PRESS RELEASE
Kaunas is shortlisted for the title of European Capital of Culture 2022

We are more than happy to announce that Kaunas City and Kaunas District have submitted an application to European Commission to become the European Capital of Culture in 2022. The concept of the programme is CONTEMPORARY CAPITAL. Once Kaunas (1919–1940) was a Temporary Capital of Lithuania and that period had a great impact on the city's development, culture and identity. With a second chance to become a temporary capital (for culture and Europe this time) we strive to explore our city's contemporaneity and establish culture as an engine, which drives the strategic aim of Kaunas city to become home for learning and happy people.

The first Jury meeting took place in Vilnius on 20th June, 2016. Kaunas was shortlisted along with Klaipėda and our city is ready to work on further programming of the biggest cultural project, which will reach its culmination in 2022.

The final Jury's decision will be made after a visit to Kaunas and the second Jury meeting in spring 2017.

In this document you will find information on Kaunas City and its District, concept and artistic programme, and partnership possibilities.

The Creative team of Kaunas 2022 welcomes ideas, proposals and initiatives from European partners in order to open up this programme for European audiences.
Many cultural objects in Kaunas city can be visited using public transport, which takes passengers from the City centre to the outskirts of the City in less than 30 min for a price of under 1 euro.
Kaunas is located at the confluence of two largest Lithuanian rivers, the Nemunas and the Neris and near Kaunas Reservoir, the largest artificial lake in Lithuania. The City has an abundance of green zones, including public parks and riverside beaches.

**FOUNDATION**

It is believed that Kaunas was founded in 1030. Surrounded by rivers from three sides the City was an intersection of trade routes and a river port with the only Hansa merchant office Kontor in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

**TEMPORARY CAPITAL**

The interwar period when Kaunas became the Temporary Capital of Lithuania was a second big jolt after the Hanseatic League for the City to grow. The modernist urban and architectural heritage in Kaunas reflects the diversity and importance of the modernization as a universal process of human and European history.

**CONTEMPORARY CAPITAL**

Using its various historical moments as well as the City’s current strengths and the involvement of its citizens as reference points, Kaunas seeks to create and establish its identity as a city that is modern, progressive, full of culture, science and innovation.

**HOTELS**

There are 89 places to stay in Kaunas, including hotels, motels, private lets, rural tourism as well as very affordable student accommodation.

**HERITAGE**

Kaunas has the largest density of heritage objects in Lithuania and recently the City has been awarded the European Heritage Label. The City is also en route to becoming the UNESCO site for Modernist Architecture.

**GREEN CITY**

Kaunas is located at the confluence of two largest Lithuanian rivers, the Nemunas and the Neris and near Kaunas Reservoir, the largest artificial lake in Lithuania. The City has an abundance of green zones, including public parks and riverside beaches.
TEMPORARY CAPITAL versus CONTEMPORARY CAPITAL

Our concept is Contemporary Capital. Why? Because we realise that when we talk about our City we tend to look back to the period when Kaunas was Temporary Capital of Lithuania. This was between 1919 and 1940. Ironically this was the time when our “real” Capital went to Poland for a while.

But it is time for us to move on. To create a new “golden age” for Kaunas. And the vehicle for doing so is to become a temporary capital once again. European Capital of Culture. A contemporary one. Just for one year this time. But its impact will be huge.

Our concept of Contemporary Capital means:

- EUROPEAN CAPITAL. Restoring sovereignty of a city as a self-asserted and self-conscious place among other old European cities.

- FUN CAPITAL. Kaunas will be the city, which no longer needs to fight nor struggle – it has earned its right to have fun.

- EDGY CAPITAL. The City with cutting edge technical and progressive humanitarian skills, the City for start-ups and rebellious souls.

- CONTEMPORARY LEGEND. Creating a legend for the City. There will be dragons on steroids and love stories to die for.

- MODERNIST CAPITAL. A friendly face of modernity: the history of Kaunas’ modernism can educate people and it can contribute to European culture by presenting a missing link between Art Nouveau of Paris and Bauhaus of Berlin.

- FRIENDLY CAPITAL. Kaunas can become an eco-city with its longest pedestrian street in Europe and an abundance of green zones.

AND FINALLY HERE IS HOW WE BREAK CONTEMPORARY CAPITAL INTO TWO IMPORTANT STIMULI FOR ACTION:

TEMPO MUST BE RECLAIMED AS “TIME”. Let’s have four hours per day dedicated to family, neighbours, charity, voluntary work, leisure, cultural activities – exhibitions, theatre, concerts, public events, guided tours or just exploring the city.

Let’s call it a conTEMPORARY style of living in 2022.

Let’s make it a habit.

Habits are very powerful; you may take our word for that.

TIME IS OUR CAPITAL. Let’s use “capital” as a visionary state, as a notion of cumulative place where intellectual resources, community will and collaboration of persons from different cultural, economic and academic fields can generate power for innovations, which are relevant to contemporary life.

Let’s reinstall the European ways of city planning and management.

Let’s create permanent places to live and work.

Let’s reclaim permanency.

Permanency is an everlasting contemporaneity.

We are fully aware that we need to change our identity based not on whom or what we were a hundred years ago, but rather whom or what we are now.

So being a temporary capital again can be a catalyst that clears the blocked mind-set, which holds us back. Let’s say it could be our last and ultimate temporariness.

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Our Artistic Vision is to create a new cultural and civil tempo in order to make the citizens take a step from a Temporary Capital to a Contemporary Capital.

Our Artistic Strategy makes participation a key value. Every citizen will have a right to participate. We will bring arts, design, and architectural projects to the streets and will aim for cultural activity to become an everyday occurrence instead of being "something special".

More than 70% of all activities are planned to take place in communities, neighbourhoods and public spaces. 30–35 Cultural Labs will be established in Greater Kaunas territory starting in 2018, where culture professionals will work closely with community members to create their own programme of exchange with international artists, gardeners, circus troupes, chefs, street artists and activists. All Labs will be international and experimental.

Along with participation our artistic strategy has 7 key elements:

**Learning happens everywhere**

The task here is to sow the idea among our citizens that if you want to be contemporary you have to learn something new every day. This is exactly how modern Europe was built. We will do this, for example, through capacity building activities, such as The New Cultural Tempo School starting in 2017 with international practitioners as tutors for Kaunas 2022 team, cultural operators, partners and participants of our programme (e.g. youth programme Centuryans) and others.

Projects like Café du Monde aiming at cultural dialogue amongst local and international residents as well as the interdisciplinary school project Animate Your City will help citizens and cultural operators in Kaunas learn something new every day.

**Kaunas as experimental site**

The City as an experimental site will encourage people to try something new they have never done before. The experimental character aims to create new links, find new ways of living, consuming and enjoying life and this will contribute to the atmosphere and happiness rate in the City. This is mainly achieved through projects like The Museum for The City where people curate their own exhibitions of what is important to them. The Experimental Site strategy also applies to presenting cutting-edge, high quality international contemporary art forms and introduce their cultural tempo to our citizens.

**A unifying narrative**

... addresses the general amnesia for parts of our history and heritage. We envision a city, which knows its history as a continuum. Not as a patchwork of random and temporary events. The events can be good and bad, glorious and shameful, but we must learn to see them as an eternal play of cause and consequence.

Along with international conferences and exhibitions about heritage and Modernist architecture as well as digital tools and animations to experience heritage as part of what makes our city contemporary, a new narrative – a working contemporary legend – will be created.

**Listen and act**

Our strategy includes listening and taking steps that empower the City's residents and visitors, encouraging a greater sense of personal and collective identity. We have to start acting on the need of establishing a concept of cultural institutions, which need to become more accessible – physically, socially, culturally and intellectually, and truly connect with community, look beyond traditional means and work with and for people, not against them (e.g. The New Cultural Tempo School, Museum for the City and City for the Museum).

**Cross-sector communication**

We will establish a free flow of cultural know-how amongst local cultural, educational and business communities, and also amongst partners in Baltic, Nordic and other countries in order to ensure cross-sectoral co-creation and partnerships. We will bring together artists and scientists (e.g. art exhibition at the Science Centre), cultural producers and business companies (e.g. Design Flood), sports and performing arts (e.g. Kaunas Marathon).

**Openness for the Other**

We have to transform our fortress-like mentality into openness in order to experience the encounter of what Kaunas born philosopher Emmanuel Levinas called face-to-face and become a true part of European intercultural partnership. We will open the City to the outside as well as to the inside through the influx of artists and groups from all over Europe and the world through projects, such as Community Culture in Action, intergenerational and school projects, and through opening up shared memories like in Yiddishe Mame.

**Platform for young generation**

The task is to empower young people to see the City as their own and to remain here.

We have officially declared that at least 50% of Kaunas ECoC 2022 team members will belong to the young generation. The strongest example of this in Kaunas 2022 programme is Centuryans – a project completely led by the young generation. The project started in Spring 2016 and will run until 2022, growing in participation and projects with large scale and highlight events organized by the generation of 2000’s.

Creating a platform for young people to be involved in and lead important parts of the programme will encourage more of them to stay connected to the City not only on a temporary basis, but to put roots here.
The structure of the proposed Kaunas 2022 programme has four main strands: CONFLUENCE, CONFUSION, CONTEMPORARY and CONSCIOUSNESS. Each of them reflects challenges, ambitions and visions of how Kaunas can use culture to underpin a process of change. Under each of the four strands we have projects that are connected – often creating project clusters. Many of them take as their starting point some of the challenges of the City and its communities and address these issues on multiple levels: with a professional, specialist-driven approach that includes artistic expression, community and participatory activities, audience-oriented performances and exhibitions. In this way, we want to secure a legacy that makes a real mark on Kaunas and its citizens – moving things forward and everyone enjoying the ride at the same time.

The premise of involving everyone in Kaunas and the Metro area in Contemporary Capital is through a community building platform that we call THE NEW CULTURAL TEMPO SCHOOL. Its activities will start in 2017 and run through the preparatory years before our finalised 2022 programme unfolds.

Four Highlight Events frame four important moments in our European Capital of Culture year and structure our Kaunas 2022 programme: The Opening Weekend on 20–22 January 2022; Kaunas Days – our main summer event on 20–22 May 2022; The Contraflow event organised by Centuryans on 20–22 September; The Closing Event starting on the 6 December 2022.

KAUNAS 2022 – The Programme

Kaunas – Contemporary Capital 2022 programme will host 4 HIGHLIGHT events, 12–15 Platforms (Large Scale Projects), operated by the Kaunas 2022 Office in close collaboration with local and international organisations, and several hundred projects initiated and led in partnership with local cultural operators and universities, European and worldwide organisations, cultural producers and artists. These projects will cover the aims and conceptual directions of the programme strands.

HIGHLIGHT EVENTS will be the main tools to celebrate the newly created Contemporary Legend. Each of the events will open a new season and will be directed by internationally recognised directors.
PROGRAMME STRANDS

CONTEMPORARY

Projects of this strand are dedicated to creating a new cultural tempo of the City, raising the quality and quantity of cultural services in Kaunas, encouraging innovative ideas in social, science, and creative fields, building a healthy, green, recreational environment in Kaunas and promoting contemporary culture.

Platforms:
- A Working Contemporary Legend;
- Contemporary Art Center / Public Art;
- Slow Down Tempo – Kaunas Marathon.

CONFUSION

Activities of this strand are related to conflicting and contradictory issues, involving reconstruction of the multicultural memory of the City, creating an environment open to different cultures, encouraging critical thinking and self-reflection, facing the forgotten history.

The concept is based on many confusion points related to the City – the discrepancies in how the City sees itself and is seen, the history of the City as it was and how it is perceived by the citizens.

Platforms:
- Modernity for the Future;
- Matters: Industrial Culture;
- Yiddishe Mame;
- Fortress Mentality;
- Sites of Memory.

CONSCIOUSNESS

The projects of this strand help create a new identity of Kaunas city through community involvement, civicly engaged businesses, establishing connections with the city’s housing projects, environmental projects, generating positive identity of the City and raising citizens’ pride and happiness.

Platforms:
- Community Culture in Action (Cultural Labs);
- Museum for the City and City for the Museum;
- Centuryans;
- Ladislas Starevich Animation Laboratory.

CONFLUENCE

This programme strand is about encouraging multidisciplinary, inter-institutional co-operation. Expanding the scope for collaboration and quality of cultural service providers, initiating art and science projects, culture and business collaboration, international partnerships and exchanges, boosting the creative industries sector.

Platforms:
- Design Flood;
- No Border Radio;
- Digital Diplomacy;
- Baltic Song Festival;
- Theatre Flux;
- Science Island.
CONTemporary networks: from institution to individual

For the preparation of Kaunas 2022 we will tap into all of the European exchange networks, in which the City is already an active participant, as well as creating new connections. Our aim is to create a CONTEMPORARY network of European cities, initiatives and individuals:

1) International diplomatic missions that were located in Kaunas during our time as temporary capital (project Digital Diplomacy) will become a starting point for contemporary – digital – diplomatic initiatives.

2) New Hanseatic League partnerships focusing on new / contemporary ways of trading and communication between European cities.

3) UNESCO Creative Cities, especially in the Design category, to which Kaunas belongs, will become a platform for partnership between institutions, municipalities and NGOs through the establishment of the Design Forum, conferences and exhibitions, as well as urban interventions.

4) Twin Cities partnerships will be renewed and strengthened (Riga, Wroclaw, Tampere, Tartu, St Petersburg, Grenoble and more).

5) ECoCs 2022 paired towns (Kaunas and Esch-sur-Alzette 2022) providing more possibilities for individuals and local community members to exchange talents, ideas, share their culture, food traditions, gardening knowledge, crafts, etc. through introductory weeks and year-long programme exchanges.

6) Looking at other temporary capitals in Europe we will connect to Weimar and Bonn in Germany, Iasi in Romania and Kauhajoki in Finland to explore possible parallels and share the experiences at The Legacy of Temporariness conference on Europe Day (9 May, 2022).

7) Kaunas 2022 programme is going to become a platform of strong partnerships and collaborations between international scholars, researches and cultural networks:

  e.g. IFTR Conference (International Federation of Theatre Research), European Design Forum, IBA Conference (International Biennial Association’s annual meeting), International Award for Public Art – Award Ceremony.

8) Many of our projects will promote intercultural networks of new technologies across Europe as new social bonds (No Border Radio project, Science Centre, Digital Windows to Europe, IT conferences and fairs).

9) We have agreed with Pula in Croatia to develop the concept of a network of fortress cities, which include Pula itself, Magdeburg, Herceg Novi (Montenegro) and Viborg near Aarhus.

10) And finally, all programmes will ensure long-term networking between various European institutions and individuals, will help cultural operators share their experiences, strengthen their skills and knowledge in European partnerships and communication, and will prompt new initiatives of networks and international projects.
MAPPING PARTNERSHIPS

The newly established Contemporary Art Centre will focus on public art initiatives and will be strongly supported by an international network ensured by Kaunas Biennial, which has 20 years of international partnership experience, and Lewis Biggs (UK), who will be the Artistic Director for visual and public art programme for Kaunas 2022. The Artistic Director is constructing the public arts programme in partnership with more than 10 international organisations.

Internationally recognized artists, composers, conductors, theatre directors have been invited to take part in preparing the programme and commissioned to create works in relation to the main strands of the programme: e.g. Philip Miller (oratory, Yiddishe Mame programme), William Kentridge (new video works and personal exhibition), Roberto Magro (contemporary circus festival in “the sleepy suburbs”), Patricia Piccinini (Kaunas legend character / a sketch for an air balloon travelling across Europe), Rafael Lozano Hemmer (coordinator Designing for Emotions, Up in the Air), Neville Gaby, Will Self (artistic interventions in modernist apartment buildings in Modernity for the Future project). Mirga Grazinytė-Tyla, who is the conductor and Music Director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra will lead the opening concert of the programme and one of the biggest Highlight events The Liberty Parade including 2,000 musicians from all over Europe.

CONNECTING NEIGHBOURS

The European Capital of Culture is neither a local nor a national project. We strongly believe that this title is awarded to all Europeans, especially our neighbouring countries. That is why we focus on the partnership with countries around Lithuania: Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Russia, and Belarus. We have transnational connections with the Wroclaw Industrial Festival (Poland) and the Ural Industrial Biennial in Ekaterinburg (Russia), National Philharmonics in Minsk (Belarus) and we intend to connect with partners in the Russian enclave Kaliningrad, with whom we want to explore the ways of working for the project Modernity for The Future. The Polish curator Krzysztof Stanislawski will be a part of the curatorial team for contemporary art actions: exhibitions, public art, and performance. With Latvia and Estonia we are planning a symposia and a tour across Europe by the Baltic Sea Youth Philharmonic and a planned concert by Kremerata Baltica (LV, EST, LT musicians), as well as initiating the Baltic Song Festival (based on our mutual singing traditions listed by UNESCO). Kaunas National Drama Theatre has invited the Latvian theatre director Alvis Hermanis to direct their programme in 2022. We are in contact with Gundega Laiviņa (Riga 2014, Road Map curator), who will help to connect communities in Latvia and Lithuania for our Community Culture in Action platform.

Kaunas 2022 is open for networking opportunities, linking organizations and artists, pairing communities and individuals.
KAUNAS IN NUMBERS

387,158 INHABITANTS (combined City and Metro)

The longest pedestrian street in Europe Liberty Avenue – stretching for 1.6 kilometres

29 MUSEUMS

58 LIBRARIES

1,556 CULTURAL HERITAGE OBJECTS

13 THEATRES and 4 THEATRE FESTIVALS

9 INTERNATIONAL CONTEMPORARY ARTS FESTIVALS

7 MUSIC SCHOOLS and 9 MUSIC FESTIVALS

12 UNIVERSITIES and COLLEGES

30,000 UNIVERSITY and COLLEGE STUDENTS

115 SCHOOLS and 44,257 SCHOOL STUDENTS

109 CHURCHES and HOUSES OF PRAYER

15 BRIDGES

Average monthly wage 696 Eur, minimum wage 350 Eur

18,549 ENTERPRISES

BC ŽALGIRIS has won 17 Lithuanian Basketball Championship gold medals. 1 EUROLEAGUE GOLD MEDAL.

25% of population over age 60

34% of population under age 30

Unemployment rate 5.7%
Pre-selection stage, 2016

The Applicant
KAUNAS CITY MUNICIPALITY
in partnership with
KAUNAS DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

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Useful links
www.kaunas2022.eu
www.facebook.com/kaunas2022
#kaunas2022

Kaunas City Municipality

Kaunas District Municipality