codes, enriching experiences across various projects and subjects. Digital apps will facilitate interactive tours of cultural and tourist sites, enabling online participation in events worldwide, including those catering to people with disabilities via dedicated platforms and apps.

These endeavors will align with a Google partnership, aiming to craft an interactive Google Street View map of Skopje. Employing online tools such as Google AdWords, Facebook ads, and YouTube pre-roll screens, we aim to attract a larger audience to both the virtual and physical realms.

An ambitious project with web designers will manifest in a 3D cultural map of Skopje, offering insight into ongoing artistic events. Users can interact, 'like,' and share favored sites and events, contributing photos and comments. This map will

become a canvas for users to plan agendas, arrange meetups, and explore interactive possibilities. Understanding that the title of European Capital of Culture will arouse curiosity among the unfamiliar, we will curate an extensive podcast library. These downloadable podcasts will delve into topics like Skopje's history, contemporary art, culture, cuisine, lifestyle, and identity, captivating a broader audience.

Our digital strategy is poised to harness the boundless potential of the digital realm, weaving together Skopje2028's narrative across virtual spaces, interactions, and experiences, inspiring engagement and enriching cultural connections.

## Advertising Strategy

Our digital strategy is poised to harness the boundless potential of the digital realm, weaving together Skopje2028's narrative across virtual spaces, interactions, and experiences, inspiring engagement and enriching cultural connections.

Recognizing the evolving landscape of marketing, our approach moves beyond the confines of the traditional marketing mix. Instead, our focus is directed towards forging strategic partnerships and deploying innovative online advertising methods that are finely tuned to resonate effectively within the dynamic context of 2028.

### **Internet Advertising and Web Marketing:**

Our strategy hinges on dynamic online marketing and viral Internet advertising. We will strategically position Skopje2028 across international art and culture web portals, as well as social networks. By leveraging platforms like Google AdWords, Facebook ads, mobile app promotions, and YouTube pre-roll screens, we will amplify our reach and engagement.

### **Outdoor Advertising:**

Our presence will extend to the physical realm through outdoor advertising. This includes branding initiatives on taxis, public transportation vehicles, mega posters on partner headquarters, and prominent displays in local establishments such as stores, restaurants, bookstores, and galleries.

### **Broadcast Media Advertisement:**

Our engagement will encompass broadcast media, including radio and television. We will create captivating videos for these platforms and participate in relevant programs to maximize reach and impact.

### **Merchandise and Giveaways:**

We will strategically use branded merchandise and giveaways to create a tangible connection with our audience, serving as tokens of remembrance and engagement.

### **Information Points and Volunteer Engagement:**

Info-points manned by volunteers in partnership with the City Tourist Information Board will serve as touchpoints for disseminating information, addressing inquiries, and fostering engagement.

### **Advertisement in Long-Distance Transportation:**

Long-distance bus companies will feature our branding and promotional materials, ensuring exposure to a diverse audience. Moreover, our advertisements will be prominently placed in Air Serbia flights and at the Macedonian airport, extending our outreach.

### **Engagement through the "From Skopje for a Skopje Culture" Foundation:**

Our Foundation will be a dynamic avenue for advertising and engagement. We will prioritize sponsorship and actively target company top-level management as partners, presenting them with opportunities for collaboration.

### **Sponsoring and Fundraising Strategy:**

Our commitment to sponsorship is underscored by a dedicated Sponsoring & Fundraising team, reporting directly to the Skopje2028 Foundation CEO. The initial phase involves an analysis of our sponsorship goals, market research for potential sponsors, and crafting tailored packages. This will be followed by proactive outreach, arranging meetings with potential sponsors to present our cause, unique sponsor packages, and the commercial potential of Skopje2028. Simultaneously, group sponsor events will be organized in collaboration with entities like Macedonia 2025, Chambers of Commerce, and relevant business companies. These events will foster engagement, build ownership, and encourage pride in being part of our journey.

### **Long-Term Relationship Building:**

Our approach focuses on cultivating long-term relationships with sponsors, investing time and effort to ensure their sustained involvement. Sponsorship agreements will be formalized, income controlled, expenditures documented, and sponsor benefits honored.

### **Community Foundations for Project Grants:**

A forward-looking strategy involves establishing a community foundation for Skopje2028 project grants. This initiative, supported by donations from various sources, will ensure the continued financial backing of community foundations established in Macedonia. These local foundations will serve as intermediaries between donors and civil society organizations, fostering a culture of giving and transparent fund utilization. Our advertising strategy is strategically diversified, tapping into modern tools while fostering lasting relationships and community engagement, positioning Skopje2028 as a transformative cultural experience.

In conclusion, the Skopje2028 marketing and communications strategy is marked by three significant phases:

**Take-Off (2024-2027):**

- The primary goal is to widely promote Skopje2028's creative potential to the public, showcasing it as a model for the city's long-term culture-based development.
- Key activities include preparing a detailed long-term cultural program, establishing a Marketing and Communications Unit within the Skopje2028 Foundation, creating an integrated marketing and communications strategy, forming partnership relations with domestic and foreign co-producers, conducting annual campaigns, establishing local info-points in all ten municipalities, and organizing various forums and events to disseminate information about Skopje2028.

**Jump (2028):**

- The objective is to generate significant interest from domestic and international media, attract diverse audiences, and maximize income from Skopje2028.
- Key activities encompass implementing the marketing and communications strategy within the cultural activities system, operating based on quarterly marketing plans, highlighting unique selling points and promoting leading capital projects, involving the entire cultural and creative sector, and employing innovative guerrilla marketing campaigns to attract a wider local, regional, and European audience.

**Resumption (2029):**

- This phase involves comparing the cultural life in the City of Culture to the previous year and the year of culture.
- Key activities consist of promoting European values through cultural programs financed from the city budget, coordinating promotional activities among the city's cultural institutions, maintaining cooperation with foreign partners, continuing cultural collaborations with other European cities, and transforming the entire Skopje2028 project into a long-term strategic foundation related to art, culture, and heritage.

These phases collectively form a comprehensive strategy aimed at not only elevating Skopje's cultural prominence during the European Capital of Culture year but also fostering a lasting legacy of cultural development and engagement in the city.



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

As outlined in our Marketing and Communications Strategy, one of our key objectives is to enhance the visibility of the European Union (EU) in Skopje while adhering to the established EU regulations pertaining to the branding of the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) initiative. We recognize the significance of showcasing the EU's support and involvement in Skopje2028, aligning with the overarching goal of cultural exchange and unity within the European community.

To achieve this, we have devised a comprehensive plan that ensures the EU's presence is prominently felt throughout Skopje and the Skopje2028 activities:

### **Official Launch Event with EU Representatives:**

- Organize a grand launch event for Skopje2028 that includes participation from EU representatives, ambassadors, and cultural attachés "Cultural Crescendo"
- Emphasize the EU's support for Skopje2028 in speeches and presentations during the event.

### **EU Flag Integration:**

- Display the EU flag alongside the Skopje2028 logo in all official promotional materials, banners, posters, and advertisements.
- Place the EU flag prominently at event venues, cultural institutions, and public spaces related to Skopje2028.

### **EU-Focused Press Releases:**

- Issue press releases that specifically highlight the European Union's role in funding and supporting Skopje2028.
- Collaborate with local and EU-based media outlets to ensure comprehensive coverage of the EU's involvement.

### **EU Cultural Diplomacy Seminars:**

- Organize seminars and workshops that delve into the EU's cultural diplomacy efforts and its impact on Skopje2028.
- Invite EU cultural experts, ambassadors, and scholars to participate as speakers in these educational events.

### **EU-Centric Artistic Collaborations:**

- Partner with artists and cultural organizations from EU member states to create joint artistic projects, exhibitions, and performances.
- Highlight these collaborations as a manifestation of the EU's commitment to cultural exchange.

### **EU Cultural Heritage Showcase:**

- Curate a special exhibition that celebrates the rich cultural heritage of EU member states. Feature artworks, artifacts, and traditions from various European countries.
- Collaborate with EU cultural institutions to provide authentic representations of European cultures.

### **EU Film Screenings and Festivals:**

- Host film screenings showcasing European cinema, including films funded by EU initiatives.
- Organize an EU Film Festival during Skopje2028, highlighting the diversity of European filmmaking.

### **EU Artist-in-Residence Programs:**

- Establish artist-in-residence programs that invite EU artists to work in Skopje, fostering cultural exchange and collaboration.
- Showcase the outcomes of these programs in exhibitions and performances.

### **EU Culinary and Gastronomy Events:**

- Organize culinary events that feature dishes from EU member states, promoting European gastronomy and culture.
- Collaborate with EU culinary experts and chefs to provide authentic European dining experiences.

### **EU Student Exchanges and Workshops:**

- Facilitate student exchanges between Skopje and EU cities, promoting cross-cultural learning and artistic development.
- Conduct workshops led by EU mentors in various artistic disciplines.

### **EU Open Dialogue Panels:**

- Host open dialogue panels and discussions that explore the impact of EU policies on culture and arts.
- Invite EU officials, cultural policymakers, and scholars to participate in these conversations.

### **EU Heritage Walking Tours:**

- Develop guided walking tours that highlight Skopje's landmarks and historical sites with European significance.
- Share stories of how Skopje's history is interconnected with broader European narratives.

### **EU Artistic Residency Showcases:**

- Host showcases or exhibitions featuring the work of artists who participated in EU-funded artistic residencies.
- Highlight the transformative experiences these artists had during their residencies.

### **EU Cultural Awards and Recognitions:**

- Establish awards that recognize contributions to cross-cultural understanding and EU-oriented cultural initiatives.
- Present these awards during Skopje2028 events to emphasize the EU's influence on cultural appreciation.

### **EU-Related Publications:**

- Publish brochures, booklets, and online articles that specifically discuss the EU's cultural initiatives and its impact on Skopje2028.
- Include interviews with EU representatives and cultural experts.

By executing these strategies, we are committed to elevating the visibility of the European Union within Skopje and effectively conveying the EU's integral role in the success of Skopje2028 as the European Capital of Culture. This alignment with EU regulations ensures that our communication efforts reflect the partnership and unity that define the ECoC initiative.





## VI Capacity to deliver

### 33. Please confirm and supply evidence that you have broad and strong political support and a sustainable commitment from the relevant local, regional and national public authorities.

Under the leadership of Mayor Ms. Danela Arsovska, the city authorities recognize the pivotal role of culture in fostering an inclusive and united society. Mayor Arsovska's independent candidacy in the election program emphasized securing the title of European Capital of Culture 2028 (ECoC) as a strategic challenge within the cultural domain. The Mayor remains a steadfast advocate for Skopje's 2028 ECoC candidacy, providing unwavering support and financial backing through the initiatives of the city's Department for Culture. It's important to note that the team responsible for managing candidacy affairs is devoid of any political affiliations or biases.

Throughout the extensive preparatory period, the Skopje2028 project received substantial backing from the state, formalized on July 6, 2021. This collaborative body comprises 21 representatives from city and state authorities, including members from the cultural and creative sectors. This collective operates as a dynamic Steering Committee, orchestrating the project's trajectory.

Skopje2028 is strategically positioned as a project of national significance. As such, the endorsement and backing of pertinent national authorities are of paramount importance. This pertains not only to funding but also to content development, encompassing the active participation of national cultural institutions. Consequently, a dedicated agreement has been established between the City and the state, encompassing ten city municipalities functioning as independent administrative and territorial entities, each with its distinct political representatives. This comprehensive framework formalizes political backing for the Skopje2028 project across all three tiers: City, State, and Municipal, solidifying the already evident practical support into a structured alliance.

**The city government is unwavering in its endorsement of the ECoC 2028 candidacy. City officials have astutely acknowledged the profound impact of the cultural and creative sectors, recognizing their significance not only for social and economic advancement but also for fostering sustainable growth and collective well-being within the city. This commitment vividly underscores their pro-European stance and resolute dedication to upholding fundamental European values encompassing democracy, tolerance, equality, the rule of law, and nondiscrimination.**

**In this vein, our pursuit of the ECoC 2028 designation represents more than a mere aspiration; it's a testament to the resolute political determination to establish Skopje as a potent cultural force on the global stage, particularly within the intricate tapestry of the European cultural landscape. The robust backing from cultural sector participants and citizens alike serves as the most formidable guarantee for realizing this ambition.**

Our bid for the ECoC 2028 title stands as a testament to the unwavering dedication of Skopje's artists, cultural practitioners, and numerous citizens to the profound values and lifestyle of Europe. The enduring political backing has remained steadfast over the years, even in the face of three distinct shifts in governing political coalitions within the past eight years. This commitment is underscored by the following timeline of the bidding process:

**2014**

Initiation of procedures by the City of Skopje Council to nominate Skopje for the European Capital of Culture.

**2015**

Establishment of the ECoC Initiative Board by the City of Skopje Council.

Organization of the international conference "The Meaning of the ECoC Title and Its Contribution to the Cultural and General Development of the City."

**2016**

Hosting of the "Towards the ECoC Title" workshop, attended by representatives from the Ministry of Culture, civil sector in cultural affairs, municipal representatives, and the City of Skopje. Issuance of a promotional brochure.

**2017**

Conducting of the "ECoC – Opportunity for Long-Term Development of the Cities" workshop, featuring participants from educational, national, local, and independent cultural institutions.

**2018**

Hosting of the international conference "Skopje – Candidate City for ECoC 2028."

Formation of an independent expert working team, tasked with researching and analyzing bid books from candidate cities and previous title holders.

**2019**

Approval by the City of Skopje Council for initiating the procedure and necessary activities to nominate Skopje for ECoC 2028.

Establishment of the Skopje2028 Bid Office. Engaging in collaborative working meetings with the program teams of Plovdiv ECoC 2019 and Leeuwarden ECoC 2018. Organization of workshops for strategic planning of the Skopje candidacy and developing the ECoC concept methodology, organizational structure, and candidacy activities. Launch of the first public volunteer recruitment call.

**2020**

Series of meetings, dialogues, and thematic workshops with experienced artists and cultural professionals.

Active participation of part of the Skopje2028 bid team in the "Culture in the Time of Corona" City of Skopje project.

City representation at the opening of Rijeka ECoC 2020.

**2021**

Formation of the coordinating body "Skopje 2028 – ECoC City Candidate." Productive visit and formal cooperation agreement with Slovak city Trenčín, ECoC 2026. Implementation of an exclusive street art program within the context of Skopje2028.

**2022-2023**

Restructuring of the Skopje2028 Bid Team personnel, fostering continued and robust collaboration with all cultural stakeholders for crafting the bid's concept, program, and related components, dedicated to the innovative and creative development of a new concept.

This timeline underscores the steadfast commitment of Skopje's artistic and cultural communities, citizens, and governing bodies in pursuing the ECoC 2028 title as a representation of shared European values and aspirations.

## 34. Please confirm and provide evidence that your city has or will have adequate and viable infrastructure to host the title. To do that, please answer the following questions:

- Explain briefly how the European Capital of Culture will make use of and develop the city's cultural infrastructure.
- What are the city's assets in terms of accessibility (regional, national and international transport)?
- What is the city's absorption capacity in terms of tourist accommodation?

### Why choose to visit Skopje?

Skopje beckons as a destination like no other, inviting you to craft extraordinary experiences that seamlessly blend history with urban allure. Our city stands in a league of its own, promising a truly distinctive journey that awaits your exploration.

Here's why you should make Skopje your next travel destination:

**Unique Experiences:** Skopje offers a tapestry of experiences that fuse the historical and the contemporary, creating a travel encounter you won't find elsewhere.

**Historical Wonders:** Delve into the rich historical tapestry of Skopje, where ancient and modern worlds converge, promising a captivating journey through time.

**Cultural Immersion:** Immerse yourself in the local language, culture, architecture, and cuisine. Discover the soul of Skopje as you connect with its vibrant cultural scene.

**Musical Harmony:** Let the city's melodies serenade you as you explore its music scene, resonating with the rhythm of Skopje's heart. Embrace Our Values: Skopje's values are an open book, waiting for you to explore and embrace. Let our city's character become a part of your own journey.

To make your visit even more enriching, our tourist information desks, strategically located throughout the city, are ready to assist you. These hubs offer a wealth of resources, including information on cultural landmarks, accommodation options, tour guides, and complimentary maps, books, and flyers. Our materials are available in multiple languages, ensuring that you have access to all the historical insights and guidance you need to make the most of your stay.

Skopje invites you to embark on an unforgettable adventure, forging memories that will linger long after you've left. Discover the essence of Skopje and let it become your very own Skopje. **Your extraordinary journey awaits.**

Skopje boasts a well-equipped infrastructure, robust production capabilities, skilled personnel, efficient organizational structures, thriving tourist facilities, and various other capacities. These resources collectively ensure the successful execution of all planned activities within the framework of the Skopje2028 program, marked by a remarkable standard of excellence.

The city's infrastructure encompasses a spectrum of facilities that will serve as key venues for a countless of interactions, social engagements, educational initiatives, performances, and the fostering of new cultural values. These spaces will foster an interactive relationship between artists and visitors, underscoring their significance as spaces where culture seamlessly converges with the local community.



## Cultural Infrastructure

Skopje boasts a rich tapestry of cultural treasures, encompassing an extensive collection of 32 municipal and national public cultural institutions, alongside six cultural centers thoughtfully established by diverse municipalities within the city. These institutions represent the bedrock of Skopje's public cultural infrastructure. Complementing this robust foundation are three cinema halls, contributing to the city's cultural vitality.

However, the cultural landscape of Skopje extends beyond these institutions. Embracing inclusivity and diversity, private and non-governmental cultural entities actively steward spatial resources that are equally pivotal to the city's cultural ecosystem. Collectively, these venues, both public and private, form the very heart of the Skopje2028 project. They stand ready to serve as dynamic stages and interactive platforms, facilitating a rich tapestry of cultural events and activities that will shape the vibrant narrative of Skopje's cultural journey during the European Capital of Culture endeavor.

## Transport Accessibility

### Air Transport

Skopje boasts two prominent international airports: Skopje International Airport and Ohrid St. Paul the Apostle Airport. Both airports hold distinction as vital components of the SEETO Comprehensive Network and the Core Network Airports. Of the two, Skopje Airport takes the lead, offering an extensive network of 44 flight connections to global destinations and a noteworthy volume of approximately 10,680 flights annually.

The strategic positioning of Skopje Airport augments its significance, positioning it as a potential pivotal point for logistics and transportation in both Macedonia and the broader Balkan region. The airport's facilities include a well-appointed parking area, accommodating 1,200 designated car spaces and six dedicated bus parking slots. Moreover, provisions are in place to ensure seamless access for passengers with reduced mobility.

For travellers' convenience, reliable transportation options abound. Daily bus services link Skopje and the airport, facilitating swift transit. Additionally, taxi services stand readily available to serve passengers arriving or departing from Skopje Airport. The airport's connectivity extends to the Skopje highway, further enhancing accessibility and facilitating convenient travel connections.

### Road Infrastructure Connectivity:

Since 2016, the state highways of Skopje have been seamlessly integrated into the foundational framework of the European road network, fostering efficient connectivity:

- The A1 highway links the Serbia-Greece borders.
- The A2 highway facilitates travel from Bulgaria to Albania borders.
- The A3 highway spans the Albania-Bulgaria borders.
- The A4 highway commences at the Kosovo border, traverses Skopje, and extends to the Bulgaria border.

Comprising an extensive 850-kilometer network, the comprehensive road system encompasses a primary network encompassing 513 kilometers that crisscross the nation's terrain. The robust road infrastructure effectively interlinks Skopje with 15 border crossings, forging essential connections with neighboring nations: Greece (3 crossings), Bulgaria (3 crossings), Serbia (2 crossings), Kosovo (2 crossings), and Albania (4 crossings). Within Skopje city, a modernized public transportation system underscores accessibility:

- An impressive acquisition of 313 new city buses took place in 2012, bolstering urban mobility.
- The city's bus stops, numbering 226, were revitalized, elevating passenger experiences.
- Notably, 22 buses commence daily journeys from Skopje's central bus station to various European cities, fostering regional and international connections.

### Efficient Railway Connectivity:

The east-west railway traversing the expanse of the Republic of North Macedonia spans 315 kilometers in total, with 152 kilometers already constructed and operational. Notably, the well-established Skopje–Tetovo–Gostivar–Kichevo railway, extending over 103 kilometers, plays a pivotal role in this railway system. This strategic rail line integrates seamlessly with the Albanian and Bulgarian railway networks, fostering vital cross-border connections.

Additionally, the railway extending from Skopje to the Kosovo border encompasses a span of 32 kilometers, facilitating essential cross-border transit. The national railway network significantly enhances passenger mobility:

- Across the country, a network of 94 key railway stations, both major and minor, facilitate the smooth passage of passenger trains.
- Among these stations, primary ones are strategically located in major urban centers, underscoring the comprehensive coverage and accessibility offered by the rail system.

### Elevating Tourism in Skopje:

Our foremost objective involves a continuous increase in the influx of tourists to Skopje. Achieving this entails the adoption of an innovative tourism development model, coupled with the creation of fresh and captivating tourist offerings and novel forms of tourism. This thrust will be underpinned by robust marketing capabilities, designed to showcase Skopje as an easily accessible and enticing tourist haven, replete with a wealth of tourist experiences.

Through this initiative, the City of Skopje aims to significantly enhance its tourist portfolio, outlining a meticulous blueprint for premium promotional efforts aimed at both domestic and international tourists. This strategic pursuit involves an exhaustive inventory and upkeep of all culturally and historically significant landmarks that constitute the bedrock of Skopje's tourist allure. Our focal point encompasses city tourist centers and offices, where our efforts will encompass facilitating the development of tourist applications spotlighting Skopje's attractions. Furthermore, we are committed to propelling and aiding local tourism, ecotourism, and alternative tourism ventures.

Key Features of Skopje's Tourism Landscape:

- The city boasts a formidable hotel infrastructure, comprising 317 hotels in total. This collection encompasses a diverse range, including 13 5-star hotels, 88 4-star hotels, 125 3-star hotels, 5 90-star hotels, and 1 1-star hotel.
- Additionally, there are 717 apartment complexes catering to various preferences, along with 177 hostels offering budget-friendly accommodations.
- The provision of 270 rooms for rent supplements the accommodation options, catering to a broad spectrum of travelers.

### Skopje's Tourism Uptrend and Skopje2028's Role:

In recent years, Skopje has experienced a notable surge in tourist visits. The infrastructure to accommodate these growing numbers has also seen significant improvement in 2022, allowing for a more comfortable experience for visitors. Remarkably, Skopje welcomed a total of 299,733 tourists in 2022, marking an increase over the previous year's figures. This upward trajectory sets the stage for Skopje2028 to play a pivotal role in fostering further growth in our visitor economy. With this in mind, Skopje's Tourism Strategy for the period 2020-2023 places the European Capital of Culture at the heart of our efforts to bolster tourism numbers.

### European Cultural Tourists as a Primary Focus:

At the core of our strategic approach lies a focus on cultural tourism, which has been identified as a powerful driver for tourism expansion. With the European Capital of Culture title within reach, Skopje2028 assumes a central role in our aspirations. Our primary target demographic for cultural tourism is the discerning European traveler, who places culture at the forefront of their vacation preferences. The allure of Skopje's cultural offerings is positioned as a prime motivation for them to select our city as their destination of choice.

### Year-Round Cultural Tourism and Value Generation:

One of the most remarkable features of cultural tourism is its non-seasonal nature, ensuring a consistent stream of visitors throughout the year. This aspect augments its potential to generate substantial added value for our city's economy. In the context of Skopje2028, cultural tourism is not just a component; it serves as our Unique Selling Proposition (USP). This distinction is crucial for tour operators, as they can seamlessly integrate enriching cultural experiences in Skopje as part of their comprehensive holiday packages.

In essence, Skopje2028 is poised to magnify Skopje's appeal as a cultural tourism destination. By capitalizing on our city's cultural wealth, we aim to attract and engage European travelers who seek immersive cultural encounters during their vacations. This strategic alignment ensures that the European Capital of Culture stands as a beacon for cultural tourists, fostering sustainable growth and enhancing Skopje's position on the international tourism map.

## 35. In terms of cultural, urban and tourism infrastructure what are the projects (including renovation projects) that your city plans to carry out in connection with the European Capital of Culture action between now and the title year?

### Infrastructure Development and Skopje2028 Synergy:

The preparatory phase for the ECoC candidacy illuminated vital insights into both the city's requirements and the citizens' needs, particularly in terms of infrastructural enhancements. Notably, we recognized that robust infrastructure is closely intertwined with the successful execution of the Skopje2028 project. In response to these discerned needs, the City of Skopje is embarking on an ambitious endeavor encompassing one reconstruction project and ten innovative new infrastructural initiatives.

## Central Infrastructure Endeavor: Universal Hall Reconstruction

Foremost among the proposed infrastructure undertakings is the comprehensive revitalization of the Universal Hall building. This iconic venue stands as a pivotal city hub for hosting cultural events catering to larger audiences, boasting an impressive seating capacity of 1500. This strategic reconstruction holds profound significance, aligning harmoniously with the broader Skopje2028 vision. The anticipated timeline for this transformative project is set between 2025 and 2026, underscoring its prioritized status.

### Diverse Array of Infrastructural Ventures:

In parallel, our ambitious plan encompasses an additional ten infrastructural projects, each hailing from distinct cultural domains. These ventures, outlined as follows, exemplify our multifaceted approach to uplifting our city's cultural infrastructure:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>1. Modernization of Performing Arts Centers</b>                   | <b>6. Development of Interactive Cultural Exhibition Spaces</b>       |
| <b>2. Creation of Contemporary Art Spaces</b>                        | <b>7. Cultural Learning and Resource Centers</b>                      |
| <b>3. Establishment of Cultural Innovation Hubs</b>                  | <b>8. Facilitation of Open-Air Art and Performance Venues</b>         |
| <b>4. Cultural Heritage Preservation and Restoration</b>             | <b>9. Support for Community and Grassroots Cultural Initiatives</b>   |
| <b>5. Enhancement of Cultural and Creative Industries Facilities</b> | <b>10. Elevation of Cultural Connectivity and Mobility Facilities</b> |

With an unwavering commitment to holistic cultural development, these projects span a diverse spectrum, catering to varied artistic expressions and cultural pursuits. The deliberate infusion of innovation, heritage preservation, and accessibility underscores our dedication to fostering an enriched cultural landscape for both residents and visitors.

In essence, the symbiotic relationship between infrastructure and culture is evident, as highlighted by the fusion of Skopje2028 and our infrastructural advancements. This comprehensive strategy forms a bedrock upon which Skopje's cultural renaissance and sustainable growth shall thrive, propelling our city into the spotlight as a vibrant cultural and artistic hub on the global stage.

### Infrastructure Enhancement Projects:

**Mega Parks:** A visionary venture encompassing capital investments in five expansive mega parks, catering to the rejuvenation and leisure pursuits of citizens. These sprawling green havens will provide a tapestry of natural beauty for recreational enjoyment.

**Cultural Center in Aerodrom Municipality:** A cultural nucleus poised to enrich the lives of residents from diverse municipalities. This establishment promises to infuse an array of artistic expressions into the city's cultural tapestry.

**Cinema and Theater in Aerodrom Municipality:** A novel cultural haven, purpose-built for the convergence of artistic experiences. This dynamic space will host theater performances, festivals, and cultural events, cultivating an environment of creativity and inspiration.

**Swimming Pool in Shuto Orizari Municipality:** A health-focused initiative, crafting a haven for recreational respite across generations. This initiative underscores inclusivity, fostering health awareness and well-being within marginalized groups.

**New Library Construction:** A commitment to education underscored by the creation of a state-of-the-art library facility. This investment serves as a beacon of progress, catering to the city's relentless thirst for knowledge.

**Outdoor Arena:** An open-air spectacle venue, thoughtfully designed with comprehensive amenities, heralding a new era of concerts and cultural gatherings under the open sky.

**Brakja Miladinovci Library Reconstruction:** A tribute to cultural heritage manifested through the modernization of the iconic Brakja Miladinovci city library. This endeavor extends its impact by introducing new reading spaces across Skopje's municipalities, fostering learning, camaraderie, and research.

**Universal Hall Reconstruction:** The revival of an iconic performance space, accentuated by expanded capacity, enhanced stage facilities, and supplementary offerings. This project aims to restore the Universal Hall's status as a cherished cultural landmark eagerly anticipated by the entire community.

**Botanical Garden Enhancement:** Elevating the city's ecological landscape through the revitalization of the botanical garden. This haven for nature enthusiasts and science aficionados amplifies the city's commitment to environmental stewardship.

**Children's City Park Transformation:** A captivating endeavor centered on the transformation of the central Children's City Park within the City Park precinct. This imaginative space will house an array of engaging attractions, from roller coasters and merry-go-rounds to a 7D cinema and go-karting, catering to a diverse spectrum of age groups.

These ten multifaceted initiatives collectively exemplify the City of Skopje's unwavering dedication to enhancing its infrastructure in ways that resonate deeply with citizens, fostering a holistic urban experience steeped in culture, well-being, and community enrichment.





# IMPRESSUM

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