

Open Call
for Cultural
and Artistic
Projects

SKOPJE 2028

European Capital of Culture 2028





Skopje as European Capital of Culture 2028

The European Capital of Culture (ECoC) is one of the European Union's most influential cultural initiatives, established in 1983 to highlight the richness of Europe's cultural diversity while strengthening a shared European identity. In 2023, Skopje was awarded the title of European Capital of Culture 2028, positioning the city at the heart of European cultural exchange, cooperation, and innovation.

Skopje 2028 is guided by the motto “Culture Over Division”, reflecting the city's historic role as a place of encounter, resilience, and solidarity. Rooted in a multiethnic, multi-layered cultural landscape shaped by heritage, migration, post-earthquake reconstruction, and contemporary urban challenges, Skopje's ECoC vision understands culture as a long-term driver of social cohesion, democratic participation, ecological responsibility, and urban transformation.

The Open Call for Cultural and Artistic Projects is one of the core instruments through which this vision will be realized. It invites artists, cultural professionals, organizations, institutions, and European partners to actively co-create the official Skopje 2028 cultural programme for the period 2026–2028, ensuring strong European cooperation, citizen participation, and sustainable cultural legacy.

Purpose and Objectives of the Open Call

This Open Call is conceived as a grant-based cultural funding mechanism, not as a public procurement procedure. Its primary purpose is to support original, non-commercial cultural and artistic projects that align with the strategic objectives of Skopje 2028 and the broader values of the European Capital of Culture programme.

The call aims to:

- Strengthen European cooperation, mobility, and co-creation, positioning Skopje as a meeting point for diverse European cultural practices.
- Support citizen-centered and participatory cultural models, ensuring active involvement of local communities.
- Encourage radical creativity, experimentation, and interdisciplinary approaches, including digital, hybrid, and emerging artistic practices.
- Address shared European challenges, such as social fragmentation, ecological crisis, digital transformation, and questions of memory and identity.
- Contribute to the long-term cultural, social, and urban transformation of Skopje beyond 2028.

Projects selected through this call will become an integral part of the official Skopje 2028 programme, implemented across the city and its ten municipalities, in both institutional and public spaces.



Thematic Framework:

Five Programmatic Strands

All proposals must align with at least one of the five thematic strands that structure the Skopje 2028 programme:

Art4Hope – Art for Hope

This strand focuses on countering apathy, social fatigue, and youth emigration by nurturing hope through collective artistic action. It encourages bold experimentation, interdisciplinary practices, and the activation of new cultural spaces. Art4Hope emphasizes resilience, optimism, and the transformative power of artistic action, summarized in the guiding principle: “It is not hope that prompts action – action prompts hope.”

Togetherness

Rooted in Skopje’s legacy of post-1963 earthquake solidarity, Togetherness addresses social cohesion, dialogue, tolerance, and the “right to the city.” Projects are expected to foster collaboration across communities, generations, and cultural backgrounds, using art as a platform for shared experience, participation, and mutual understanding.

rECOvering – Renewal

This strand responds to the city’s recent urban, ecological, and social challenges, including environmental degradation and fragmented urban development. It invites projects that explore healing, recovery, and resilience through culture, combining artistic practices with ecological awareness, critical reflection, and future-oriented imagination.

CreARTing – Creation

CreARTing bridges art, technology, science, and entrepreneurship. It supports projects that integrate ICT, digital media, AI, XR/VR, and creative innovation, aiming to reduce the digital gap, stimulate youth entrepreneurship, and position Skopje within contemporary European creative economies.

Heritage – Cultural Heritage

Heritage projects focus on the preservation, reinterpretation, and reactivation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Emphasis is placed on living traditions, memory, craftsmanship, and the dialogue between historical legacy and contemporary artistic expression, reinforcing Skopje’s role as a culturally layered European city.

Eligibility, European Dimension and Supported Sectors

Who Can Apply

The call is open to a wide range of cultural actors, including:

- Individual artists and cultural professionals
- NGOs and cultural organizations
- Artistic collectives
- Educational and research institutions
- International partnerships and European networks

Applicants must be 18 years or older, professionally active in the cultural field, and legally resident in an eligible European country.

Eligible Countries

Applicants may be based in:

- All 27 EU Member States
- Neighboring and partner countries participating in European cultural cooperation (including North Macedonia, Western Balkans, EEA countries, Ukraine, and others)
- EU Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) and Outermost Regions (ORs)

European Dimension

A strong European dimension is mandatory.

Projects must demonstrate at least one of the following:

- European partnerships or co-production
- Cross-border artistic collaboration or mobility
- Engagement with shared European themes, narratives, or challenges
- Cooperation with past or future European Capitals of Culture

What the Call Supports: Project Types and Priorities

The Open Call supports projects that aim to:

- Research contemporary artistic practices in a European context
- Create new artistic works through co-creation (not touring)
- Learn and exchange knowledge, skills, and methodologies
- Connect artists, communities, and European networks
- Preserve and reimagine cultural heritage
- Transform traditional forms into contemporary expressions

Priority is given to projects that demonstrate:

- European co-creation and mobility
- Citizen participation and co-decision models
- Youth-led or intergenerational engagement
- Ecological responsibility and urban transformation
- Digital creativity (AI, VR, XR, interactive media)
- Activation of public space and inclusion of marginalized groups

Financial Framework, Duration, and Evaluation

Budget and Funding Levels

- Total budget 300,000 €
- Maximum grant per project: 50,000 €
- Minimum co-financing: 10% (including in-kind contributions)
- Funding ranges:
 - Small-scale: 3,000 – 10,000 €
 - Medium-scale: 10,000 – 30,000 €
 - Large-scale: 30,000 – 50,000 €

Project Duration

Projects may run between 2026 and 2028, with residency or activity periods ranging from 7 to 60 working days, depending on scale.

Evaluation and Selection

Applications are assessed by independent national and international experts based on:

- Relevance to ECoC objectives
- Artistic quality and originality
- Feasibility, sustainability, and accessibility
- European partnerships
- Long-term impact and legacy

Final selection is made by a panel of five experts, ensuring transparency, diversity, and balance.

Long-Term Impact and Legacy

Beyond individual projects, the Open Call is designed to generate a lasting cultural legacy for Skopje by:

- Strengthening European cultural networks
- Building local capacities and professional skills
- Embedding culture in urban and ecological transformation
- Ensuring inclusive access to cultural life
- Positioning Skopje as a confident, open, and future-oriented European cultural city

S K O P J E



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