



Kaunas 2022

European Capital of Culture

Lithuania's second-largest city Kaunas has developed rapidly, creating new reasons to pay a visit. Located between two rivers and enveloped by nature, it charms tourists with architecture, water activities, and striking landscapes. The interwar years from 1919 to 1940 were significant for Kaunas as the temporary capital of Lithuania. The city burgeoned into a thriving centre of scientific, cultural, and academic activity. Its greatest treasure – the unique modernist architecture – also emerged during this time. Kaunas is famous throughout the world as the birthplace and home of many renowned individuals, including the founding member of Fluxus Jurgis Mačiūnas.

The project “Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022” is a success story: the number of tourists from abroad soared by 138% during the title year, the programme invited to 3000 events, welcomed around 2,4 million visitors, and gained interest of major global media. The city's and its district's status as the European Capital of Culture – the biggest, most important, and most popular cultural project in the EU – has allowed its creative community to carry out a long-awaited transformation of Kaunas city and its district “From temporary to contemporary” and create one big European stage.

Starting from 2015 the aim of Kaunas 2022 programme was to create change:

Through **openness**: from suspicion to trust. From self-deception to truth. From Sovietism to Europe.

Through **responsibility**: from a hapless resident to a fully-fledged citizen. From "me" to "us".

Through **activism**: from an old swamp to a young river. From a stop-over to a cosy home.

Through **optimism**: From boredom to modern forms. From an abandoned corner to a creative space.

Through **discussion**: from idol-worshipping to co-creation. From a dull avenue to a cosy courtyard.

Through **the joy of learning**: from an empty museum to a living history. From the duty to the joy of culture.

Through **narrative**: from a city "against" to a city "for". From "once upon a time" to "ever after."

Through **culture**. From temporary to contemporary.

The broad cultural programme of 2022 was created by more than 19 000 professional artists and creators from Lithuania and abroad. Among them were such world-renowned artists as Yoko Ono, William Kentridge, Marina Abramovič and others. The events of “The Contemporary Myth of Kaunas Trilogy” – “The Confusion”, “The Confluence”, and “The Contract” – which lasted a few days, and drew great attention, celebrating the transformation of Kaunas into an open, contemporary capital, proud of its unique architecture, history, Fluxus spirit and tightly-knitted communities. [You can see the full programme of “Kaunas 2022” here.](#)

The main programmes of “Kaunas 2022”

- [Modernism for the Future](#) – promoted community consciousness and its ties with the modernist heritage of Kaunas by organising new creative projects and strengthening the relevance of the heritage on the European level.
- [Designing Happiness](#) - created a new perception of a convenient city and urbanism, based on the recommendations of designers and environmental specialists. This programme sought to accommodate the city to everyone’s needs and cultivate contemporary citizens.
- [Memory Office](#) – collected people’s stories, made those stories heard, and aimed to revive the multi-ethnic memory of Kaunas City and Kaunas District, and strengthen communication among different resident communities.
- [Mythical Beast](#) - the entertaining element of the programme. Assisted in developing the plots of the grand events of 2022 through all the existing and newly created stories of Kaunas. Created an entertaining legend of the Mythical Beast of Kaunas.
- **Emerging Kaunas** - dedicated to the young generation of various ages – from infants to young adults. The goal of the project was to assist the young generation in creating a city in which they wish to live.
- [We, The People](#) - strengthened the sense of community in residents of Kaunas City and Kaunas District by practicing cultural engagement: through joint activities residents were encouraged to form resilient and creative communities.
- [Contemporary Neighborhoods](#) - united Kaunas District residents with artists and specialists, which helped to discover the unique identity of each neighbourhood and reveal it in the programme of 2022.
- **Cultural Partnerships** - the network of cultural organisations and creators which developed more than 100 unique artistic projects dedicated to the special programme of 2022 in partnership with Kaunas 2022

The city and district experiencing a cultural bloom, their rich multicultural history and the interwar modernist architecture marked by the European Heritage Label were appreciated not only by local communities, tourists, but also by the international media. [“National Geographic”](#), a popular science magazine boasting 6 million readers, noted that Kaunas is “finally getting the plaudits it deserves”, [“The Guardian”](#) listed the Capital of Culture among the 10 best European city breaks with a difference, and [“Time”](#) presented Kaunas as one of the best places in the world in 2022.

Festivals and events that gained enormous popularity became an inseparable part of the city and its district and will continue to be successfully implemented after the end of the “Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022” project. The “Fluxus” night carnival, the longest and friendliest “Courtyard Festival” table in Europe, and breath-taking “Contempo” performances in unexpected spaces are just a few of the stories that have started and will continue in Kaunas and its district. [More than 1000 legacy products remain in Kaunas in total: from crowd-pulling festivals, sculptures, and art objects to publications and virtual routes.](#)

Did you know?

- The project was sponsored by Kaunas City, Kaunas District, and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, but not by the EU.
- Even though the EU wasn’t a sponsor, it carried regular supervision of the project through a specifically established committee.
- The project’s sponsors implemented continuous and transparent project control.

- The project did not compete with any other cultural organisation. The designated funds were new, significant allocations for culture.
- The project was implemented with partners (we had 300 Lithuanian and foreign cultural institutions) and acted as a coordination centre.
- The project included Kaunas and Kaunas District on equal grounds.
- The project has started and ended as a public initiative and was based on the vision of an open European city which we are building together.
- The project pursued the programme stated in the bid which won the EC's competition. The project could not alter the spirit, values, and key elements of the programme.
- By its nature, the project was educational. Educational activities began in 2015, when the team for drafting of the bid was collaborating with foreign consultants, was training itself, and trained the team of the future project consisting of cultural professionals, university lecturers, and city leaders.

You can see the main achievements of "Kaunas 2022" in numbers here: <https://youtu.be/OCuUi4mI5FI>

You can find a representational video of "Kaunas 2022" here: <https://youtu.be/xvaZ4RuVhel>