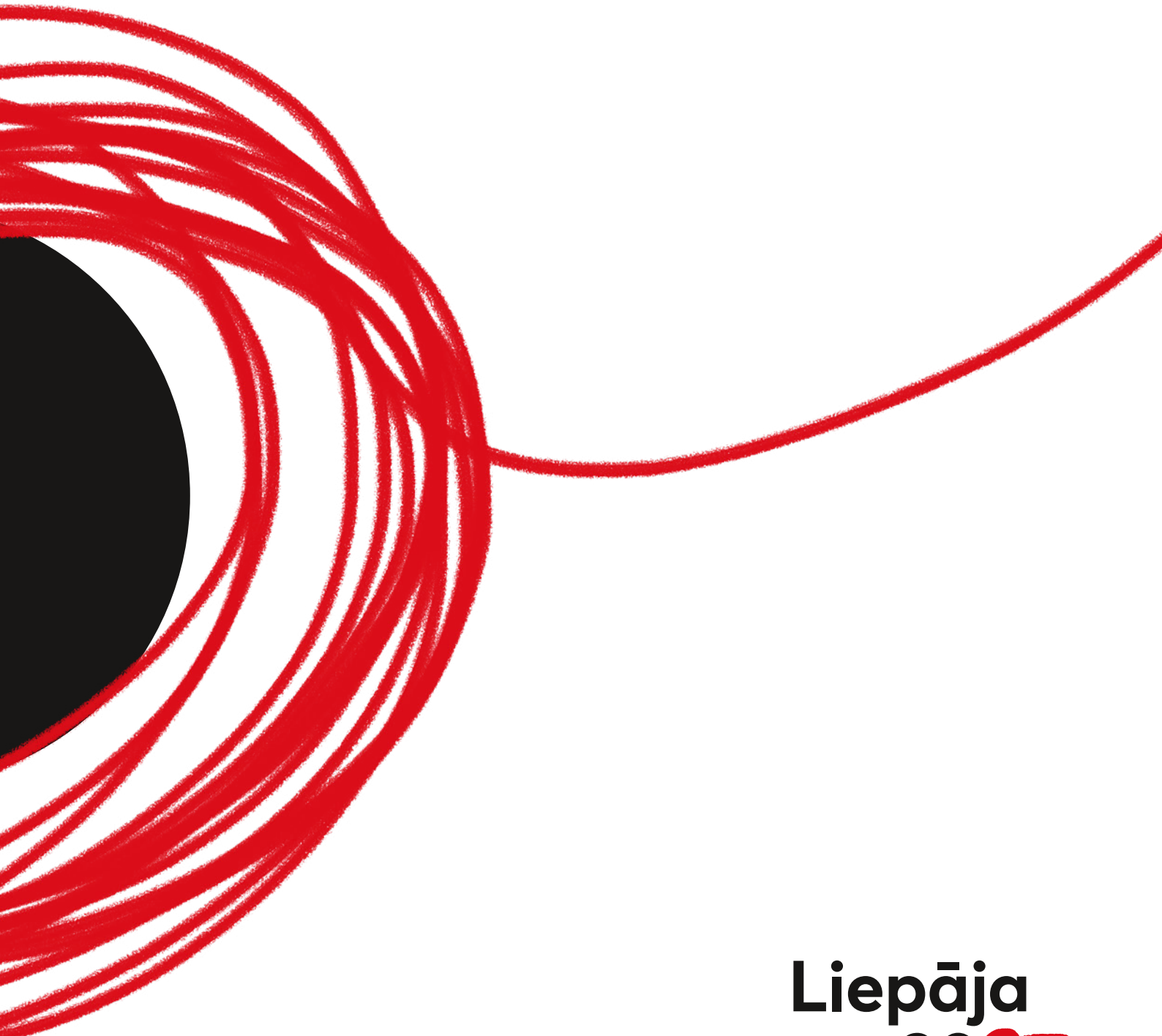


(un)rest



Liepāja  
2027

European Capital of Culture  
Candidate City



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# Introduction

## Q1

### Liepāja's concept

They say the wind is born in Liepāja. With wind come rest and unrest. A little too much rest for some. A little too much unrest for others. A lot too much unrest with another war being fought between Europeans – undermining what we have built up together and bringing suffering, fear and uncertainty.

The wholesome kind of **(un)rest** is the process where what is in rest is shaken up and what is in unrest becomes more peaceful and accessible. **(un)rest** is the healthy energy that moves us forwards, that pushes us to reach our goals. It is our navigation plan.

The wind changes constantly, but our concept is unchanged. It is inspired by the wind and the universal cycle of rest and unrest. But we refuse to be passive about it, letting it just happen.

We rather harness it into the concept of **(un)rest**. We make it bloat our sails and drive our **programme lines** like ships. We make **(un)rest** our navigation plan on our discovery journey towards the **European Dream** (hoping that it does not turn into a European nightmare), inviting adventurous Europeans into our **Port Paradox**, seeing ourselves and our neighbourhoods with **New Eyes** through European spectacles, practising how **Deliberate Modesty** impacts our shared Baltic Sea, and turning our gaze towards the horizon with **Creative Foresight**.

In our view, navigating today's world requires ample cultural competence. **(un)rest is our navigation plan** towards the kind of cultural competence we need.

A way to translate, forecast and guide the development of our society as healthy and active individuals and communities. To offer ourselves, as European cities and communities, the opportunity to navigate a dangerous sea: mind-boggling technological development, climate change, constant flow of (dis)information – and even closer to the bone: lack of civic engagement and social cohesion, missing sense of our role in Europe and the world, low ambition and scarce international perspective, lack of human resources and resourceful humans.

But if we manage to cross this perilous sea, we will land our ships at the shore of our goals:

#### Learn to cooperate – from provincial to European centre stage!

Sailing over the wine-dark sea to men of strange speech, as Homer says (not Simpsons' Homer). It's high time for swimming with the big fish in international waters.

#### Co-create your habitat – from mental to environmental!

Standing at the beach in Liepāja, shouting against the wind knowing that everything we do impacts this great big habitat that we call Baltic Sea, Latvia, Europe, aka Earth.

#### Build a smart future – from human to digital and back!

Skilled, courageous skippers mastering deep, uncharted seas of technological advancements and unpredictable sea monsters.

#### Keep your identity (fluid) – from Latvia with love!

Navigating the paradoxes of diversity and openness whilst sailing home with a sense of belonging and pride.

#### Reset mindset – from inertness to meaningful action!

Dipping into the currents that whirl our diverse neighbourhoods closer together and allow us to dive back into the nonchalant ease of Europeaness that we were once so good at.

**(un)rest** is the navigation plan that has all the tools needed to get to our goals:

- a navigation map covering a smaller and a larger area (the bid book, the cultural strategy),
- a compass (Monitoring and Evaluation),
- a star for navigational reference (the European Dimension),
- 5 strong ships (our programme lines),
- a crew (Task Force **(Un)Rest** – we will tell you more later),
- a command bridge (Liepāja 2027 organisation).

What else does it take next to this solid setup? Lot's of luck perhaps. And a little help from our friends on #teameurope. We are looking forward to this trip.

# (un)rest navigation plan

## Challenges

Poor and incomplete cooperation with European countries, cities and partners at all levels.

Lack of engagement to get involved in the co-creation of the environment and understanding of environmental issues.

Low level of digital skills, uncompetitive knowledge, no intergenerational cooperation and knowledge exchange.

In the process of modern globalisation, economic needs are given priority, slowly losing unique cultural and historical evidence, traditions and practices.

Too many people do not get involved in city life, they do not go beyond writing comments on social networks.

## Main goals

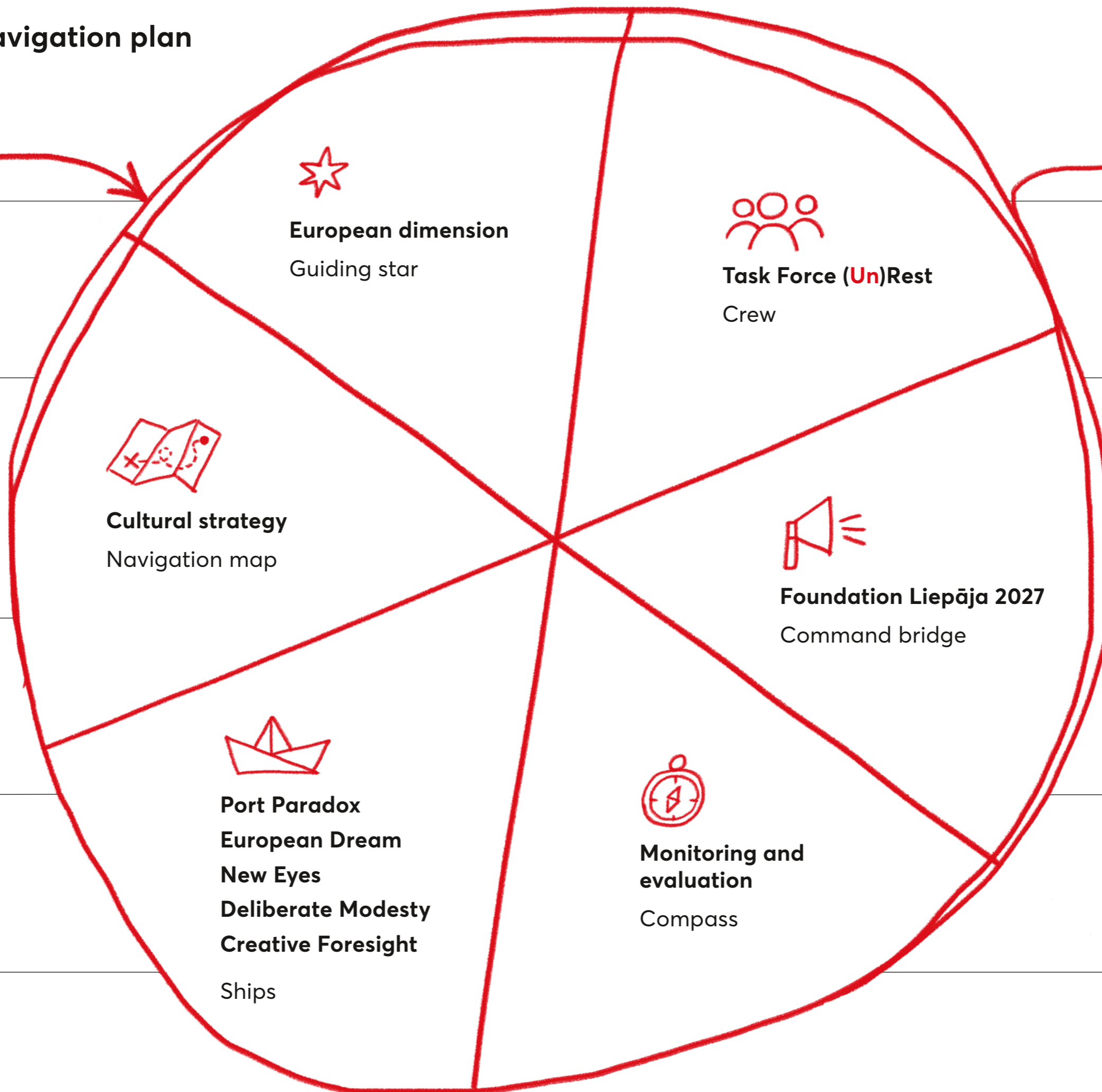
Learn to cooperate – from provincial to European centre stage!

Co-create your habitat – from mental to environmental!

Build a smart future – from human to digital and back!

Keep your identity (fluid) – from Latvia with love!

Reset mindset – from inertness to meaningful action!



**European dimension**  
Guiding star



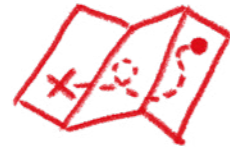
**Task Force (Un)Rest**  
Crew



**Foundation Liepāja 2027**  
Command bridge



**Monitoring and evaluation**  
Compass



**Cultural strategy**  
Navigation map



**Port Paradox**  
**European Dream**  
**New Eyes**  
**Deliberate Modesty**  
**Creative Foresight**  
Ships

# Contribution to the long-term strategy

## Q2

### Changes to the cultural strategy and shared priorities

If (un)rest is our overall navigation plan, Liepāja's cultural strategy is the navigation map describing the route we need to follow in order to get there. But 2027 is not the terminus. The journey goes on as – since our Preliminary Bid Book – an **extended version of the strategy** has been approved by Liepāja City Council, taking us up to 2035. It also places additional emphasis on long term cultural cooperation with the restructured South Kurzeme region and the goal to become European Capital of Culture for 2027.

We also took the opportunity to make a significant change to our cultural strategy action plan and especially its three core objectives that we had reported in our Preliminary application. Those objectives are:

- Creating an open and participatory society
- Developing diverse and high-quality cultural processes
- Implementing a green, smart and sustainable cultural infrastructure

We set out below how these objectives have developed since preselection and how our cultural strategy will be our map for the journey of (un)rest.

#### Embedding the European dimension

Previously, the European dimension was one of the objectives, somewhat separated from the core actions. We have now decided to make it our guiding light in all key actions and connect a European dimension to each of the core objectives.

So we have to say, "thank you, Europe", for adding this extra orientation star to our navigation map! Thank you for challenging us and making us think differently. We recognised in the first application that one of our biggest challenges is relatively weak cooperation with Europe and international partners on the part of our cultural operators. And during the first phase we discovered why.

This was because often, in the field of culture, cooperation with European professionals was defined as something separate, and autonomous, making it hard to include as a natural and integral part of developing cultural activities. But now, through our ECoC learning, we have **un-separated European connectivity** and made it the key orientation point that gives direction to all our activities. In essence, the European dimension becomes an integral part of our thinking and action planning. And by working with all the cultural institutions in Liepāja, South Kurzeme and also in Kuldīga (see below) we have already started making European and international outreach a prerequisite to participation in our 2027 programme. We describe this in more detail in the European dimension section.

#### Task Force (Un)Rest

The first core objective of our cultural strategy is to build an open and participatory society. Yet national surveys show that only 14% of the public not just in Liepāja but throughout Latvia have taken the opportunity to have their say in solving important issues in the last two years. The impact of the pandemic, the spread of fake news, and fractious political processes seem to have reduced that already small percentage even further. Here in Liepāja, in conversations with cultural organisations and looking at research on cultural consumption and participation, we find clear confirmation of that relatively low level of engagement across the city as a whole.

We need to turn that around. Thankfully, ECoC gives us an **exciting new platform** to tackle this challenge of too much "rest" from cultural life and to encourage a wide range of cultural professionals to work with us. In fact, our quest has started to reach out beyond just the cultural community.

NGOs, representatives of creative industries, cultural organisations, artists, and even researchers from universities began to debate and discuss and to look for tools to improve Liepāja's public participation

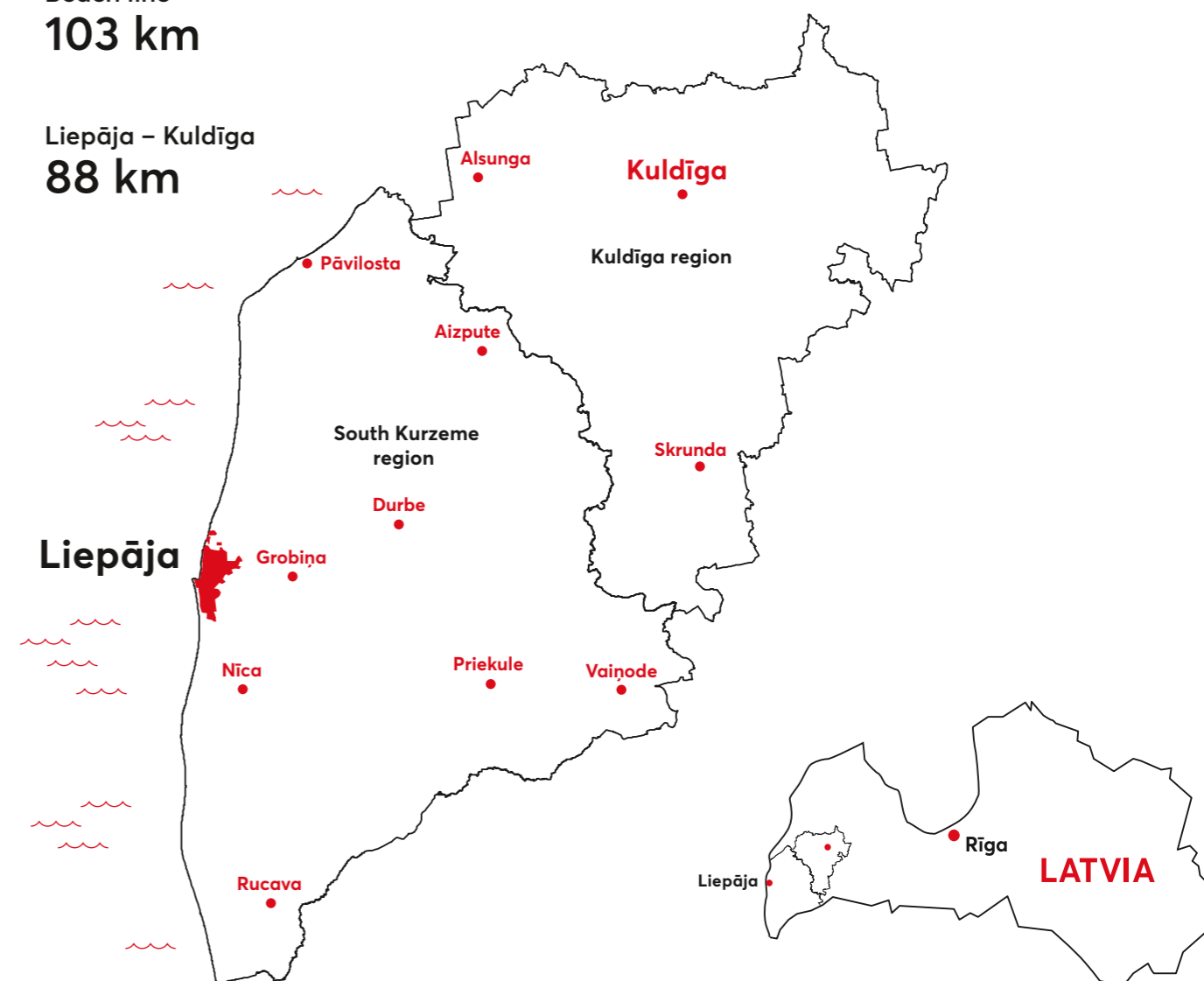
processes. They also **challenged the 15:85** split we used at preselection – feeling it created an "us and them" split which was unhelpful. So we decided to drop the figures which were getting everyone so preoccupied with which "side" they were on. After all, our goal is to create more cohesion and not less. Our ECoC application has been a driving force bringing together all these (un)restful participants in the crew to navigate us towards our goals. We call it Task Force (Un)Rest.

Task Force (Un)Rest is an open pool of people and activities. The Task Force will address and engage a wide audience across all walks of life, regardless of whether someone belongs to the active community or is currently taking a social nap. Our strength lies in our joint work, and with that in mind, we also hope to increase the participation numbers across Liepāja from 14% to at least 30%. We'll talk more about Task Force (Un)Rest in the Outreach chapter.

The table below summarises how our Task Force (Un)Rest initiatives tie into Liepāja's cultural strategy objectives and how those are embedded in a European dimension.

Beach line  
103 km

Liepāja – Kuldīga  
88 km



#### Picking up friends on the way

We do not know what it is like to have 10, 15 or 80 million people in a country, because we are less than 2 million in this small country. From these, we need to put together a parliament, an Olympic team, doctors in hospitals and teachers in schools, and we also need to find the people to deliver a great cultural system.

In Liepāja we know our strengths and weaknesses. So we are grateful for the opportunity to cooperate in the wider region with others who share our cultural ambitions, supporting each other in building a more open and European cultural system that reaches far more people right across the **South Kurzeme region**. And since preselection our (un)rest map has taken us to our nextdoor neighbour and former candidate **Kuldīga**. In keeping with our strategic plan to place more emphasis on cultural partnerships and development, we have invited Kuldīga to join our (un)rest journey. We are delighted that they have jumped on board. They bring some important ideas and projects which complement our own. The impact of our new (un)rest partner is shown in the value they bring to the artistic programme in Q6.

Task Force (Un)Rest	How does the Task Force operate?	Liepāja Cultural Strategy Core objectives	European Dimension within Strategy Core objectives
<b>Audience research and expansion</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Getting to know our audiences better – who they are, and who they are not and why</li> <li>Turning the “not on my radar” people into regular culture-goers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diversifying cultural events both topic-wise and geographically</li> <li>Reducing economic and mobility barriers</li> <li>Developing cultural education processes</li> <li>Creating interdisciplinary activities, digital accessibility</li> <li>Expanding the concept of culture in the public consciousness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open and participatory society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addressing European and international audiences</li> <li>Increasing accessibility for international audiences</li> <li>Bringing local audiences more in contact with European cultural themes</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural Renovation</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity building for cultural operators, independent or not</li> <li>Challenging our business as usual mindset</li> <li>(un)rest and not resting on our laurels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthening the capacity of cultural institutions</li> <li>Increasing the number of volunteers</li> <li>Implementing the circulation of creative forces</li> <li>Supporting and developing the activities of NGOs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diverse and high-quality cultural processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identity and cultural diversity</li> <li>Raising ambitions for more quality and reaching more international connections</li> <li>Increase European participation in artistic residences</li> </ul>
<b>From Hotel to Home</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not living in separate rooms in the “city hotel” but creating a home together</li> <li>Building a more engaged and active community</li> <li>Creative placemaking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changing attitudes and developing a sense of belonging and responsibility towards Liepāja, Latvia, Europe, this planet</li> <li>Building citizen collaboration platforms, storytelling and using technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Green and smart, sustainable cultural infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following the New European Bauhaus</li> <li>Being more ambitious and including good practises from beyond Latvia</li> <li>Going the extra mile for cultural exchanges</li> </ul>

## Q3 Expected long-term impacts

Liepāja’s ambitions for the long-term impact of becoming European Capital of Culture have not changed. If anything, they have grown and become more clear and concrete as we have moved further along the road of (un)rest. We don’t just want change. We want purposeful change. Especially in helping our communities and also our organisations to become more open, more involved and more ambitious for high quality. To continue our sea-faring metaphor, it’s a bit like **turning around an oil tanker**. A bit cumbersome but once we do so, it’s full steam ahead.

To complete the journey we need a map (our bid book and our Cultural Strategy as described in Q2) and a compass. The compass will be our system for Evaluation and Monitoring. Showing us that we are heading in the right direction and setting out the benefits – the long-term impacts – as we reach our destination.

We want our **Evaluation model** to help guide us throughout the process as well as recognising our progress when 2027 is over. So, we have built a set of indicators which help us show how we are going to meet our goals and how Liepāja will look in 2028 when we have achieved them. Our eyes are very much on the prize which lies over the horizon of 2027.

The objectives set out in the Cultural Strategy:

- Creating an open and participative society
- Developing a diverse and high quality cultural system
- Creating a green, smart, sustainable cultural infrastructure.

Feed into our (un)rest journey goals:

- Learn to collaborate: from provincial to European centre stage
- Co-create your habitat: from mental to environmental
- Build a smart future: from human to digital and back
- Keep your identity (fluid): from Latvia with love
- Reset mindset: from inertness to meaningful action.

For each of our goals we describe the impacts (outcomes) and indicators to demonstrate and measure the progress we have made (how we know we have made it). Culture is first and foremost, especially in helping us to get more people involved and active. But there are also major contributions from and impacts for our education system, attitudes towards environment and sustainability, and economic growth. This is summarised in the table below for each goal.

A range of data sources from surveys and interviews, event venue data, from tourism and transport providers will **underpin our ability to measure our progress**. More about the operation of the system of monitoring is described in Q4.

### Impacts of the last couple of years

When we started this journey towards the title of ECoC 2027, we could not have imagined that the world would change in two years. Then we dreamed about advancing technology but we couldn’t imagine the speed at which digital solutions would evolve. We were interested in the physical and mental health of every citizen but we could not imagine the challenges we would have to face in the name of collective health.

So, when talking about the potential long-term impact of Liepāja 2027 on cultural, educational, economic and social processes, we recognised that we could not continue to plan in the way we did only a few years ago. Fatigue, apathy and the constant change of restrictions make a large part of society, including the cultural sector, longing for the “good old days”. When we were able to plan in the long run, attend events and experiment with ideas. However, we are all aware that under no circumstances can it be “good old days”. The world has changed irreversibly. But using our strategy as our map, our goals as the prize and our planned impacts as our guiding compass, we know that we can make Liepāja a better, more open and European place that sees a future full of possibility. ECoC can help us turn those possibilities into reality.

## Goal 1: From provincial to European centre stage: Learning to collaborate

<p><b>Impact and outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How we know we made it</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cultural organisations have deep and consistent collaboration with European partners and networks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information of international partnerships</li> <li>• Creative Europe and other international project collaborations</li> <li>• Participation in European networks and associations</li> </ul>	<p><b>More people from Latvia and other parts of Europe move to Liepāja driven by its environment, culture and education quality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population figures such as inward migration</li> <li>• Diversity of Liepāja's population</li> </ul>
<p><b>Liepāja is a place recognised for great international cultural events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and quality of events</li> <li>• International artists and producers</li> <li>• Growth in international audience and media coverage</li> </ul>	<p><b>Liepāja is recognised nationally and internationally for the quality of its cultural education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Figures for students and pupils</li> <li>• School and teacher international exchanges and connections</li> <li>• Number of international lecturers, teachers and students</li> </ul>	<p><b>Liepāja's population feels much more connected to Europe</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attitude surveys</li> <li>• Attendance at European shows and exhibitions</li> <li>• European culture, business and education connections and partnerships</li> </ul>
<p><b>Liepāja is a recognised sustainable European tourism destination</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of international visitors and spread throughout the year</li> <li>• Culture tickets bought by international guests</li> <li>• Increases in hotel beds and year-round occupancy</li> </ul>		

## Goal 2: From mental to environmental: Co-creating our habitat

<p><b>Impact and outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How we know we made it</li> </ul>	<p><b>Culture is more open and accessible</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing audience demographic including more people from diverse communities and more people with disabilities</li> <li>• Demonstrably more venues with improved access</li> </ul>	<p><b>Education and lifelong learning materials are easily accessible to a wide range of people from all of our communities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new modern library is in place</li> <li>• Ukstiņš lifelong learning quarter established</li> <li>• Liepāja is a STEAM hotspot</li> <li>• Number of people attending courses and gaining new qualifications</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cultural events take place all over Liepāja, using a range of venues and spaces</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New venues and spaces in our neighbourhoods – investing especially in less attractive areas</li> <li>• Culture points set up in each area of the city</li> <li>• Mapping of new event and cultural spaces</li> <li>• Better leisure facilities for young people</li> </ul>	<p><b>Physical and mental health has improved across Liepāja and facilities to support healthy and active lifestyles are internationally recognised</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved health outcomes e.g. life expectancy, obesity</li> <li>• More people living active, healthy lifestyles</li> <li>• More people walking and cycling, more bike lanes</li> </ul>	

## Goal 3: From human to digital and back: Building a smart future

<p><b>Impact and outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How we know we made it</li> </ul>	<p><b>Liepāja's cultural heritage is easily accessible both physically and digitally</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved quality of physical and digital exhibitions and displays</li> <li>• Increased audiences – physical and digital</li> <li>• Numbers and type of events</li> <li>• Improved skills of cultural professionals</li> </ul>	<p><b>A new, post ECoC cultural vision has been developed and shared</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new 10 year cultural strategy is in place</li> <li>• Other strategic documents have been updated to set out a post ECoC vision</li> </ul>
<p><b>Liepāja is a best practice example of digital connectivity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved digital connection facilities across all of the city and region's public services</li> </ul>		

## Goal 4: From Latvia with love: Keeping our identity (fluid)

<p><b>Impact and outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How we know we made it</li> </ul>	<p><b>Most people in Liepāja play an active part in city life and cultural events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audience numbers</li> <li>• Amateur arts organisations and participants</li> <li>• Liepāja wins in national competitions</li> <li>• Media coverage</li> <li>• Intergenerational events and participation numbers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Culture is seen as a vital part of future city development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural budget is set at a higher level than 2022 and continues to rise</li> <li>• Culture funding per capita</li> </ul>
<p><b>People are much more aware of and connected to their history and heritage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local artist in residence projects</li> <li>• Published research on local heritage</li> <li>• Number of students and schools projects looking at local and national heritage</li> </ul>		<p><b>People from all communities feel much more "together" and connected to Liepāja and Latvia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Views of local people</li> <li>• Net promoter score (NPS)</li> <li>• Number of people returning to Liepāja</li> <li>• Involvement in National Day celebrations</li> </ul>

## Goal 5: From inertness to meaningful action: Reset mindset

<p><b>Impact and outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How we know we made it</li> </ul>	<p><b>Culture and civic participation are the "go to" position for people here rather than sitting on the sofa "rest"</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural participation levels</li> <li>• Cultural vibrancy – range and number of events</li> <li>• Coverage of Liepāja as a cultural city</li> </ul>	<p><b>Communities are active and connected to culture and to each other and people volunteer more</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numbers and impact of NGOs</li> <li>• Participation levels</li> <li>• Number of active volunteers</li> </ul>
<p><b>A strong network has been established for cultural organisations to take forward the next stage of Liepāja's cultural journey</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Format of regular meetings</li> <li>• Number of exchanges and joint projects</li> <li>• Continuation of joined up programming</li> <li>• More long-term careers for cultural people</li> </ul>	<p><b>Growth in jobs in creative and cultural fields</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of creative and cultural employees</li> <li>• New companies and jobs created</li> <li>• Improved salaries and prospects</li> </ul>	<p><b>Relations between the Municipality and the people are open and supportive</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory budgeting projects</li> <li>• Greater involvement of local people in decision making</li> <li>• Surveys on satisfaction with city services</li> <li>• Greater participation in elections</li> <li>• Participation of young people</li> </ul>

## Q4 Monitoring and evaluation

As we indicated in the previous question, we want to use our Monitoring and Evaluation (M and E) framework as a compass to help us know we're going in the right direction on our (un)rest journey. Our monitoring and evaluation plan consists of several stages:

- Attracting a strong team of professionals to conduct research
- Developing high quality data collection mechanisms
- Regular data analysis (at least once a year) and feedback
- Making changes in direction if the compass points out that we are heading the wrong way!
- We will carry out this cycle of "collecting data – analysing – making a difference" – several times, with the aim of introducing this practice during the ECoC build up and then leaving it as a valuable legacy for further development of urban and regional cultural strategies.

We have taken into account the suggestion from the Selection Panel to look beyond Latvia, to involve European partners in monitoring and evaluation, and to take the opportunity to share experiences with other European cities. So, in the course of more extensive research and data analysis, collaborate a member of **the European Society for Public Opinion and Marketing Research, ESOMAR**, who has helped to define the monitoring and evaluation matrix.

The matrix will involve a network of professionals to assess not only the impact of the ECoC on the cultural environment and the economy but also on changes in society, public involvement and the image of the city and region abroad.

**Step 1** – Within the Liepāja 2027 Foundation we will recruit a professional whose main responsibilities will be related to the coordination of the M and E process – cooperation with partners and experts, monitoring the quality of data sources, ensuring the exchange of information, cooperation with universities and other education partners.

**Step 2** – Create a team of M and E experts – researchers universities and organisations, which, according to their specialisation, will conduct their part of research on a specific area of ECoC impact. It is already agreed that the impact of ECoC on cultural processes will

be evaluated by an expert from The **Department of Scientific Research** of the Latvian Academy of Culture, which also participated in the evaluation of Riga 2014. The representative from independent **NGO Providus** will provide their knowledge in the evaluation of public involvement but changes in the educational process will be evaluated by professionals from **Dynamic University**, and changes in the city's visibility and image by internationally awarded **Forta Research**. In evolution processes will be involved also **Rīga Stradiņš University, Liepāja University** and others.

**Step 3** – Create a data collection network. In order for our research team to carry out their work and analyse the collected primary and secondary data, we will cooperate with cultural organisations, producers, representatives of creative industries, Liepāja and regional government departments, residents, volunteers, research laboratories and several universities, using open data sources. In order for all results to be together and available to work groups and the general public, we plan to engage our strong IT sector to create a digital tool for data collection and analysis, which could also be used after Liepāja 2027.

### Scope and scale

The main data sources on which the data analysis will be based are: officially available statistics and quantitative data (e.g. number of tourists, number of registered NGOs, number of visitors, spectators, artists, education, health-related activities, surveys) as well as qualitative research (discussion groups, expert interviews, media and social network analysis). The definition of KPI indicators is based on the recommendations developed by the European Commission for ECoC evaluation, as well as the recommendations of data analysts, researchers and universities.

In **Q3 we have described indicators**, which will be developed to regularly measure key outcomes and progress towards our goals. In order to be able to objectively evaluate and analyze the impact of the ECoC, experienced statisticians and mathematicians will be engaged to analyze the defined KPIs regularly.

### Baseline studies and surveys

Primary and secondary data sources will be used for the Liepāja 2027 study and evaluation, according to the field of research. Officially available statistics (data from the Central Statistical Bureau and the municipalities) will be used primarily. In addition, a sociological survey (quantitative and qualitative) will be carried out to **obtain a comprehensive view** from citizens, businesses, event attendees, experts and other stakeholders. Sociological research is planned to be conducted in Liepāja, Latvia and the Baltics to assess the impact of ECoC activities at the local level (on Liepāja residents), at the regional level (impact at the national level) and at the international level (primarily on Lithuania and Estonia). Initially, baseline data will be defined as a basis for further research and evaluation according to the scope of the ECoC.

In addition, we intend to use interactive "evaluation stands" after the end of some key events. This immediate evaluation will allow collection of views from attendees as well as creating a single Benchmark indicator. The benchmark will make it possible to identify the most successful and less successful events. The immediate evaluation questionnaire will be developed by a panel of experts but an **international Net Promoter Score (NPS)** could be used as a measurement to identify visitor segments: particularly satisfied, neutral and dissatisfied.

As indicated above, we have identified a wide set of data which will enable us to measure our progress against the 5 ECoC goals as set out in Q3. We will also continually **monitor the quality of the data** as we go along. For example:

- Promoting the availability of open data in and about Liepāja
- Improving the quality of secondary data sources, including data submitted to the Central Statistical Bureau
- Monitoring whether there is a need to add additional KPI in the matrix, in case the planning process identifies a key new area
- Cooperation with the IT sector to create a single digital tool for efficient data collection.

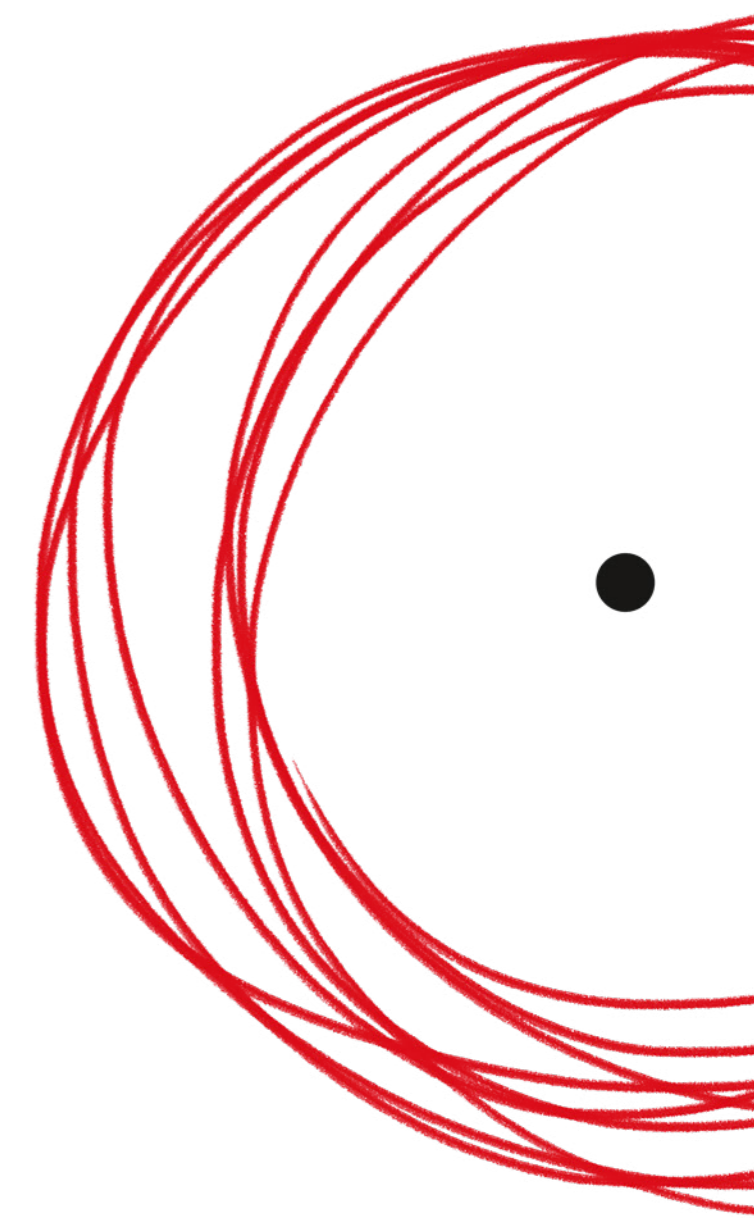
### What success could look like

There is widespread public consent that the European Capital of Culture project has made real changes in the daily life of Liepāja and the region. An intangible but clear feeling similar to the one experienced now: "I can't imagine what Liepāja was like when it didn't have the Great Amber Concert Hall."

**The leap of culture** – culture has gained recognition as an area that is able to make changes in other sectors as well. Also that the presence of culture is self-evident in educational processes, regeneration of brownfields, development of the NGO sector, and formation of an active and engaged society.

As we said in the first application, we want to enter the TOP20 of Europe's most creative cities. In 2019, the European Commission assessed the cultural richness, creative economy and favorable environment of 79 cities (50,000 to 250,000 inhabitants). In this rating, Liepāja ranked only 61st. In comparison, Tartu (Estonia) is in 5th place, while Klaipėda (Lithuania) is in 24th place. So we have a way to go to catch up with our (ECoC) neighbours and success will mean closing that gap!

Another success measure is to establish the New Media Arts Center and to apply for Liepāja to become one of the UNESCO Creative Cities in Media Arts and to develop this genre of contemporary art together with Košice, Braga, Lyon and other cities.





## Monitoring and evaluation milestones

### Preparatory stage

2022

- Recruiting a team member to work on M and E
- Starting establishing a baseline from existing data
- Carrying out the mapping of the creative sector
- Approving the M and E financing mechanism and action plan

2023

- Procurement announcement to attract individual partners
- Concluding agreements with M and E partners
- Establishment of an M and E expert group
- Finalising the baseline studies
- Development of a digital data collection and analysis tool
- First annual data collection and analysis, feedback Liepāja 2027

2024

- Work on research – necessary surveys, defining and identifying primary and secondary data sources collection and analysis
- Review and improve the quality of data sources
- Annual data collection and analysis, feedback Liepāja 2027

2025

- Publication of basic research
- Annual data collection and analysis, feedback and recommendations Liepāja 2027

2026

- Annual data collection and analysis, feedback and recommendations Liepāja 2027
- Reviewing measures to improve the quality of data sources

### European Capital of Culture year

2027

- Collection and analysis of current ECoC activity data, feedback Liepāja 2027
- Development and approval of a plan for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the ECoC from 2028 onwards

### ECoC impact period – ex-post evaluation

2028

- Data collection and analysis
- Final survey, data collection, ECoC Review Conference – Impact on Culture, Education, Public Involvement, Public Health, Tourism, Economy and Environment
- Publication of ECoC 2027 report

2030

- Carrying out an interim study
- Data collection and analysis

2035

- Carrying out a study on the long-term impact of the ECoC on the development of the next cultural strategy

## Sharing results

Liepāja's residents gave us a mandate and confidence to start and implement the project. So we want to show them that their faith in us was justified and that we are making progress along our journey of (un)rest.

Information on the foundation's activities, strategic plans, achieved goals, challenges and also the evaluation of its activities will be **regularly published** on the website of the Liepāja 2027 Foundation, in social networks and in national and international communication channels.

Partners will be involved in the dissemination of the results, including those working on the ECoC impact assessment.

In 2028, we will organise a special event dedicated to the evaluation of the ECoC, in which we will invite research groups to share their experiences and final conclusions about Liepāja 2027.

This valuable data will also be used in the creation of artistic works, such as light installations depicting newly created compositions in Liepāja, colour mosaics from data on different ages, nationalities, and perhaps also a sound installation from the range of genres shown in 2027. Already during the development of the application, members of the **IT sector, programmers and students** of New Media Art at the Liepāja University came up with the first offers and fantastic ideas about potential applications. May the creativity of (un)rest continue!



# Cultural and artistic content

## Q5

### Artistic vision and strategy for the cultural programme

Liepāja is a port city, blown and shaken by the harsh winds. It looks proudly to the horizon. Our city has always dreamed of mighty shores and boldly sets its course on them. We have always been between sea and land, between East and West, between archaic and modern, traditional and innovative, international and local, volatile and stable, between rest and unrest. We are the gatekeepers – the wind blows from our city all across Latvia and all across Europe. We want to make people navigators of (un)rest. Everyone who lives in the territory of ECoC and everyone who lives outside of it is invited to bravely navigate the stormy sea with us. Whether people connect from here or from abroad, whether through participating, connecting online, visiting or co-creating – the (un)rest journey towards the five goals we have defined is universally adaptable by other people and other places.

**Our vision is to reach the other shore, to achieve the goals we have defined in Q1 – finding our Europeanness and pluralistic groove again. Embracing both, diversity and a sense of home. Protecting our Baltic Sea and environment. Connecting with the European and international flow. Being smart about the big revolution that are happening through technology and climate change.**

We want this vision to be poetic enough for people at home to buy into the idea (because deep at heart we are the lonely farmer who reads poetry by candlelight). On the other hand, we want our vision to be understandable for other Europeans, we want it to be quantifiable and accountable. Hence it is translated into an artistic programme (Q6), an outreach approach (Q14–16), an evaluation model (Q4) and a legacy (Q3).

#### Artistic strategy

To help us understand each other better, to promote social activity and also growth for a healthy dose of rest and unrest, we will create a wide and varied cultural programme. Through it we want to experience

and articulate time and space not only in Liepāja and Latvia but also **as part of Europe and the world**, to be aware of where we come from, to understand the times we live in and to anticipate change, becoming skilful way-markers and an important networking point in Europe. Learning to balance without becoming static and reacting to events around us – without becoming confused. To acquire the right tools to shape the future and to activate citizens' participation.

Art and culture have always been a sensor and a mirror of their time. Finding new, creative solutions, offering alternative stories, making a statement, not necessarily giving concrete answers, but giving the knowledge to deal with the reality of the moment and offering unexpected solutions for the possibilities of the future. How will we do it?

**... define the topics.** Through extensive research, involving people and organisations, studying European and global current affairs, evaluating artistic processes, we have defined the themes that we think need to be brought to the fore, to be stirred up, to be made visible to the general public.

We have organised this broad range of themes into five programme lines. We imagine them as great, noble ships, each suited to its task.

...(steamboat, sailing ship, ferry, icebreaker, tanker)...

**Port Paradox** – questions of identity, how to remain authentic in this standardised world?

**European Dream** – European values, what is the European dream?

**New Eyes** – exploring the local (your backyard, your neighbour, your country, your world)

**Deliberate Modesty** – awareness, sustainability, climate change, green mindset

**Creative Foresight** – anticipating the future, evolution of technology, active education of the younger generation

**... choose suitable event formats.** Cultural and artistic events will be creative tools to bring these different themes to life, turning them into action. And precisely because society is so diverse, the formats will be different too.

The artistic programme will include conferences, debates, festivals, niche events, workshops, creative residencies, open project competitions, concerts, performances, art in public space, new media art, animation, theatre, readings, hikes, staged adventures in nature, exhibitions and events in new cultural spaces, degraded areas, etc.

Often, an event in our programme includes several activities, offering different perspectives on a theme. For example, the project Face to Face with the Natural includes a festival, workshops and expert conversations.

**... involve people.** Our artistic vision is to involve everyone who is ready to be involved in the (un)rest process. We need different points of view, different fields represented, knowledge, experience and a willingness to work together. Therefore, our allies are the whole society, which we will call Task Force (Un)Rest on this journey, where cultural organisations, creative industries, NGOs, educational institutions, companies, independent artists, professionals from different fields – environment, sports, business and IT, volunteers, Community Whisperers and (un)rest Ambassadors will participate as both co-creators and audience.

**... grow (muscles and ...) capacity.** As we set out, we realise that our ability and capacity to deliver the entire artistic programme depends to a large extent on the capacity of Task Force (Un)Rest, so we will already carry out a number of capacity-building activities in the run-up to the ECoC programme:

- Developing ecodesign guidelines for sustainable event design, more on this in Q6 Face to Face with the Natural
- Cultural Renovation Programme (Q14–15), for which we will implement:
  - Strengthening the creative industry in cooperation with Liepāja Business Incubators and D10 Centre
  - Establishment of an NGO Incubator
- Establishment of a volunteer platform and a Community Whisperers programme
- Audience development (Q14–16)

#### From outer space into the European dimension

What have we learnt from the ECoC-openings we have attended? It is extremely important to take into account the view from the outside, the visitors' experience of the programme, especially for those who are unfamiliar with the local language, local legends and context.

In the light of these Aha-moments we decided to make the **view from the outside** an artistic strategy as much as a practical approach to the European dimension. The view from the outside and **practicalities of the European dimension** (Q11) like language and easy navigation for foreigners will also be strong guiding principles in the marketing approach (see Q38–39).

#### Building a legacy

D10 United, Circulation of Creative Forces and NGO Incubator are our main tools for **capacity building**.

Supporting the independent NGOs to build capacities, involving the welcoming sector, the social sector, and our volunteers programme are key to make the artistic vision a sustainable reality that will have a sell-by date far beyond the 31 December 2027.

It's not like we don't have capable people – but perhaps the stimuli to incentivise a critical number of them to up their game are not frequent or strong enough. **Cultural Renovation** is that part of our artistic action plan where we will keep pushing our cultural institutions and artists to grow their **artistic ambition and international network**. The European Capital of Culture can become that incentive, that stimulus to make that extra effort in artistic quality and excellence, in international outreach – towards partners but also towards international audiences.

**Q6****Cultural and artistic programme and structure****Port Paradox**

Inviting adventurous Europeans into our city of paradoxes

**New Eyes**

Seeing ourselves and our neighbourhoods with New Eyes through European spectacles

**Creative Foresight**

Harnessing innovations and technologies emerging at the horizon for arts and learning

**European Dream**

Making (un)rest our navigation plan on our discovery journey towards the European Dream

**Deliberate Modesty**

Practising how Deliberate Modesty impacts our shared Baltic Sea and environment

## Pūt, vējiņi! (Blow, wind, blow!)

/ Opening Event

"Blow, wind, blow, drive my boat, take me to Kurzeme". These are the first lines of an ancient folk song that comes close to describing the tenacious and enterprising nature of the Kurzeme people. But the wind of 2027 also blows us out of Liepāja and **towards Europe and the world beyond**. Our idea for the opening event revolves around this song that for centuries has flowed like a deep river in the blood of the Kurzeme people and echoed in the heartbeats of the whole nation.

The inaugural event will be a cultural odyssey in which we challenge and unite our commonalities and our differences through song. Allowing travellers to meet fellow Europeans, enriching, learning from each other and interacting with the cultural heritage and accumulated life messages of Europe's diverse peoples. The opening show will allow the individual characters of the European cultures and their bright colours to shine through.

We will launch a symbolic ship into the Liepāja Canal – perhaps a hologram, a flying sailing ship on a crane, it might be a colourful construction made by craftsmen and local residents. The ship will carry a group of **traditional singers from Rucava, Otanki and Suiti** – ancient inhabitants of Kurzeme. They come from different cultural spaces in Kurzeme with a very specific traditional dress and authentic culture. One of the interesting features of their intangible cultural heritage is "dialogue" singing. The cheeky remarks of one of them frame the repetitive melodies of the others,

and the dialogue is spontaneously improvised and without predefined content. At the opening event of the European Capital of Culture 2027, we will symbolically and culturally connect by singing traditional songs from different European nations. On the platforms on the banks of the canal, those whom the Suiti meet on their (un)rest trip will appear. For example, the **Bertsolari from the Basque Country**, who sing their jokes and funny remarks out loud. They will connect with Suiti women in a singing dialogue, the **Gstanzl singers from Austria** with their comical jokes, the **Battorina singers from Sardinia**, who might challenge women with their cheeky wisdom. The channel will feature Latvian and European voices in dialogue – joking, bantering, provoking each other – always meeting at eye level and with a smile!

For the European Capital of Culture, it will echo both our Kurzeme identity code and our programme concept of (un)rest, which will accompany and guide us in the vast waters of Europe and the world. Maintaining and strengthening the **common values that unite Europe** – is this not the true European dream?

The European Capital of Culture 2027 opening activities will be a celebration not only in Liepāja, it will reverberate throughout the whole Kurzeme region. A big variety of smaller events of different genres will be bustling lively in the city and its surroundings, every café, square and park, cultural venue and indeed the streets will invite you to discover, enrich and to unite.

**Budget:** EUR 400 000

# Port Paradox

## Rock the Rock

/ Music Festival

The closed city of Liepāja became a rebel city in the second half of the 20th century. A real paradox of the 20th century. The Soviet naval base became the capital of Soviet rock music. Brave rock musicians and composers in Liepāja promoted the idea of freedom and independence for Latvia, which was implemented in 1990. These pioneers of freedom are now gentlemen and ladies in their prime. But they can still rock!

In 2027, the alternative music concert agency **Circle Pit Shows** and **Summer Sound**, one of Latvia's largest music festivals, will join forces to create and offer European listeners a rare phenomenon in Latvian music life – a two-day city music festival Rock the Rock.

Rock the Rock is intended as a comprehensive and inclusive rock festival. It will focus not only on the usual associations, but will also allow you to see the rock music scene in the broadest sense – without neglecting the values of classical rock music and not forgetting the deepest layers and genres of rock, giving each listener the opportunity to compose a close, unique musical experience. This iconic event will play with the city's concert venues, each creating its own unique atmosphere. The festival will also spill into South Kurzeme, supplementing the evening programme with day concerts in public places both inside and outside the city.

Rock the Rock will form a link between different eras. 44 groups and performers and up to 20,000 listeners will gather in 7 cultural places of Liepāja city and region and ten times more – through digital channels.

On the stage, on the beach, in the legendary Concert Garden Pūt, Vējiņi! in Jūrmala park, clubs and cultural places in the city and region, we will celebrate the diversity of rock music. From indie-rock to postmetal / hardcore, from classical rock to post-punk rock / darkwave and from metal to avant-garde.

On Saturday afternoon, on one of the open-air stages, we will also open up the city's young talents. Admiring the performance of our **Pop-Rock School** and **Liepāja Music School** youngsters, who are constantly honing their skills day after day. In between the concerts, we also plan to organise talks, meetings and lectures, where local musicians and foreign guests will share their experiences. For example, **Le Festival Musiques Interdites** from Marseille will talk about their festival, which since 2004 has been rehabilitating musical repertoires banned by the Nazis and other totalitarian regimes.

Within the framework of the festival, an exhibition of 20th century Latvian and Eastern European rock history and "archaeology" will take place in the digital environment, where its oldest roots will be "unearthed"

and explored. The organisers have approached **Latvian and foreign bands** and have already agreed with many of them, including indie/rock band Efterklang from Denmark, Slovenian rock band Laibach, indie/experimental band Cleaning Women from Finland, Latvian metal band Skyforger, punk rock band Johnny & The Burnouts and others.

**Partners of Rock the Rock:**

**Local partners:** Organisers Circle Pit Shows and Summer Sound, Concert Garden Pūt, Vējiņi!, Culture House Wiktorija, Fontaine Palace Club, Culture Places Kursas Putni and Wise, Liepāja Music, Art and Design Secondary School, Liepāja Pop Rock School, Bands Colt, Līvi, Skyforger, The Sound Poets, Dzelzs Vilks, Pērkons, Pienvedēja Piedzīvojumi etc.  
**International partners:** Le Festival Musiques Interdites (FR), Rock Bands Efterklang (DK), Laibach (SI), Shishi (LT), Cleaning Women (FI), Veonity (SE), etc.

**Budget:** EUR 350 000

## Locus Mundi

/ Art Exhibitions

In 2027, locals and visitors will have the opportunity to visit two great exhibitions depicting Liepāja as a City of Paradox. Works of art by Latvian classics at the **Liepāja Museum** (Locus Mundi: Now). And the contemporary art exhibition Locus Mundi: Then, organised by the **Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art** in an industrial hangar on the former Liepājas Metalurģs metallurgical plant.

### Locus Mundi: Now

Locus Mundi: Now is conceived as an international contemporary art project in which artists are invited to create new works in dialogue with the history and specificity of the site. Tracing the city's transformations through time, and exploring Liepāja's identity in a contemporary context. How does the spirit of a place (genius loci) change as a result of historical, economic, political or cultural changes? At what point is it replaced by the spirit of the world (genius mundi), washing the specific phenomenon of place into the ocean of globalisation? Following the footprints of history in Liepāja, we can trace the steps of Duke Jacob, the city's ambitious rise during the Russian Empire, and the fluctuations of economic, political and cultural development from the time of the first Latvian Free State, through the decades of Soviet occupation to the present day.

The Loci method is a long-established memory enhancement technique that uses the visualisation of a recognisable environment or a specific place to recall information. Artists will be invited to create their

own works in response to this method. Artists born in Liepāja will be invited to participate in the exhibition: **Ēriks Božis, Ieva Epnere, Ieva Rubeze, Raids Kalniņš, Gints Gabrāns** and other Latvian artists, as well as artists from other countries. To name just a few: Stockholm-based video and performance artist from Zimbabwe Santiago Mostyn, Estonian artist Kristina Norman, whose interdisciplinary practice includes video installations, sculptural objects, urban interventions, Polish artist Janek Simon, Istanbul-born artist who questions identity, borders, bureaucracy, language barriers and translation, Meriç Algün Ringborg, Behzad Khosravi Noori, born in Tehran, analyses contemporary history with the aim of returning to memories beyond the mind, Forensic Architecture – an interdisciplinary research group that uses architectural methods and technologies to investigate cases of state violence and human rights violations around the world, Croatian artist and writer Dora Budor from New York, Estonian artist Flo Kasearu who works with different social processes, current themes such as freedom, public and private space, Turkish conceptual artist Ahmet Ögüt who works with a wide range of media, Finnish artist Pilvi Takala who uses performative actions, to transform social structures and question the normative rules and truths of our behaviour in their cultural contexts, surrealist-inspired Eva Kotatkova, whose artistic vocabulary combines sculpture, text and performance, exploring the relationship between private and personal, public and authoritarian spheres.

### Locus Mundi: Then

In parallel, the Liepāja Museum will host the exhibition Locus Mundi: Then showing historical works of art whose authors' life paths have brought them to Liepāja. Several of the artists in the exhibition were born in Liepāja and the region (Kārlis Zāle, Augusts Annus, Jānis Gailis, Rūdolfs Priede, Roberts Stārosts, Artūrs Baumanis), for others Liepāja was the last stop before going into exile (Niklāvs Strunke) or it was the last stop for their work (Hermanis Aplociņš, Jānis Sudmalis, Kārlis Fridrihs Šaumanis, Kārlis Celmiņš, Nora Drapče). By exhibiting the works of these artists together, the viewer is offered the opportunity to see a cross-section of historical processes from one local vantage point – Liepāja – which, by following the artists' lives, allows one to see the geopolitical map of the world in an unusual focus.

The Liepāja Museum's exhibition Locus Mundi: Then forms a bridge between the past and the future, indicating the changing nature of this city. Unintentionally pointing out that Liepāja is not only a windswept port but also, thanks to trade connections and shipping links with **Europe, Russia, the USA, Canada**, has brought international influences. It has literally sifted and absorbed the grains of the world's breath. That is why it is very important for us, alongside the exhibition of paintings by the classics of Latvian art, to show the works of artists who, as long- or short-term residents of Liepāja, managed to find their place in professional art, taking part of their Kurzeme mentality with them to the world. The wave of emigration from Liepāja to the USA also broke into the fate of the world-famous artist **Mark Rothko**, who left here (Liepāja) with his family in search of a better life.

The exposition will be created in collaboration with the exhibition curator, **Dr. art. Aija Brasliņa**, Head of the Collections and Scientific Research Department of the **Latvian National Museum of Art**. It will also reveal the influence of world art painting in the works of the great Latvian classics, which was gained from travel notes, studies, and masterclasses.

Interacting with the exposition created by the Liepāja Museum, contemporary artists will be invited to enter into a dialogue with their predecessors, making references to historical works of art, integrating them into their new works, modulating historical interpretations, creating new stories in which the present meets the past. In this way, historical works of art will find a contemporary reflection in Locus Mundi: Now that reaches beyond the museum walls and speaks to the audience in the city's public space and industrial heritage zone.

Alongside the exhibitions, we will also celebrate the development of art genres in Liepāja over the 100 years since the Liepāja Art School was founded in Liepāja, together with the **Liepāja School of Music, Art and Design** – by organising participatory exhibitions in urban spaces, shop windows and city art galleries, inviting artists from Liepāja and the region – professionals and amateurs, students and budding artists – to take part.

#### Partners of Locus Mundi:

**Local partners:** Artists Ieva Epnere, Ieva Rubeze, Raids Kalniņš, Gints Gabrāns, Ēriks Božis, Curator Dr. Art. Aija Brasliņa, Latvian National Centre for Culture, Latvian National Museum of Art, Liepāja Museum, Liepāja Music, Art and Design Secondary School, Art gallery Romas Dārzs, Art Salon Ludviķis  
**International partners:** Artists Eva Kotatkova (CZ), Santiago Mostyn (SE/ZW), Kristina Norman (EE), Janek Simon (PL), Meriç Algün Ringborg (TR), Behzad Khosravi Noori (IR), Dora Budor (HR/US), Flo Kasearu (EE), Ahmet Ögüt (TR), Pilvi Takala (FI), Klaipeda Branch of Lithuanian Photographers Association (LT), Association Arts Zone (LT), Lithuanian Artists' Association Kaunas Department (LT), Kaunas 2022 (LT)

**Budget:** EUR 380 000

## upWIND downWIND

/ Wind Celebration

Liepāja is the city where the wind is born. Once you visit you will believe in it, too. Whether it's a refreshing breeze in the summer or a violent autumn storm that shakes you to the bone, a warming breeze in the spring, or a whirlwind of winter snow. Liepāja is a city of wind. That is why upWind downWind is a celebration of the wind. The wind can be soothing and therapeutic, or vice versa – a work-inspiring or wind of change! The wind can create art and music, the wind helps in sports and shouting through the wind can heal the soul. In the Netherlands, it is recommended to go out "uitwaaien – blow out" and with us you can really do it. Energy for free!

We will start the festival in 2025, in the **Concert Hall Great Amber** with the art installation Wind Observatory, which will be created by Latvian multi-artist **Voldemārs Johansons**. A special device, which will be placed on the roof of the concert hall, will measure the wind in Liepāja, and the collected data will be instantly

transmitted by light rays projected on a large, specially designed water pool in the concert hall, creating a unique art phenomenon, shapes, waves that change with the wind. Science and art will merge in real time.

We will celebrate Liepāja's windy summer with yacht regattas and sailing championships. Gatherings of kites and boaters, wind kite masterclasses for children with a magnificent parade on the seashore. We will create sand sports competitions, learn new community games from sporting friends from other European countries and celebrate with traditional European non-Olympic sports tournaments. And how about therapeutic barefoot walks on the fine Baltic Sea sand and healthy marathons! In the cold season, we will offer storm-watching hikes in the night hours. And amber-seeking expeditions in the golden morning when the sea is most generous with its bounty. Shouting contests for the angriest Liepāja residents will be accompanied by a brass band and the sound of the sea! And many other unifying upwind and downwind mischiefs that unite communities. We will also invite all independent creatives to develop wind-related programmes and offer them in an open competition for the region's active involvement in celebrating the energy and power of the wind. Let the wind unite us!

### Atmospheric Waves

The Atmospheric Waves project will bridge art and science in combining elements of climate science and environmental arts. Together **with sound artists and scientists from cities around the Baltic Sea** we will organise an exhibition of wind-powered sound installations that respond to changes in social and atmospheric pressure during the anthropocene period – Atmospheric Waves /18 July 2026–18 July 2027/

Climate models and projections often overlook wind, placing emphasis on rising sea levels and temperatures, but wind can signal and accelerate climate disruptions.

Knowledge of climate change can raise anxiety, fear and depression, especially for the younger generation when they think about their future. However, finding ways to work with changing environmental conditions helps overcome our fears and build tangible connections. With the environmental sound art project Atmospheric Waves we want to encourage creative and informed responses when it comes to climate change and conditions of the Anthropocene by offering a range of outlets for artists, scientists and the public that question our fears and build resilience for the uncertain future.

Wind is part of Liepāja's identity – it is said that badminton is a one-person sport in Liepāja. People go kiting, windsurfing, and storm-watching in Liepāja for recreation. Wind is used for energy production. Wind is celebrated in Latvian folksongs. Acclaimed sound artists, climate scientists, students and the public will be welcomed to an international symposium on Wind, Waves and the Anthropocene. A multi-year **Wind Art Residency** programme to develop wind and climate data driven sound art sculptures that communicate large-scale atmospheric processes not visible to the naked eye will promote environmental awareness.

The wind sculpture exhibition will be opened on July 18th 2027 – International World Listening Day held in honour of the Canadian composer, environmentalist, and founder of acoustic ecology **Raymond Murray Schafer** – and will sing a song of encouragement for the younger generations to work towards an adaptive yet sustainable future.

The festival programme is developed by sound artists and **curators Krista Dintere (LV), Anna Priedola (LV) and John Grzinich (US/EE)**, and a developing network of climate-aware sound art practitioners are joining their effort – **Florian Turke (DE/PL)** who builds environment responsive resonant wire instruments, trans-disciplinary artist and soundwalker **Jacek Smolicki (SE)** who initiated an idea to learn about climate observation and listening practises from coastal residents, and other sound artists. **Klaipėda University Marine Research institute** and meteorologists from Latvia and abroad will provide sound artists with data to interpret in sonic installations to help people grasp the long term climate change.

#### Programme:

2026: International Symposium on Wind, Waves and the Anthropocene – lectures, performances and workshops with the younger generation.

2027: Individual residencies in Liepāja and Pāvilosta (South Kurzeme region) to develop site-specific wind-driven sound artworks.

18 July 2027: World Listening Day. The Opening of the Atmospheric Waves exhibition. 3–5 of them – permanent sculptures, others – kept until the storms in November when they are performatively taken down.

#### Partners of upWind downWind:

**Local partners:** Artists Voldemārs Johansons, Krista Dintere, Curator Anna Priedola, Art Research Laboratory of Liepāja University MPLab, Society ASTE. Art, Science, Technology, Education, Electronic Art and Media Centre E-Lab, Concert Hall Great Amber, Liepāja Municipality Sports Department, Latvian Institute of Aquatic Ecology  
**International partners:** Artists Florian Turke (DE/PL), Jacek Smolicki (PL/SE), John Grzinich (US/EE), Aleksandra Grzonkowska (PL), Juan Duarte Regino (FI), Klaipeda University Marine Research Institute (LT), Festival of Traditional European Non-Olympic Sports (FR), Estonian Academy of Arts (EE), Bioart Society (FI), Ars Electronica Festival (AT)

**Budget:** EUR 195 000



## The Karosta Paradox

/ Mixed Media XR/AR Game

Former closed military town – Karosta (War-port) – is a witness of different times, different political systems and the different life-stories of its inhabitants. Artists from **Liepāja University New Media department** will collaborate with game developers, augmented narrative experts from Austrian game development **studio Causa Creations** and IT specialists from **Liepāja Technology Cluster** to develop XR games that let visitors get a glimpse into the challenges and surprises of Karosta's past and future.

First, we will develop an **escape game** which simulates the military control and civic restrictions of the Soviet era and raises discussion about migration. There is a huge stigma regarding EU immigration politics in Latvia, and a big part of society is very selective on what political refugees to welcome in Latvia. As we are learning to open our border for the Ukrainians fleeing the war, we still debate how to relate to Russians potentially escaping the new "iron curtain" dropping on their homeland. We can remember how a lot of Latvians found refuge in other countries when they had to flee from repressive regimes that had occupied Latvian state during the 20th century. It was not easy to escape – there was an intensive border control, spies and whistleblowers among the locals, and even the sand of the beach was ploughed every evening to detect if there are any footsteps approaching the Western border – the sea. Still there were brave men and women that took the chance to escape the oppressive political systems. In the XR game participants will step into the shoes of 20th century emigrants of occupied Latvian territory, and try to find the island of safety in the surveilled border territory.

The second game will model probable impacts of **climate change** in Karosta that lies on the Baltic Sea, and inform about acts that harm environmental systems. How much will the sea level rise by 2050 if we do nothing to stop global warming? Can the beautiful pine trees still grow on the Baltic Sea coast in warmer weather? Will other, more Southern flora move to the Baltic areas? Which plant and animal species can change their habitats so fast? Together with environmental scientists from Liepāja University we will try to answer the worrying questions and model a future that can, but hopefully will never, come true.

To model a brighter future, the third game will challenge the imagination of its users by inviting them to reimagine Karosta in an **AR building game** where they can create 3D sketches of innovative buildings on the currently under-developed Karosta land. What should Karosta be – an industrial centre, a cultural hub or a resort full of fun playgrounds for children and grownups? We will invite Karosta residents and visitors to model their needs and dreams to provide inspiration for the city planners.

An **XR democracy game** will be dedicated to the military heritage of the South Kurzeme region which will restore many surprising facts and constructions in AR, Giving voice to unheard stories of resistance to oppressive regimes, and the role of individual choices in protecting

freedom and democracy. The AR developers will reconstruct the military airbase town Vaiņode which was the former home of the Zeppelin hangars of WWI that were relocated in the 1920s and are used as Rīga Central Market shopping pavilions until today.

Liepāja is a home of many talented programmers and 3D artists who have acquired practical skills in game development. But we want to learn from experienced artistic game developers how to build touching yet engaging and interactive narratives in AR games. Austrian game studio Causa Creations have developed many projects that tackle the issues of migration and climate change, and together we will create engaging XR stories that tell stories important for all Europe through the historic and future scenes of Liepāja.

### Partners of The Karosta Paradox

**Local partners:** Digital Game Creators Ieva Vīksne, Līga Vēliņa, Kaspars Lēvalds, Uldis Hasners, Liepāja University New Media Art Study Programmes, Society ASTE. Art, Science, Technology, Education, Electronic Art and Media Centre E-Lab, Liepāja Technology Cluster, Digital Innovation Park, NGO Karostas Glābšanas Biedrība  
**International partners:** Causa Creations (AT), Trenčín 2026 (SK), ECoC Candidate City Aveiro 2027 (PT)

**Budget:** EUR 170 000

## Karosta Has Balls!

/ Reviving Baltic Heritage

The history of Latvia is not only the history of the Latvian people. Our common story consists of the history of Livonia, the Duchy of Courland, the Duchy of Pārdaugava, the Swedish Vidzeme and the Baltic provinces of the Russian Empire. The Latvian nation was formed over many centuries and was formed from various ethnocultural groups, the largest of which were the ancestors of **Latvians, the Russians and the Baltic Germans, but also the Livs, Jews, Poles, Lithuanians and Estonians** living in the territory. The presence and contribution of all these nations was invaluable and together they formed an independent state of Latvia on 18 November 1918.

Karosta is a rich port of testimony to the history of our country. The closed military part of the city was ruled by different powers and people of different nationalities. We want to reveal the multicultural and paradoxical nature of Liepāja's cultural history to Europe and to ourselves. Helping to strengthen the connection between the positive processes of cultural exchange and migration, and to stimulate creative thinking.

That is why we have decided to hold breathtaking balls at the Officers' House in Karosta, which was designed by St. Petersburg's best architects. We will look back on multiculturalism and diversity by looking back at the past of our nation. In 2027, we will hold four seasonal and themed balls.

**Winter.** Surrounded by the strong frost and snow of February, in the light of bright chandeliers and beautiful costumes, we will, as aristocrats, walk the polonaise and let waltz whirl in the memories and stories of the late 19th century.

**Spring.** In the month of May, we will celebrate the Wedding of the People by jumping Polish mazurkas, singing Russian chastushki and dancing in the playfully changing metres of Jewish klezmer music.

**Summer.** July and the time of rose blossom will come with an ancient garden festival in Kuldīga – Duke Jacob’s Ball in Kuldīga City Garden, where we will enjoy the preserved authenticity of the former capital of Duke Jacob, decorate and compete in fine gardening (which was considered one of the high arts in the distant times of enlightenment) and enjoy together the dance in summer and the beauty it brings!

**Autumn.** On November 19, we will close with the thematic ball of the National Day, where we will draw inspiration in the musical heritage of our allied countries – England, France, America – of the 20th century. Roaring twenties, Goldene Zwanziger, Jazz Age, Karosta-Versailles – and this time it’s available to everyone!

Each ball will be complemented by additional activities and prepared with exciting expert readings and dance lessons about the era and its Zeitgeist-world spirit.

Charity campaigns, as was usual at fine balls, will dedicate donations to social organisations. Patronage is a rare phenomenon in Latvia. It must be strengthened!

#### Partners of Karosta Has Balls!

**Local partners:** Researchers Vēsma Lēvalde and Ilze Valce, Ministry of Defence, Event Producers Sarmants and Water Birds, Liepāja Ballet and Dance Studio, Choreography Studio KĀ, Liepāja Music Orchestra, Kuldīga Cultural Centre, Kuldīga Museum, Polish, Jewish and other local Liepāja National minority NGOs

**International partners:** Goethe-Institut Riga (DE/LV), The Klezmer Institut (US), Klezmer Music Foundation (US), Maxwell Street Klezmer Band (US), Swedish Klezmer Association (SE)

**Budget:** EUR 160 000

## Tell Me a Story, Liepāja

/ Storytelling in the Public and Digital Space

The history of Liepāja is rich and multi-layered, and not fully told. The lost testimonies, the hidden primary sources, the untold traumas, the censored truth is the story not only of a small European city on the Eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, but of a truly important cultural and historical memory in the context of Europe and all the places where Liepājans emigrated to in greater numbers.

Tell Me a Story will allow the city itself to tell its story in different ways – that are also understandable for our foreign visitors:

Liepāja. Culture. Memory – carefully researched cultural-historical material about Liepāja from the late 19th century to the early 21st century.

Liepāja in the Clouds – a digital reproduction of the previously prepared material with the possibility to complement it with the contribution of the European Capital of Culture-stories, music, live broadcasts, new discoveries, memories.

Pop-up Story Book – large-scale installation in the urban space that connects the story of Liepāja with the (un)rest of 2027.

## Liepāja. Culture. Memory

The story of Liepāja has yet to be collected as a whole. Previously it has only been studied in fragments. In preparation for 2027, we have invited a strong and knowledgeable team of authors, writers and researchers to create a more holistic collection of material – Liepāja. Culture. Memory – as a basis for further exploration of our city’s identity. Together with its team leader, editor **Zanda Gūtmane** and scientific consultant **Gunārs Silakaktiņš**, this modern popular-science material on Liepāja’s cultural history will present the historical “fixed points of memory” (Jan Assmann) from the late 19th century to the early 21st century.

The initial format will be a book of about 350 pages, inspired by Umberto Eco’s History of Beauty.

But the material produced will not remain on the shelf. It will become a digital Liepāja in the Cloud and through being made available for further artistic production it has the potential of creatively transferring “memory points” to society, promoting the emergence of new cultural products – one of the first being the Pop-up Story Book.

As we sketch the content, we realise this as our gift towards Europe, to tell our story as a whole. Thank you, Europe, for making us go on this (un)rest journey that we would have not undertaken alone.

We will look at the influence of late 19th century German-Baltic culture and Russification, the beginning of industrialisation and the city’s heyday, to the early 20th century under Tsarist Russia, the growth of the military power of Karosta war port, and the period when steamship traffic to New York was active and Liepāja became an important centre of emigration of European peoples. The role of Liepāja as a temporary capital and headquarters of our European allies (France, England, USA) in the establishment of the Latvian Republic. We will also share the painful memories of the Nazi and Stalinist regimes, the deportations of the population and, ultimately, the Holocaust that ended the lives of so many Jews in Šķēde.

We will put these stories together as a single picture with a happy ending – the awakening and regaining of independence, the connection with Western culture through diaspora integration, the return to Europe in the 21st century, the signs of a gradual change of identity, the losses and the gains.

One addition we have already agreed on with **the curator Edgars Lāms, the Chapter of the Latvian Writers’ Union** and its members – to compile a collection of literary works – poetry, prose – that mention Liepāja and literature that originated in Liepāja – Liepāja in Literature, Literature in Liepāja.

## Liepāja in the Clouds

How did Liepāja become the most important military base of the Russian Empire and later the capital of Latvian rock music? How do the winds sound on Liepāja beach and where are the best parties inspired by Liepāja’s writers and artists?

Based on Zanda Gūtmane’s research described above, we will create a **digital platform and mobile app** Liepāja in the Clouds, which will capture the untamed spirit of (un)rest that is unique to Liepāja, exploring the city and its most exciting events from the point of view of its inhabitants.

The mobile app will serve both as a navigation tool in the extensive ECoC programme and as an independent work of art. Gathering legends and stories about life in Liepāja sent in by Liepāja residents, which will be put into an exciting form by storytellers from Kuldīga and Liepāja in collaboration with Theatre actors and digital artists. In augmented reality (AR) it will be possible to meet the virtual storytellers of Liepāja, who, as the user walks along the streets of Liepāja and its surrounding districts, will at every corner allow them to discover stories known only to locals and the most important historical events that took place there. **Initiative Follow the Neighbour** will develop a self-guided walk with stories of Liepāja residents, designed as conversations between neighbours who have not known each other before. Creating a sense of belonging for young Liepājans and allowing visitors to see the city through local eyes.

We will invite Liepāja residents to submit local legends as a gift to the city on Liepāja’s 400th birthday in 2025, and by 2027 they can be integrated into the digital platform and available in different languages.

Liepāja is the home of media art – it should be accessible in the global digital space! This will also allow people who cannot afford to travel for physical or financial reasons to experience and get to know Liepāja. It will also invite guests to meet on the virtual streets of Liepāja and discuss the uploaded artworks and share their impressions after experiencing virtual wind sessions.

## Pop-up Story Book in the Urban Space

We will create the story of Liepāja in the form of a large-format pop-up book in the urban space. Making forgotten memories accessible to everyone and filling them with live storytelling through performances, music and dance.

One example of a pop-up book activation meant as a healing intervention is the **Hungarian-Australian filmmaker Peter Hegedus**, who for the first time will screen his long-running immersive film about the tragic events of 1941, when more than 3,000 Jews were exterminated.

Throughout the calendar year, everyone who comes to Liepāja will have the opportunity to get to know the cheerful and the not so cheerful, explore and understand the city’s history, and find orientations for the way ahead.

This project is a tribute to the people of Liepāja themselves, emphasising that our history is the reason for building a shared future for our children and grandchildren. It will be a story of tolerance and mutual understanding, respectful memories, protecting this fragile fabric of the world. Historical material, personal stories will be discovered and passed on to people today – to the local inhabitants of Liepāja and to the (virtual) visitors of the city.

#### Partners of Tell Me a Story, Liepāja:

**Local partners:** Editor Zanda Gūtmane, Scientific Consultant Gunārs Silakaktiņš, Curator Edgars Lāms, Researchers Vēsma Lēvalde, Anda Kuduma, Inna Gile, Maija Meiere-Oša, Sigita Ignatjeva, Designer Ieva Vīriņa, Actor Gatis Maliks, Liepāja Theatre, Uniting History Foundation, Liepāja University, Kurzeme Institute of Humanities, Liepāja Chapter of the Latvian Writers’ Union, Kurzeme Cultural Heritage Centre Kūrava  
**International partners:** Researchers Daļa Kiseļūnaite (LT), Peter Hegedus (AU), Marek Głuszko (PL), Klaipeda University (LT), Nova Gorica 2025 (SI)

**Budget:** EUR 234 000

## The Phantom of the Library

/ 250th Anniversary of Liepāja Library

A modern library is more than a collection of books open to the public. Over the last 250 years, the function of the library has completely changed. Especially now, in the 21st century, when, on the one hand, with the availability of technology, almost any information is just a click away and for a large part of society the library is not part of the daily itinerary and, frankly, never has been. But on the other hand, we see the library as a respectful public space solution in Liepāja. A resource for increasing the active part of society. A valuable player also for strengthening the Liepāja University as a strong scientific centre, as well as a place for improving education across all age groups. In Liepāja, the creation of a modern library has been on the agenda for some time, and the preparation of the ECoC application has significantly accelerated the process.

## Found in Archive

We consider the first step – the research in Liepāja Old Library’s collections together with European partners – as an important step for the future. And one which will take place independently of the new infrastructure. As the first public library in the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia, the holdings of the Liepāja Stadt- und Lesebibliothek still contain valuable reading material on natural sciences, geography, history, medicine, law, art, travelogues, fiction, encyclopaedias, periodicals, and much more. The valuable collection is mostly in German, but also includes books in French, Latin, Latvian, Polish, Dutch, Russian. In order to provide access to these valuable materials to a wide international audience, the **Liepāja Central Scientific Library** in cooperation with the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia, the Liepāja University and the University of Greifswald is developing a three-phase (two years each) project. The results will be transformed into a beautiful travelling exhibition, which will be shown not only in Liepāja, but also in Latvian embassies in various European countries.

## Found in Translation

Another important area is the creation of new literature, the development of writing and the translation of literature into different European languages. Together with the **Liepāja University Writing Studies, the Chapter of the Latvian Writers' Union** and other partners, we will implement both these activities in residences in Liepāja and the regions.

Together with **Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) in Kaunas, Lithuania and the Tartu Writers' Union, Estonia**, we will promote translations and new works of Baltic literature. Also, GO!2025 partner **Razpotja Magazine** has agreed to publish translations into Slovenian in Razpotja Magazine. For a start, in cooperation with **Šiaures Atenai**, the largest Lithuanian literary newspaper, we will publish translated poetry by Lithuanian Edmunds Untulis, translated by **Liepāja writers** Jana Egle, Gunta Šnipke, Sandra Vensko, Laura Andersone, Dace Pūre and Valentin, who are currently participating in Kaunas 2022 cultural events. The activists of **Liepāja Book Club** want to implement poetry yoga – a yin yoga class synchronised with poetry. All these collaborations will come together in September 2027 at the Poetry Days – Found in Translation, bringing events to unusual urban places such as garage roofs, courtyards, and squares.

### Partners The Phantom of the Library:

**Local partners:** Writers and editors Linda Zulmane, Gunta Šnipke, Jana Egle, Sandra Vensko, Laura Andersone, Dace Pūre, Liepāja Central Scientific Library, 42 Libraries Across the South Kurzeme Region, Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia, Liepāja University Writing Study Programmes, Liepāja Book Club, Liepāja Chapter of The Latvian Writers' Union

**International partners:** Artist Amble Skuse (SC), Tartu Writers Union (EE), Palanga Library (LT), Palanga Resort Museum (LT), Kaunas 2022 (LT), Magazine Razpotja (SI), Literary Festival Mesto Knjige (SI), Berlin Public Art Lab (DE), Greifswald University (DE), Šiaures Atenai Newspaper (LT), Vytautas Magnus University (LT), Oulu 2026 (FI), Nova Gorica 2025 (SI), European Latvian Association, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan (AZ)

**Budget:** EUR 181 000

# European Dream

## Agora of Values

/ Democracy in Action

As we are working on this programme Europeans are attacking Europeans in an act of unspeakable aggression. The European Dream is rather turning into a European nightmare. Now more than ever, we must stand together and hold fast to values of democracy, dialogue and inclusion.

There are many opportunities for the European dream and democracy in the digital development which races ahead. And at least as many threats. It is our task in Europe today to find out how the dream needs to be adapted to the contemporary world. So that the European dream will stay an ideal and something to aspire to for future generations.

And figuring out the European dream is one of the top priorities for us and for any ECoC. So we have dreamed up a fantastic project, running throughout the year in a series of weekend "Agoras" – a mix of culture, discussion and debate about creating the Europe of our dreams.

So, with the brightest minds from Latvia and Europe we plan a **cycle of five forums** held in different parts of Liepāja. They will include discussions, seminars, and debates on artificial intelligence and democracy, big data and freedom, genetic engineering and equality, social media and privacy, attitudes towards life and death, human suffering and euthanasia, issues of democracy and information. Experts, activists and dreamers from different European schools of thought will exchange their perceptions, views, visions, introspections and reflections.

This is not meant as an expert forum only. Rather through new and inclusive methods of participant engagement we will embrace a wide audience, including students, citizens of all ages to fully immerse themselves in sharing and shaping the European Dream.

The forums themselves are grouped into five thematic clusters, each focussing on areas of **key relevance** and importance for Europe and the world:

**Forum 1 European Democracy**

**Forum 2 Green Transformation – Saving the Baltic Sea**

**Forum 3 Memento Mori – Life and Its Usual End**

**Forum 4 Digital Transformation**

**Forum 5 Global Europe**

We want to draw conclusions – from the ideas, proposals and insights expressed throughout the Agora of Values – creating a call to action and a reshaping of the European Dream so that it is fit for the late 2020s. And we also plan to connect the Agora to our major Youth FORUM taking place at the end of 2027. Young participants will be invited to use the material of the Agora of Values to support their own work and help set out the content and activities (see project Youth FORUM at the end of the programme). Additionally, we will invite a group of animation artists to turn the actions and activities of the Agora – including the events, stories, activities and joyful encounters of the project – into an animated film about democratic values.

## Forum 1 European Democracy

The crisis of democracy, authoritarian tendencies, the rise of nationalism, extremism – even war: from an individual perspective, the scale of these global processes seem daunting but the processes themselves are so far-reaching and complex that we are overwhelmed by a sense of powerlessness and a conviction that we have no control over them. Together with **Ascendum**, a non-governmental organisation/society committed to strengthening democratic values, protecting human rights, reducing discrimination, and building an empathetic, educated and civically active society, we will create a three-day series of events where we will take a step back from threatening messages and emotionally cold notions to focus on the centre of democracy – the human being.

In these three days, we want to show that democracy is about friendship and cooperation, it gives everyone the opportunity to be part of a community. Instead of the heavy rhetoric used by the media and politicians, the programme will invite action and conversation in a bright, playful and inclusive way, using culture as the main platform for communication. This is how the three-day programme will work:

**Democracy for non-ideal people.** In the programme, we will talk about a form of society for non-ideal people – a democracy where there is room for everyone.

We will self-ironically play with Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories, we will take as a basis the idea that democracy is like a mother – we expect it to hear all our wishes, even the ones we don't say out loud, and to take care of us in times of need. Meanwhile, faced with the complexity of the world and the freedom that democracy offers, we get confused and, on the contrary, wait for our father's firm hand to tell us how we should really act and live.



To address this dilemma, we will be tackling the "mommy and daddy issues" of people in democracies like this:

**Theatre performance Democracy 2.0.** A performance with elements of psychodrama therapy for young people.

The future of democracy is very much in the hands of young people – they will be the ones to find new ways of living in the increasingly complex world of the 21st century but the future will inevitably have to be built on the foundations left by older generations. What do young people themselves – people born and raised in the 21st century – think about this? What phenomena of modern democracy would they like to keep and what would they like to leave in the past? What are the concerns and contradictions of young people in contemporary democracy? How can they get along with their parents and together overcome the greatest challenges of our time: the climate crisis, the growing dominance of technology in our lives, the rise of populism?

In a theatrical event with young people, award-winning theatre director **Inga Tropa** and renowned child and youth psychotherapist and publicist **Nils Sakss Konstantinovs** will seek answers to these questions. In a multi-week workshop, the professionals will work with young people to discover and define young people's place in contemporary democracy and create a vision of what they imagine its future to be. The result will be a production that will invite audiences of all ages to a conversation about the future of democracy, aiming to foster understanding between different generations and allow young people's voices to be heard.

**An evening of failure stories for non-ideal people.**

In a democracy, we must be able to accept that no one is perfect. So why are we still trying so hard to be perfect and demanding it of others? To relieve some of the tension that inevitably comes with living a life where you are responsible for everything, the programme continues with the **Fuck Up Stories** evening, an event format that has gained worldwide popularity in recent years.

Hosted by the film director **Marta Martinsone** and actress **Marija Linarte**, the Fuck Up Stories evening will bring together well-known public figures to share their experiences of how they tried to be perfect and what came out of it, encouraging everyone to understand that in a democracy there is room and a necessity for our flaws.

**Interactive artwork by Agnese Krivade.** Living in a democracy means constantly taking responsibility – for everyday decisions, for your voice in society, for the environment around you. But how to live better is constantly expressed by the background noise of conflicting opinions, creating anxiety and confusion.

Performance artist, poet and publicist **Agnese Krivade**, whose practice explores the relationship between mind and body on both an individual and political level using ecofeminist principles, inclusivity, movement and meditative pacing, seeks a means to assuage anxiety in society. Especially for Liepāja 2027 Agnese Krivade will create a new interactive and performative installation, using the healing power of contemporary

art to experiment with psychedelia as an alternative to the turbulent existence of contemporary society. The installation will be open to everyone in the city and to visitors, aiming to strengthen people's sense of community and mutual understanding in a time divided by clashes of opinion and life in the bubbles of social networks.

**The Constitution of the Capital of Culture.** What if we could create our own country? During the three-day programme, let us imagine for a moment that Liepāja has become an autonomous state and that its basic principles are in the hands of its own citizens. What do they think the laws and values of a 21st century European city should be? Will the citizens and visitors of the city be able to unite and create the Constitution of Liepāja? Is this even possible?

Over the course of three days, journalist **Rīta Ruduša** and **Henriks Eliass Zēgners**, editor-in-chief and experienced producer of cultural events at **Satori**, an online magazine of culture and independent thought published by the **Ascendum** association will try to find out together with the citizens, while talks and lectures on the challenges of liberalism in contemporary democracy will be held in cooperation with the association of the Rīga-born and world-renowned philosopher of liberalism Isaiah Berlin. The finale will present the Liepāja Constitution and discuss how the values and principles it defines can be put into practice.

**European Dream in the Democracy Quarter in Kuldīga.**

The Democracy Quarter community in Kuldīga is a diverse group of philosophical, scientific and cultural professionals, as well as local enthusiasts, each with their own practices, skills, competences and experience, who form a unique synergy to jointly seek solutions to the challenges of contemporary democracy. Together with the **Kurzeme NGO centre**, both existing and new community activists will create a series of Democracy Festival events throughout 2027, focusing on the theme of the European Dream of a Solidarity Society in different formats and combinations. This bottom-up approach will allow people themselves to articulate more clearly what they mean by a society of solidarity and how it should be strengthened in their own daily lives.

Through a variety of unusual discussion formats, engaging participants in different workshops, using the language of theatre or art to talk about issues, the festival will address challenges such as political apathy, ignorance of one's rights, lack of tolerance and solidarity, segregation of different groups in society, and others.

**International Democracy Residency.** Together with the **Danish organisation We Do Democracy**, experts in the field of participation and developers of the Democracy Garage in Copenhagen, the **Latvian Civic Alliance** and the leading Latvian public policy think tank **Providus**, we will organise an international Democracy Residency for seven thinkers from different disciplines. The residents will interact with each other, the **Kuldīga Democracy Quarter** community and the local community to create their own version of the European dream and how to make it a reality. Finding different creative and innovative points of view will ensure a "grip on reality" by testing the proposed

innovations in a concrete setting – this to reduce the risk that the formulation of the European dream is too elitist and fails to serve as a source of inspiration for the wider public that when confronted with different principles, values and ideals formulated in Europe, all too often tend to experience them as alien.

**Forum 2 Green Transformation – Saving the Baltic Sea**

**The conference.** Together with the **Latvian Investment Development Agency** and its partner **World Wide Fund for Nature**, we will organise an international conference on Baltic Sea resource recovery, potential sustainability practises, innovative solutions, with the following topics and experts from the respective fields:

- A mission approach to Europe's challenges: innovative forms of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary cooperation.
- The role of culture in changing public thinking towards sustainable lifestyles.
- Creating new industries in the field of aquatic ecosystems and developing innovations for a climate-neutral economy.
- The role of regional cooperation in the implementation of the Sea 2030 mission. Scaling competences and innovative water-related solutions.

The Baltic Sea Symphony as a major cultural event as well as individual and collective community engagement activities support and complement Latvia's mission Sea 2030 which aims to address the issues of climate change, pollution and the circular economy. The Baltic Sea needs a coherent plan, coordinated action at both local, national and global level. And it needs citizens who understand their pivotal role and task in the process.

**The Baltic Sea Symphony.** The students of **New Media Art at the Liepāja University** will create a long-term project, monitoring waste on the coast and studying sound pollution in the water. For two years, there will be marine research, cooperation with Baltic Sea hydrobiologists (Sweden, Lithuania, etc.), institutes, and educational institutions. The outcomes will be merged into a contemporary Baltic Sea Symphony, composed by several young composers from different countries for each of the four movements of the symphony for a collaborative work using the research data and sound bits. The Symphony will premiere at The Other Sea Festival. The concert will take place at midnight in the Concert Garden Pūt, Vējiņi! and we will symbolically give this event the design of the Doomsday Clock, which will warn the public about how close we are to the destruction of the world. It will be a metaphor, a reminder of the dangers that await us if we do not act decisively and swiftly. It will be a call to action if we want to save our planet and life on it.

The process will involve 15 – 25 year olds who will attend master classes, monitor and develop ideas for sound and visual design.

**Forum 3 Memento Mori – Life and Its Usual End**

Kurzeme is the region of Latvia with the highest demographic pressure – the number of children, young people and pensioners in relation to the working age population is higher here than in other regions of Latvia. In Latvia as a whole, however, mortality data since 1991 have consistently shown that the number of deaths still far exceeds the number of births.

Also, the perceptions of death are changing and debates on death-related issues such as suicide, terminal illness, abortion or euthanasia mark the sharp ends of the ideological battles in contemporary society. They show that death is a phenomenon that is not only of interest to philosophers and on the political agenda but is linked to deeper structures in our collective consciousness: death is a cultural phenomenon.

In cooperation with **Rīga Stradiņš University** we will organise a forum and events designed to provide a deeper understanding of death as a phenomenon in contemporary social life through presentations of scientific research, intellectual discussions and art projects, with a particular emphasis on the connection of experience to a specific place – death in Liepāja, Kurzeme, Latvia and the Baltics.

**Death in the Lifeworld.** The international scientific conference Death in the Lifeworld will focus on philosophical and ethical aspects, everyday experiences and rituals, as well as on pressing issues in social work and health care and the institutionalisation of death. In the conference sessions and public discussions, researchers will address both sociological data and philosophical topics related to hotly debated societal matters such as suicide, euthanasia, abortion and end-of-life issues in the context of social and medical care. Conference will close with a public Q&A on the results of the research regarding death and the imagined afterlife in the lifeworld of contemporary Latvians.

In the **art project My Youth**, students of New Media Art from Liepāja University and communication science students from Rīga Stradiņš University will create a series of media art workshops in medical and social institutions in Liepāja. Also, Memento Mori will be the framework in which the artists in the Cultural Canon residence will immerse in our tradition-rich cemetery culture and local cemetery communities, practices of celebrating with the deceased and implement their interpretations and inspirations in artistic events and artifacts.

**Thoughts on Death: melancholy, depression, panic and solutions.** In this segment we will explore the use of urban, historical and natural resources of Liepāja and the region to better understand and experiment with mental health problems and their solutions. How can a walk by the sea, a photograph of a dead tree, breathing exercises in a pine forest or a film shot in an abandoned industrial building fight melancholy?

Rīga Stradiņš University, PhD candidate **Edīte Pauna** will lecture on suicide in Latvia in an anthropological context and hold a discussion on suicide and the environment as a set of social, material and natural factors and

a subject in today's complex world. To raise awareness and to generate discourse about this subject, together with the regional newspaper **Kurzemes Vārds**, we will do a series of publications.

Three Ecologies – the theoretical and critical work of the French philosopher Félix Guattari, published in 1989, in a way anticipates the present situation and seeks a solution for the mental health and survival strategy, involving various factors that are more relevant now than ever. A public deep reading workshop and discussion of this text together with students and faculty members of **Liepāja University Faculty of Humanities and Arts** will help to understand the deeper and systemic causes of depression and possible tactics to avoid suicidal risks. Summary of the workshop will be published in the literature and philosophy journal **Punctum**.

To put discussed theory into practice let's do an art therapy hike Mother Nature along the sea with pop-up exhibitions and discussions in the localities of the region.

#### Forum 4 Digital Transformation

The growing importance of technology in Europe's future tells us about the facets of digitisation that affect not only the growth of the field itself but also, to a large extent, the processes of cultural development. At the same time, it also leads us to ask questions about the interface between the two fields of IT and culture, the role of their visions for the future and the importance of the presence of culture and art in technological processes. That is why, in cooperation with **LMT, the largest Latvian telecommunications company**, we will hold the conference about digital transformation – a city that has all the prerequisites to become an international magnet for IT development processes. At this gathering of professionals, we will focus on digitisation in culture – the possibilities of using artificial intelligence, data sources and their use.

With the involvement of strong professionals in the field, including **Google, the Liepāja Technology Cluster** and its members such as **Accenture** on the one hand and representatives of the arts from **RixC Centre for New Media Art** and protagonists of New Media Arts on the other, the conference will be complemented with various discussions, it will include:

**Reality Turn.** Ubiquitous Experiences, Art and Climate Change in the Virtual Era.

"An ecology of the virtual is ... just as pressing as ecologies of the visible world" / Félix Guattari

Humans have always been seeking answers about what reality is. Yet, as soon as old myths are dispersed, new imaginary worlds are generated. As science increasingly explains the physical world and new technologies are invented, our desire to be tele-connected, to extend senses, to obtain new experiences – becomes stronger, and transforms into new shapes – as it was from illusion in the 19th century to immersion in the 21st.

Ecological awareness forms the core of the Reality Turn, a new conference series, which aims to explore the artistic strategies facing the urgent realities of today in our

society – such as climate change, environmental issues, ubiquitous and immersive technologies. By focusing on ecologies, we are using the environment as the point of departure to make a shift "back to reality" with the two-fold intent: First, as climate change is a major issue that can only be solved in the physical world; and second, as nature in Latvia, where this conference program will take place, has always had a particularly strong meaning and link for the local communities.

The Reality Turn conference series will take place in Liepāja in 2027, when ecology philosophers, digital technology experts and futurologists will discuss alternate realities and ecologies of the virtual. **Featured international artists** will give masterclasses that use digital technologies for communicating with plants, reveal myths behind electricity and network infrastructure, grow algae and bacteria for producing green energy, experiment with 3D printing to transform the digital into the tangible, and experiment with 360°-video transforming the real environment into the mixed reality experience, establishing a stronger link between the virtual and the real. In the framework of the D10 United project, young people of the Alpha Generation, who have been exposed to digital tools from a very young age and views them as omnipresent – not just a trendy accessory, will explore new and unexpected ways of creating digital art artifacts by participating in the Artificial Intelligence Talent Programme, learning face and image recognition, data processing and analytics, data interaction processes, workshoping with New Media Artists and creating an exhibition at the **Media Art Museum (MMM)**.

#### Forum 5 Global Europe: European Values in the Clash of Civilisations

Thirty years ago, with the collapse of the Iron Curtain, the Soviet Empire and undemocratic regimes, a great political thinker declared the "end of history" and the victory of the Western liberal democratic values and system of government. Others warned that a "clash of civilizations" would actually begin and that people's cultural and religious identities would be a major source of conflict in the post-Cold War world. We have seen European values as universal, valid, recommended and promoted in all societies around the world. However, the last 20 years have not always been a time of pleasant revelations for Europe in this regard. Other parts of the world appear to be developing rapidly, based on different values and other models of social governance that are different from liberal democracies. Values such as democracy, human rights, tolerance and understanding of human dignity also vary considerably between civilizations and within Western civilization itself.

In the project European Values in the Clash of Civilisations, these issues will be discussed by public intellectuals of the three largest civilizations:

- from European political philosophy
- from the Islamic world
- from Chinese political and public opinion (or Xi Jinping Thought)

These thinkers will discuss whether and what are the alternatives to liberal democracy, the role of religion, traditions, and the extent of individual freedoms and human rights in different civilizations. How do these values affect the overcoming of the great common global challenges – the survival of humanity in a changing climate, the age of artificial intelligence, the age of biological immortality / longevity.

In addition to the intellectual debate, everyone will be invited throughout the day to learn about the topic and vision through cultural activities, such as the magical performances of Sufi dancers, and to take part in Arabic tea drinking rituals or participate in peaceful Chinese Chi Kung classes and meditation.

##### Partners of Agora of Values:

**Local partners:** Artist Agnese Krivade, film director Marta Martinsone, theatre director Inga Tropa, actress Marija Linarte, psychotherapist Nils Sakss Konstantinovs, researcher Edīte Pauna, journalist Rita Ruduša, editor Henriks Eliass Zēgners, Ascendum, Democracy Quarter in Kuldīga, Civic Alliance – Latvia, Kurzemes NGO centre, Providus, LMT, Digital Innovation Park, Rīgas Laiks, Rīga Technical University, Rīga Stradiņš University, University of Latvia, Liepāja University, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Investment and Development Agency of Latvia, World Wide Fund for Nature Associate Partner in Latvia, Concert Garden Pūt, Vējiņiļ, Kurzemes Vārds, Punctum magazine, Isaiah Berlin Centre.

**International partners:** Nordic Summer University (DK), Pochen Biennale (DE), Disnovation.org (FR), Union of the Baltic Cities (PL), ECoC Candidate Cities Faro and Aveiro 2027 (PT), We Do Democracy (DK), Democracy Garage (DK), CYLAND MediaArtLab (LT), The MUCEM Museum (FR), The Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan (AZ)

**Budget:** EUR 583 000

## The Shape of the Dream

/ Art in Public Space

The two-part project The Shape of the Dream will challenge the term "public art". Project How to Garden a Community? will take a new approach on public art through performative and participatory sculpture. Whilst the more "classic" approach of the artists in the International Symposium on Cast Iron Art will give the dream its shape with reused radiators. A very sudden plot twist in the life of any household appliance!

### How to Garden a Community?

One fundamental element that has been left unchanged in all the stormy changes of past decades is trust. In the people we have around us, our support network that keeps us going through hard times. Europe, what really is important? If Europe answers this honestly, then it is and has always been: people. So why is public art rarely about people and with people?

This project gives artists a platform for new ways to create feelings of togetherness, common values and comradeship through public art. Just like in the Ikea-effect, we tend to form communities when we have the tools to contribute to the shared values. Hence the public artwork will be created together with the communities of Liepāja.

The first part of the project will consist of an artistic and curatorial research residency in Liepāja, working and

researching communities, planning the productions, developing them with the communities.

The second part of the project will see the production of 10 public artworks during the "exhibition period".

Some of the participating artists and their approaches to "public art":

The internationally renowned Latvian photographer **Inta Ruka** uses her camera to engage in new relationships with her models. By gaining trust (as the foundational value of a community) she becomes part of it herself and is able to create her work from within the "system".

In our exhibition, safety is represented by **Justin Hoover's** educational dance-fight classes for the community in Liepāja. Communal creativity is triggered through **Laimdotas Malle's** drawing performances. Artists **Linda Boļšakova** and **Skuja-Braden** reflect on their own communal experiences, the former through her sensitive performance art and the latter with their unique clay works.

British artist **Rebecca Korn** and Latvian/Russian **Anastasia Sheps-Shneppe** explore water as a basis for communal well being on the coast of the Baltic Sea. **Gundega Evelone** and **Andris Landaus** engage one of the core elements of a community - food and gardening that highlights the care for plants that bring us nourishment. A part of their social sculpture is gathering the community around a fireplace after having worked together to share food and stories.

**Korean artist Mire Lee's** and **Latvian Darja Kazimira's** work explores the darkest nature of ourselves through ritual that transforms our darkest emotions and urges us into the next stage of our existence.

Finally, **Aigars Bikše** has been transcending societal and political traditions and events into a very unique sculptural language over the last decades. The dream might appear in surprising shapes.

### International Symposium of Cast Iron Art

This second part of The Shape of the Dream asks what the physical shape of the European Dream would look like. With a high artistic agenda provided by its international and national partners (like **Tamsie Ringler (US)**, **Katie Hovencamp (US)**, **Regimija Vaitkutė (LT)** and **Gdansk Academy of Art (PL)**), and the true spirit of the principles of circular economy, **the Residency and Workshop Centre Serde** in Aizpute (South Kurzeme) in close cooperation with **Latvian Academy of Arts**, will organise the International Cast Iron Art Symposium 2027, where it will search for the European dream in cast iron – as contradictory as this might sound.

The raw material that the participating artists will work on comes from old, outdated radiators, which are being replaced by new heating systems in various buildings in and around Aizpute. This is how new cast-iron works of art will be made from the ashes of a phoenix-like, time-worn, worthless heater. The creation process of the Symposium itself will be adapted for outdoor use and will be open to the public from the start to finish in

order to follow the process from the idea, technological production and the result.

#### Partners of The Shape of the Dream:

**Local partners:** Artists Gundega Evelone, Andris Landaus, Laimdota Malle, Aigars Bikše, Linda Bojšakova, Darja Kazimira, Inta Ruka, Kārlis Alainis, The Liepāja Secondary School of Music, Art and Design, Art Management and Information Centre, Sculpture Quadrennial Rīga, The Residency and Workshop Centre Serde

**International partners:** Artists Justin Charles Hoover (US), Rebecca Korn (UK), Anastasia Shneps-Shneppe (LV/RU), Mire Lee (KR), Tamsie Ringler (US), Katie Hovencamp (US), Skuja-Braden (LV/US), Remigija Vaitkute (LT), Juozas Laivys (LT), Žilvinas Landzbergas (LT), Klaipeda Branch of Lithuanian Photographers' Association (LT), Association Arts Zone (LT), Bad Ischl / Salzammergut 2024 (AT)

**Budget:** EUR 220 000

## Europe Sings in Liepāja

/ International Choir Music Festival

During 10 days in 2027 we will gather up to 4,000 active participants from around 40 to 50 different countries coming from all over Europe and overseas.

Singers, choirs, conductors, vocal and choral leaders, composers, arrangers, creators, music educators and music managers will meet in Liepāja and will meet with the people of Liepāja, South Kurzeme and Kuldīga.

Around 40 parallel Ateliers will offer new European friendships, learning and fun. The Ateliers cover choral music of different times and styles including Gregorian, Early Music, Romantic and Classical Music, Contemporary Music, Opera, Musicals, Vocal Pop, Vocal Jazz, a cappella or with instruments, combined with movement or other art forms. In addition, capacity building is offered for (semi)professional conductors, composers and educators. Specifically, the week before the festival is dedicated to the **Youth Event Management Programme (YEMP)** for choral managers.

Daily Open Singing for everyone will contribute to joyful togetherness. Additionally, the visiting singers are invited for excursions in the region, scaring deer and birds in the forest with their singing :-)

The focus of the **Europa Cantat Festival** is on youth (up to 27 years of age) and on intergenerational singing. But we also want to make this year in Liepāja a special Europa Cantat Festival with the theme "Singing in the Wind" – here in our city where the wind is born. Perhaps the answer, my friend, is singing in the wind.

A final mega event will bring together Europa Cantat participants in a special programme dedicated to one of the most popular composers in the world of choral music, South Kurzeme-born **Ēriks Ešēvalds**, and his work, under the artistic direction of the composer himself. The concert on the occasion of his 50th birthday is planned as a European choral music event.

#### Partners of Europe Sings in Liepāja:

**Local partners:** Latvian Song Festival Association, Latvian National Centre for Culture, Liepāja Folk Art and Culture Centre, Cultural department of South Kurzeme Region, Cultural department of Kuldīga Region

**International partners:** European Choral Association - Europa Cantat (DE)

**Budget:** EUR 1 925 000

## Stars in Amber

/ Cycle of Concerts

There are artists and experiences that can inspire you to realise your own artistic aspirations. We are proud that our opera singers perform in the world's opera meccas – the Metropolitan Opera in New York, the Vienna Opera, the Salzburg Opera Festival, while Latvian conductors lead the best ensembles, such as the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Berlin Komische Oper.

For 2027 we will invite Latvian music greats and the best performing artists from all over the world to Liepāja (e.g. conductor Andris Nelsons, opera singer Elīna Garanča and others) to perform at Liepāja's Great Amber Concert Hall. **Conductor Andris Nelsons** has already agreed to come to perform with the **Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra** at our truly great venue.

**Great Amber** impresses not only with its magnificent and modern architecture, reminiscent of a piece of amber in colour and shape but also with its excellent acoustics, designed by the world's best acoustics specialists. This is recognised by music professionals such as the musicians of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, as well as by the audience itself.

We will also celebrate with concerts the anniversaries of the great contemporary composers **Pēteris Vasks** and **Ēriks Ešēvalds**, both of whom were born right here in our ECoC region – Aizpute and Priekule. The lives and works of these two great composers are inextricably linked to their home regions.

We also want to discover the work of classical Latvian music greats unknown to Europe – by reviving the legacy of composer Agris Engelmanis, and to support the compositions of talented young composers by making new recordings in collaboration with the Liepāja Symphony Orchestra.

We will broadcast the festive concerts on outdoor screens in residential areas of Liepāja and provide special viewing opportunities in Liepāja nursing homes.

## Opera on the Beach

In 2027, we will celebrate the 105th anniversary of the **Liepāja Opera**. In order to introduce Europe and the world to the original Latvian operas and the wonderful voices of singers, by 2027 we want to restore the tradition of opera in Liepāja. We will let it be reborn not in the opera house, but by the sea – in the legendary **Concert Garden Pūt, Vējiņi!**

Liepāja voices have always been audible from far distances both in Europe and in the world. The Liepāja Opera House served as a platform for many brilliant Latvian musicians, who later were greatly successful on European and world opera stages – La Scala in Milan, the Metropolitan in New York, the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, and the St. Petersburg Philharmonic. Among them are tenor Mariss Vētra, the parents of the great maestro conductor Mariss

Jansons – Iraidā Jansone and Arvīds Jansons, and many others.

The oldest in the Baltics and rich in traditions, the **Liepāja Symphony Orchestra** will host the Opera Festival by the Sea. The festival will also include the commissioning of three new operas.

In cooperation with the **Liepāja Puppet Theatre**, a puppet opera will be created in 2025, organising a literary competition, and children and schoolchildren will be involved in the creation of the libretto. In 2026, the premiere of a new mono-opera is planned, while in 2027 – Latvian sacred music composer **Rihards Dubra** will create a new work – the opera Kaupo on one of the first baptised rulers of Livonia at the beginning of the 13th century, whose actions influenced many events in the Liv lands of the river Gauja at that time and are yet to be assessed in the context of European history. The Liv king Kaupo is also called the first European in Latvia.

The new productions of the European Capital of Culture year, 2027, will be combined at the Opera Festival, and the original operas will be complemented by a festive Gala concert.

#### Partners of Stars in Amber:

**Local partners:** Concert Hall Great Amber, Liepāja Symphony Orchestra, Uniting History Foundation, Concert Garden Pūt, Vējiņi!, Liepāja Puppet Theatre, The State Choir Latvija

**International partners:** Conductor Andris Nelsons, Leipzig Gewandhaus orchestra, KD Schmid, Harrison Parrott

**Budget:** EUR 1 055 000

## Nordic Solstice

/ International Traditional Culture Festival

Cultural diversity is the secret ingredient of the European dream. The Baltic and Nordic countries add to this diversity with the celebration of the summer solstice.

For the first time in the history of the Baltic States, we will celebrate the summer solstice in a week-long event together with our neighbouring peoples. Creating a link between the cultures of the Nordic and Baltic countries. It will be a celebration of life and light for people of all ages, together with guests from Lithuania, Estonia, Finland, Sweden and Norway.

The Nordic Solstice in Liepāja and the region will last from 19 till 24 June 2027, starting with a public orientation game, reliving the traditional solstice on the shortest night of the year across the region and ending with a proper Green Midsummer Ball.

## The Mysterious Fern Flower

A mysterious Fern Flower, blooms only on the shortest night of the year and can only be found if you look for it in pairs. Any of us who has been in the forest knows that the fern is a plant with beautiful, scalloped leaves but no flowers, but what if it does? :)... So we will invite residents and visitors to search for the mysterious Fern Flower in an exciting treasure hunt. The main organisers of the event will be Liepāja's amateur art groups of **Liepāja Folk Art and Culture Centre** and minority associations, who will create "checkpoints" throughout the city with performances and tasks related to the Summer Solstice and folk traditions. In the neighbourhoods, in the centre and on the beach, teams of residents will have the opportunity to follow a specific route and get to know various Summer Solstice traditions – dances, games, singing, cooking, cheese-making, as well as the opportunity to participate in the weaving of the largest Latvian wreath – for the **Concert Hall Great Amber**. The game is played by teams – families, friends, work teams or groups of like-minded people, with three different routes – for walkers, cyclists and public transportation. The game will end with an award ceremony and a celebration concert.

Alongside the game, there will also be a Herbal Night Market in **Market Pētertirgus**. Traditionally, the Herb Market sells Midsummer wreaths, Midsummer herbs, cheese, meat, pies, beer, garden produce and usually the first strawberries from the garden.

## Contemporary Midsummer

The Latvian also celebrates the traditions of the Solstice. Artists from different disciplines will be invited to Liepāja to reflect on this tradition from the perspective of contemporary art. With the help of Norwegian and Japanese contemporary choreographers **Heine Avdal** and **Yukiko Shinozaki** we will invite dance groups and dance studios to join us. In June 2027 amateurs together with professionals will create an adventure that is deeply rooted in the traditional, but experiences transformation through their own dance steps.

Together with curator **Andrew Gryf Paterson (SC/FI, Pixelache Festival)** we want to stimulate the experience of cultural heritage and the heritage of folk traditions while we are moving between yearning for ancient rituals and the need for contemporary expressions through art, music and new media.

## Celebrating Pan-European Solstice

As Midsummer symbolically celebrates the triumph of light, our aim is to give the Midsummer tradition a new fire. In 2027 the Solstice will be celebrated in 27 places in our region – this time with the participation and traditions of our neighbours from **Lithuania, Estonia, Finland, Sweden and Norway**. A cooperation of the current Liepāja, South Kurzeme and Kuldīga folk art and culture centres. The best part is the opportunity to take part in it yourself. From 19 to 22 June, every visitor will have the opportunity to take part in the Living Traditions in South Kurzeme, Kuldīga and Alsunga Suites on the theme of the Summer Solstice, where Latvian

traditions will intermingle with those of our neighbouring countries.

### Sauna!!!!

All bare bottoms take to the sea – this could be our new marketing slogan – at least for our **International Sauna Festival Light Spirit**. Sauna-ists from different neighbouring nations are welcome to share their wellness practices on the seashore and in coastal villages. Sauna is still associated with the physical purge but also with the purification and special cleansing of the spirit for mental wellbeing. We invite our European visitors to join us in this fest of endorphins.

### Midsummer Eve Celebration

The annual Midsummer Eve Celebration with traditional amateur art groups will be joined in 2027 by Baltic and Nordic neighbours, with a special solstice tradition défilé and performance parade. Celebrating the traditions of the Midsummer festivities, the Midsummer Night performances, together with our European neighbours, will mark perhaps a new tradition in the promotion and consolidation of European cultural diversity.

#### Partners of Nordic Solistice:

**Local partners:** Choreographer Krišjānis Sants, Liepāja Folk Art and Culture Centre and Amateur Art Collectives, Liepāja Region Tourism Information Office, Market Pētertirgus, NGOs Representing National Minorities in Liepāja, Pirts Skola, Pirts Spirit, South Kurzeme Tourism Agency, Ethnographic House Zvanītāji, Koņuciems Village in Pape, Pape's Information Point Dzintarvēji, Society Ziemupīte, Ethnic Culture Centre Suiči, Kuldīga Active Recreation Centre, Kurzeme Cultural Heritage Centre Kūrava, Concert Hall Great Amber

**International partners:** Curator Andrew Gryf Paterson (SC/FI), Choreographer Heine Avdal and Yukiko Shinozaki (BE/JP), Finnish Folk Music Institute (FI), Kaustinen Folk Music Festival (FI), Tallari (FI), Ričardas Rasiukas (LT), Pirties Angelai (LT), Klaipeda City Municipality Centre of Ethnic Culture (LT), Guldborgsund Municipality (DK), Estonian Folk Art and Craft Union (EE), Bodø 2024 (NO), Oulu 2026 (FI), Palanga Municipality (LT), Nordic Council of Minister's Office in Latvia

**Budget:** EUR 265 000

## Urban Dreams Liepāja

/ Design and Architecture Days

### European Time Traveller Walk

When talking to **Juris Zviedrāns**, it is more than clear that his knowledge as a passionate expert on historic wooden buildings, an archaeologist, and researcher, who also manages the Tāši Manor, is driving him to write books, restore hundreds of buildings and also to captivate the European public with stories of true architectural values. Surprisingly, they can be found here in Liepāja and in the region in great numbers.

Together with Juris, **Liepāja's and the region's tourist offices**, we will create several itineraries that will explore the cultural history of the city and its regions over the centuries through the rich diversity of its architecture. Rather than creating tourist routes, we will bring them to life by involving the public through audio stories, sound and visual installations along the way, and XR applications to be used on the smartphone.

Through open call competitions, we will invite local and international artists to submit their ideas with different proposals on how these routes can be walked and explored through art. For example, it could be a walk-performance – an immersive journey that draws on the city's history, where the heritage of wooden architecture, Art Nouveau, port warehouses, sacred buildings and Paul Max Bertschy's creations are complemented by the human stories of the city's citizens.

Liepāja's cityscape is rich and multi-layered and a 3D open-air time travel taking us on a walk through European diversity in architectural and building styles. It has developed in different historical periods and is closely linked to European cultural heritage – with many houses being designed or built by craftspeople and architects from Prussia, Saxony, Holland, Sweden or influenced by characteristics from Gotland, Denmark, Schleswig-Holstein. In 1871, Paul Max Bertschy, a German from Berlin, became Liepāja's chief architect. The architects who worked in Liepāja were of different nationalities – Germans, Latvians, Finns and Scots like Louis William Melville and the Englishman Charles Carr. The architectural trends of the time can be recognised in Liepāja's building of late 19th and early 20th centuries, but the architecture of the buildings is unique to Liepāja. Not a European dimension in itself, but certainly contributing to European diversity.

### Manor House Walk

In the surroundings of Liepāja city a large number of architecturally and historically interesting former manor complexes have been preserved, but still languish in oblivion – in Tāši, Dunalka, Cīrava, Dzērve, Apriķi, Aizpute and Kazdanga. We will enrich the route with the stories of local people about these manors but also highlight those who have now taken on the extremely difficult task of maintaining and restoring them.

### Old House, New Story

Kuldīga – the former Capital of the once mighty Duchy of Courland and Semigallia, has succeeded in preserving the looks of the ancient town and is expected to be listed in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Under the guidance of the **Kuldīga Restoration Centre**, we will become active against plastic window frames and other atrocities. We will organise international restoration workshops, bringing together owners and building managers, local and foreign experts, experienced craftsmen and residents to learn about different conservation and restoration methods and to promote craftsmanship in woodwork. Following the call of the European Green Deal, these events will promote the use of traditional, natural building materials and explain the benefits of preserving historic buildings. The events will include lectures in the urban environment, analysis of historic sites, and good examples of restoration throughout Europe and the world. The series will conclude with an international cultural heritage forum.

### Design Walk

The New European Bauhaus, as an interdisciplinary initiative, will by 2027 have produced many innovations,

inventions that will combine science and culture, environmental improvement with green technological solutions. In this context, together with the **Rīga Chapter of the international NGO SEGD (Society for Experiential Graphic Design)**, we will look at Liepāja from a different point of view – from the future. We will be shaping this future of our place of residence and living environment, including aspects of sustainability, accessibility and design.

Between now and 2027, we will create a series of events called Design Walk 2.0, in which we will involve a wide range of people, from the education sector – from kindergarten to university, as well as citizens and urban planners. Together with design professionals from SEGD Paris Chapter, SEGD London Chapter and SEGD Edinburgh Chapter, Rīga Technical University, with the participation of professionals from leading design firms in **Estonia (Velvet)** and **Iceland (Gagarin)**, as well as the architectural firm **Epitesz from Hungary**, we will create realistic sketches, analyse potential development scenarios for the city of Liepāja, and leave the most valuable conclusions for the future development of the city. What's more, we will put what we have created back into the hands of youth – both by handing over the mandate to children of all ages to keep dreaming of the desired performance, and to the powerful ones who will build the Youth FORUM themselves.

As an additional event, we will organise a Design Walk for the general public to raise public awareness of design, architecture and cultural infrastructure development opportunities. During the Design Walk everyone will have the opportunity to get to know design studios, offices, production facilities, successful interior, exhibition and urban projects and processes located and taking place in Liepāja. Participants will be welcomed by designers and industry representatives and will be introduced to their working environment, processes and creative activities. Although the walk is still 5 years away, the Liepāja Secondary School of Music Art and Design, Liepāja State Gymnasium No. 1 (awarded the Grand Architecture Prize in 2018), Art Gallery Romas Dārzs, Julianna's Courtyard, etc., have applied for participation.

Our aim with this walk is to show the high quality of design created in Liepāja and to encourage young people's interest in design education. The meeting of designers and design users will promote the demand for quality design, the analysis of Latvian design achievements, and the promotion of design in Latvia and abroad.

By offering a more accessible opportunity to get acquainted with the design process and current trends, we will also facilitate dialogue between industry professionals, representatives of state and local government institutions and entrepreneurs.

### Urban Story Walk

There are people you can't stop listening to. Their passion, the way they construct their stories, their humour, make us as listeners open our mouths, eyes, hearts and minds. **The Kurzeme Cultural Heritage Centre Kūrava**, which brings together the most powerful storytellers from Latvia and abroad, will

give us the opportunity to hear urban stories. With the aim of promoting the preservation of oral heritage, the development of the storytelling tradition and the collection of historical testimonies, recording individual stories and collective reflections, we will create exciting three urban story routes.

In these routes we will like to emphasise the nuances of dialects and the use of intangible cultural heritage values, natural phenomena and legends, explanations of Latvian mythology.

Together with our **Swedish partners Land of Legends**, we will create stopping points and routes according to a precise methodology.

These routes will be placed on the digital platform Liepāja in the Clouds, supplemented with reality audio and various means of visual expression. Liepāja's storytellers have room to grow. During the project we will follow the spread of the storytelling movement in Liepāja. That's how stories should be!

### Pavilion for the Future

We have identified a need to show contemporary art in Liepāja, to create cultural meeting places for the public but at the same time we are also dreaming of the most suitable location for the ECoC Information Centre. We have received an incredible endorsement from **Liepāja's business community** to build a cultural pavilion for the city, which would at the same time serve primarily as an **ECoC Information Centre** but once the project is completed would be at the disposal of Liepāja's artists and NGOs. We will organise an **international architects' competition** for the pavilion idea as an example of new architectural thinking that responds to global challenges and offers long-term solutions.

We hope that the pavilion will not only stimulate discussion on the development of philanthropy, but also inspire the different residents of the city district with innovative artistic and cultural activities that unite the community.

#### Partners of Urban Dreams Liepāja:

**Local partners:** Archaeologist Juris Zviedrāns, Latvian Association of Castles and Manor Houses, Rīga Technical University, Kuldīga Restoration Centre, Liepāja Region Tourism Information Office, South Kurzeme Tourism Agency, Kuldīga Tourism Information Centre, Liepāja Secondary School of Music Art and Design, Liepāja State Gymnasium No. 1, Art Gallery Romas Dārzs, Julianna's Courtyard, NGO SEGD (Society for Experiential Graphic Design), Liepāja City Building Board, Design Studio H2E, Liepāja Interior Museum The Hotel of Madam Hoyer, Kurzeme Cultural Heritage Centre Kūrava,, Kuldīga Active Recreation Centre, Information and Technology Department of Kuldīga Municipality, Latvian Storytellers Association

**International partners:** Storytellers Colin McAllister (SC), Piret Päär (EE), Kairi Leivo (EE), Bad Ischl / Salzkammergut 2024 (AT), Trenčín 2026 (SK), ECoC Candidate City Aveiro 2027 (PT), SEGD Chapters in Paris, London and Edinburgh, Architectural Firms Epitesz (HU), Velvet (EE) and Gagarin (IS), Land of Legends (SE), Hiking Trail Grande Randonné 2013 (FR), FEST Federation for European Storytelling (BE), Renovation Centre Tammela (FI), Europa Nostra (IT), The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (IT), Akershus Restoration Centre in Drobak (NO), Goldmund Storytelling Academy (DE), Rumsiskes Open-Air Museum (LT), SRIK TARTU Centre for Restoration (EE)

**Budget:** EUR 553 000



## Kino Sapis

/ European Film Days

The **Rīga International Film Festival (RIGA IFF)** was established in 2014 and has quickly become one of Latvia's premier cultural events. Its entire programme is devoted to presenting and introducing audiovisual media that differs from the mainstream repertoire of local cinemas, TV, and available streaming platforms. Predominantly focused on European films and representing European filmmakers, the festival is the sole event of its scale in Latvia that uses cinematic means of expression for analysing and describing various social trends and processes. Its industry section – from springboarding short films into the festival circuit to discussing the developments in immersive audiovisual storytelling – bolsters sustainable collaborations and keeps track of trends in the film world. Professional juries preside over the international competitions for feature-length films, short films and music videos. These competitions salute uniquely expressive filmmakers and works that communicate new trends and advances in the language of cinema.

In October 2027, RIGA IFF plans to **partially relocate to Liepāja** and expand the timeframe of its programme, so that the proposed season would kick off in the spring and continue with European cinema screenings throughout the summer as a warm-up for the festival in October. The festival's first weekend (Thursday to Sunday) in October would be fully transferred to Liepāja. This would include the Opening Night that will have a variety of international guests, well-known filmmakers and actors in attendance.

Building on the existing programming expertise and structure of RIGA IFF, the headliners of the programme – the sections that attract a broad spectrum of quality contemporary cinema and audiovisual art to Latvia – will be screened in Liepāja: **FESTIVAL SELECTION**, the most spectacular works of cinema from Europe and around the world, **NORDIC HIGHLIGHTS**, films that reveal the Nordic style of cinematic creation and storytelling, and **KIDS' REEL**, a selection of new European releases that makes for an exceptional and exciting cultural experience for the whole family. Films from these sections will screen during the RIGA IFF weekend in Liepāja.

RIGA IFF will be cooperating with various national and independent venues in Liepāja: the Great Amber Concert Hall and the historic Liepāja Theatre. In addition to these, the former steel factory Liepājas Metalurģis will be used as a venue to host out-of-the-box screenings, both figuratively and literally, like open-air events and expanded reality experiences.

The RIGA IFF 2027 programme will be anchored in Liepāja by a retrospective programme dedicated to the city. The **renowned Liepāja-born cinematographer Eduard Tisse** was a long-time partner of Sergei Eisenstein (e.g. in *Strike* (1925), *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), *Eisenstein in Mexico* (1933) and *Alexander Nevsky* (1938)), and one of his most significant works will be screened with the accompaniment of the original live score. A documentary on Eduard Tisse is a much needed feature and is planned for 2027.

The festival's industry programme will continue initiatives that have proved to be valuable and successful in past years: **Extended Realities** – which helps build bridges between immersive audiovisual storytelling creators and professionals from the creative industry and education by promoting the use of XR narratives in culture and education.

### Partners of Kino Sapis:

**Local partners:** The Rīga International Film Festival (RIGA IFF), Concert Hall Great Amber, Liepāja Theatre

**International partners:** European Film Awards (DE), Goethe-Institut Rīga (DE/LV), Danish Cultural Institute in Latvia (DK/LV), European Children's Film Association (BE), The Nordic and Baltic Short Film Festivals Network

**Budget:** EUR 200 000

## Cultural Canon

/ Revising Cultural Heritage

The Latvian Cultural Canon is a carefully selected collection of Latvia's most outstanding and significant works of art and cultural treasures. The Canon of Culture contains evidence of the epochs that characterise Latvian culture in various fields of art and culture. These are the values we are proud of, which form the basis of every Latvian's cultural experience and sense of belonging to Latvia.

In 2027, we will invite an international team of artists to explore and interpret the artistic values and traditions inscribed in the Latvian Cultural Canon, searching for what is similar or different. How much Latvia is in Europe and how much Europe is in Latvia?

From 1 June to 30 August 2027, **six artists** from different disciplines will be offered a residency **at The Residency and Workshop Centre Serde** and local resources for various creative experiments, collaborations and discussions with residents and visitors. Serde is one of the most experienced residency centres in Latvia – in the Kurzeme town of Aizpute. Serde is a UNESCO partner and was accredited to provide advisory services to the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. At the end of the residency, the artists will present cultural events to a wider audience, inspired by and interpreting the cultural values inscribed in the Latvian cultural canon.

The **Artist Residency Programme** is an international fellowship competition for professional artists who are interested in collaborating with each other, experimenting with ideas, materials, technologies and environments, and creating concrete objects or performances as a result.

Artists in residence will be able to choose any of the values inscribed in the Cultural Canon for the realisation of their artistic vision, but given that we have included in the ECoC programme the events the Nordic Solstice and Memento Mori, we will invite artists to explore the tradition of Midsummer celebration and the cemetery traditions inscribed in the Cultural Canon.

## Contemporary Dance

Contemporary dance experts/artists **Krišjānis Sants** from Aizpute, Latvia and **Ieva Gaurilčikaite-Santa** from Vilnius, Lithuania will collaborate with a pair of Norwegian and Japanese dancers and choreographers **Heine Avdal & Yukiko Shinozaki** to create an original interpretation of the folk dance tradition of the Latvian Cultural Canon. In the artist's residency in Aizpute, artists will explore the origins of dance, its various historical contexts, socio-anthropological and political influences, by getting to know and meeting local resources. As a result, in the chain of events of the Nordic Solstice festival in one of the city's beautiful seaside parks, in collaboration with the experienced Liepāja folk dance groups, we will be amazed by traditional sequences and steps of stage dances frozen in the canon, allowing them to be reborn in possible new connotations.

## Celebration of the Sun

Since the beginning of humanity, the sun has been a divine symbol of the power of light that creates life. In ancient civilisations, festivals and rituals celebrating the sun's orbit were important points in the annual calendar. Festivals of light are celebrated in different cultures around the world – Diwali in India or the Persian New Year, the festival of Norouz. But also in Celtic traditions, such as the Yule festival, the Imbolc festival, Beltane or Walpurgis Night, Midsummer Night or St John's Day, the Samhain festival. Belgian musician **Romina Lischka** will combine these ideas of celebrating the sun in different cultures in a series of four programmes spanning one year. Together with guest musicians from **Sweden, Ireland, Scotland, Latvia, Lithuania, Iceland** and **Persia**, they will work in collaboration with contemporary dance artists in a joint residency and create an interdisciplinary art performance.

## Cemetery Traditions

As one of the values of Latvian culture inscribed in the Cultural Canon, the artists will interpret the customs of cemetery care and cemetery festivals. For Latvians, visiting a cemetery is associated with a number of unwritten rules – to speak in a low voice, not to run, to be contemplative, not to take anything home from the cemetery and to keep it tidy. The cemetery is our final resting place – our eternal home, our final bedroom – and we behave accordingly. Latvia's cemeteries can be seen as parks of a kind. Especially in summer, on weekends, when many cemeteries all over Latvia celebrate the Festival of the Cemetery. Cemetery Festivals are a real community-building event, bringing together relatives, friends and neighbours of the deceased.

Interpreting this Latvian relationship with the cemetery, which is based on ancient Latvian mythology and pagan traditions ("to mourn the souls"), as well as the teachings of the Christian way of life and the secularisation efforts of the Soviet authorities, artists will have the opportunity to explore local cemetery communities and to create an art event within the framework of the Memento

Mori events. Speaking of memorialisation, we cannot fail to mention that South Kurzeme is also home to an important World War II heritage memorial – the Priekule Brethren cemetery – the largest Red Army Brethren cemetery in the Baltics, where more than 23 000 soldiers are buried.

### Partners of Cultural Canon:

**Local partners:** Choreographer Krišjānis Sants, The Residency and Workshop Centre Serde

**International partners:** Choreographers Heine Avdal and Yukiko Shinozaki (BE/JP) and Ieva Gaurilčikaite-Santa (LT), Artists Niklas Roy and Kati Hyyppä (DE), musician Romina Lischka (BE), Eli Garmendia and Nomad Studio (ES), Res Artis (AU)

**Budget:** EUR 130 000

# New Eyes

## A Festival of Friendliness

/ Community Project

## City Neighbours

The core of the project will develop from an open call for events or reasons to meet in the neighbourhoods of Liepāja – concerts, markets, exhibitions, neighbourhood gatherings and others organised by the residents themselves. The Liepāja 2027 organisation will curate several calls and provide advice for projects from 2026 onwards, with themes or priorities rooted in universal design criteria and New European Bauhaus principles. The main aim is to find ways to promote cooperation between people living and working in Liepāja, the involvement of different socially disadvantaged groups, the activities of organisations and individual enthusiasts, professionals or simply people living side by side to strengthen a sense of belonging. The activities will take place outside the existing cultural spaces of Liepāja.

Some examples of activities to be implemented that we gathered from the open call we launched at the beginning of 2021 include:

- A street neighbourhood get-together festival, with activities for children (setting up a place to play, planting flowers, etc.), identifying and creating Home Stories and putting up exhibitions highlighting remarkable people living there and young talents.
- Celebrating gardening as an art form, a network of Liepāja community gardens will be created, with an educational programme for children, youth, seniors, families and mixed groups. To attract potential gardeners who are still passive, a reality show called The Garden Bed Co-operative will be created – people living in the neighbourhood will be able to sign up for beds in which to plant tomatoes, flowers. What happens next is up to the participants – the reality show can begin. It is filmed, there are web cams, and regular episodes are produced. The audience follows the newly created community, and eventually their favourite characters.

### Creating cultural spaces in different areas of the city.

Most neighbourhoods lack an (indoor) space to meet or do things together. Whether it's an abandoned hairdressing salon in Ezerkrasts, a carefully renovated historic tsarist house in Karosta, a non-functioning garden in Metalurgs, an apartment in Lauma or an undiscovered place in the Zaļā birzs/Green Grove, we will use the principles of the circular economy to revitalise small informal meeting places and cultural venues for the ambassadors of neighbourhood communities. We will gradually open these places by 2027, with the support of the **Impact HUB NGO Incubator**, enabling active NGOs to become the soul, the engine and the community builder of a cultural place in the neighbourhood.

**Sound art exhibition Liepāja Sounds.** The exhibition is created using the unique architecture, environment and soundscape of Liepāja, through sound installations in different residential districts of Liepāja, trying to bring diversity to the most culturally unexplored areas of Liepāja (Karosta, Jaunliepāja, Lauma, Ezerkrasts, etc.). Artists like Artis Kuprišs, Ivo Tauriņš, Krista Dintere, Paula Vītola, John Grzinich (EE) Yuri Landman (NL) and others will be invited to explore the environment of Liepāja and, inspired by it, create unique sound installations that will complement Liepāja's urban environment and soundscape. In parallel, the inhabitants of Liepāja's neighbourhoods can participate in creative workshops and performances.

Together with our multicultural neighbours we will celebrate **Minority Culture Day** – a colourful, a bit loud and full-flavoured festival put together and organised by **Liepāja Culture Department and national minority NGOs**. One day in summer will be dedicated to celebrating the diversity of minority cultures – Lithuanian, German, Polish, Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian and Jewish societies will come together and parade their unique cultural riches. **Local minority ethnic ensembles** – folklore ensemble Senoliai of the Lithuanian Cultural Society, ensemble Zusammen Sein of the German Society, Liepāja Polish Society ensemble Bursztynki, Liepāja Cultural Education Society ensemble Slavyane, Liepāja German Cultural Centre ensemble Saule, folk song ensemble Voļņica and others will prepare their most vibrant concert programmes and invite to perform friends from other Latvian cities and their homeland.

All the activities and new places will be marked on the Liepāja in the Clouds platform for neighbours to find each other.

## Meeting of Ancient Neighbours – Events in the Regions

In Kurzeme, on the sea shore nearer or a little further away, strong but closed islands of culture have developed, living, celebrating and passing on their spiritual heritage to future generations. These are the ethnic groups of Rucavians, the Suiti, the Livs and the Curonian Kings. Each has its own land, its own history. Meeting of Ancient Neighbours aims at raising the awareness of residents and visitors about the existence of these cultural spaces and their traditions, by showing and celebrating their songs, dances, culinary heritage and celebration custom. Alongside this, there is a quite practical – networking – objective – exchange trips, training, cooperation with institutions to create real cooperation practises within the cultural spaces.

## New Neighbours – Kurzeme Artist Residencies

This project is intended to break the myth of “ordinary people” versus “artists”, to give people in a rural setting the opportunity to experience up close the creative process of art. To make this happen we shall cooperate with our international partners **Rupert (LT) and Mustarinda (FI) and locals from Serde, PAiR and Cita Abra** to build the Kurzeme residency network as a support system for the international artists. During the artist residency in rural villages, authors, researchers and artists will be able to immerse themselves in the cultural environment, history and inherent uniqueness of the parish/town/village with the help of local, host institutions and citizens. The residencies will provide both a period (1–2 months) for the European creators selected through an open call to be inspired, to research and develop their ideas in the local environment, and a period (within a few months) for the ideas to be realised and presented publicly.

### Partners of A Festival of Friendliness:

**Local partners:** Curator Maija Rudovska, artist Paula Vītola, Liepāja Culture Department, NGOs Representing National Minorities in Liepāja, Folk Ensembles Senoliai, Zussammen Sein, Bursztynki, Slavjane, Saule, Volnitsa, Impact Hub Liepāja, Kurzemes NGO Center, Lake Music, Austras Biedrība, Kuldīga Artists' Residency, Pair Residency in Pāvilosta, The Residency and Workshop Centre Serde, Cita Abra, Association Suiiti, Suiiti Craftsmen, Liv Union Rucava Tradition Club, Kuldīga Municipality, South Kurzeme Municipality, Ventspils Municipality, Talsi Municipality, The Nordic and Baltic network on Intangible Cultural Heritage  
**International partners:** Rethinkers (DK), Rupert (LT), Mustarinda (FI), Veszprém-Balaton 2023, ECoC Candidate City Aveiro 2027 (PT)

**Budget:** EUR 425 000

## Home of Happiness

/ Food and Culture

A well-fed person is a happy person, aren't they? Eating well and healthy is even better, and if it's in an exciting company, then we can definitely talk about a happy life! The food and the atmosphere that fills warms our bellies and warm our hearts, bring pleasant associations with the Home of Happiness, where we always want to return.

We northerners traditionally see food as a physiological necessity to sustain life and fight the cold. We ourselves are stingy with words and robust in our eating traditions, even though we boast an authentic and rich culinary heritage. Our European neighbours, on the other hand, are distinguished not only by their fantastic culinary heritage but also by the maintenance and nurturing of rituals of eating together that are full of feeling and conversation. We can certainly learn from the hot-blooded French, Portuguese, Italians and Spaniards alike about their fascinating food culture.

### The Residents' Restaurant

We want to create amazing moments for the city's residents and guests by creating meals in an unusual format – in people's own homes, in a personal

atmosphere, letting guests into our world of flavours, habits and passions. Alongside the meal, at a beautifully set table, the hosts of the house will offer a themed activity, a performance, a poetry reading or an interesting story.

The artistic director of our Concert Hall will be happy to invite you to dinner and sing a beautiful Baroque opera aria. The primadonna of the Liepāja Theatre will invite you to a premiere party/dinner at her residence. A passionate fisherman will show you the secrets of preparing your catch and entertain you with fishing legends. In other homes, we will be welcomed with freshly baked rye bread or a pot of the special fish stew Liepājas Menciņi, smoked plaice and white butter. Home-brewed beer, wine or stronger liquids will be an integral part of this delicious feast. This project will give the European and international audience the opportunity to get to know not only Latvian cuisine and people but also the people of the minorities living with us – Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Lithuanians – and dishes such as borscht, cepelini and solyanka, which have long been part of our culinary heritage.

### The Restaurant Feast

In 2027, we will invite **cafés and restaurants** in Liepāja, South Kurzeme and Kuldīga to organise, throughout the year, monthly, Common Table Days, where random visitors will be placed at tables together, enjoy delicious food, get to know, and enjoy the atmosphere with newly met fellow diners and their stories.

### A City f-EAT-sts

To strengthen the skills of talking to each other and having a good time together, we want to set up a monumental communal table. The table will become a symbol of a happy home. We will invite **European chefs and local artisans** to surprise and delight us with a shared meal. Everyone will be welcome and we will create several meals at different times of the day throughout the weekend so that everyone can find a place at the table. These could be a breakfast morning for children and families, a brunch for seniors or a platter of hors d'oeuvres that will captivate the appetite, themed lunches and candle light dinners wrapped in the romance of the evening.

### Gourmets in Liepāja

Adding to the diversity of our recipes and discovering new flavours, we will open new stands of world flavours in our proud **market Pēterturgus**, from where the delicacies of European nations will find their way into Liepājans' bellies. On the occasion of Europe Day, 9 May 2027, this will also help to flag up ECoC as an action of the European Union.

And the other way round through **Liepāja Gourmets**. The association promotes Latvia as a gourmet destination and focuses on the use of local and seasonal products, as well as sustainable and environmentally friendly approaches. They will invite the best chefs from Latvia and beyond to prepare tastings in our

public's favourite social and cultural venues. The focus is on culinary expertise and the subtle interpretation of local recipes and ingredients. In 2027, Association Liepāja Gourmets will create four seminars with international guest chefs who are invited to explore the region's products and recipes, further developing them and creating new interpretations of flavours. These workshops will be open to a wide range of stakeholders – professional chefs and hospitality students, enthusiastic home producers and those simply interested in cooking. As a result, we hope that participants will get to know and be proud of their culinary heritage, while the international guest chefs will become ambassadors of Latvian culinary excellence.

### Partners of Home of Happiness:

**Local partners:** Actors Inese Kučinska and Juris Bartkevičs, singer Baiba Bartkeviča, chefs Rauls Silts and Renārs Ķergalvis, Association Liepāja Gourmet and Mark Dieler, 150 Restaurants, Bars and Cafes of Liepāja, South Kurzeme and Kuldīga, Market Pēterturgus, JA Travel, NGOs Representing National Minorities in Liepāja, Kuldīga Active Recreation Centre, Ethnic Culture Centre Suiiti

**International partners:** Bodø 2024 (NO), Food Lab (Oulu 2026, FI), Palanga Smelt festival (LT)

**Budget:** EUR 115 000

## Skill Exchange Market

/ Intergenerational learning

True belonging to a community is characterised by similarities in the way we prepare the local and seasonal food, what we wear and why, the building traditions of a particular climate and, in general, the way we live and celebrate our way of life. Of course, globalisation has brought changes in these habits, also in Latvia, but the strong heritage traditions, the people who nurture and pass them on from generation to generation, encourage us to organise an extensive lifestyle Skill Exchange specific to Kurzeme and Latvia. We want to look back at both the ancient lifestyle skills that have been handed down through generations and the lifestyle skills that are characteristic of today because we believe that a full and rich life requires both. In this project, together with the cultural and folk art centres of Liepāja, South Kurzeme and Kuldīga, children and youth centres, non-governmental organisations, including minority organisations, we will manifest intergenerational cooperation with the aim of reviving and passing on to the future the skills needed for a good life in today's Europe.

### Traditional Skills on the Market

The quintessence of a traditional way of life today, where you can not only buy handicrafts, meet practising craftsmen and see them in action but also meet long-lost friends and acquaintances, is... guess what? It's not a supermarket, where everything is strictly profit-driven but a lively and lush traditional market, full of human stories, history and family heritage. Yes, you'll just have to have a word to get what you desire!

The traditional **Līva Village Festival** in Liepāja on the penultimate weekend in May, the **Miķeļa market in**

**Alsunga** at the end of September and the **Duke Jacob's market in Kuldīga** at the beginning of October, as well as the **ancient Curonian village market in Bandava** outside Aizpute, will be designed as a gathering of master craftsmen's workshops. Craftsmen from different European countries and twin towns will be invited to show the secrets of their craft to the general public, as well as offer their products for sale. From weaving fabrics and weaving traditional footwear pastalas to fine handicrafts, building tools and even roofing. Both local craftsmen and craftsmen from our European twin cities will be inspired by each other, enriching their cultural experiences and sharing demonstrations of their masterpieces.

### Skills in Ancient Cultural Spaces

Rucava, in South Kurzeme, has a strong cultural heritage that has developed over the centuries and is characterised by some of the most splendid folk costumes in Latvia, which preserves and seeks to transmit to new generations the living memory of local customs in clothing, construction and cooking, as well as in intangible cultural expressions. Rucava also has its own protected taste – Rucava white butter, which is traditionally prepared only there.

Grobiņa, the capital of South Kurzeme, is proud of its Viking heritage and in 2027, the **Living History Festival Seeburg** will open the **Living History Curonian Viking Grand House**, which will simulate the ancient craft skills and the exchange with craftsmen from lands near and far. The history and taste of the Baltic Sea region will be explored through the skills of locals.

The Suiiti cultural space in Kuldīga Region is unique not only in the Latvian but also in the global context and has therefore been included in UNESCO's World Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding list since 2009. In this context, safeguarding the tradition would be to manifest it in everyday life and at celebrations. Who can distinguish in the Suiiti heritage which is more important – the ability to bake sklandrauši (sweet rye dough cake with potato and carrot filling), to sing in a bourdon or to wear one's national costume with pride? That is why in autumn, around the harvest festival Miķeļi, alongside the autumn fair, inspired by the rich Suiiti heritage and the tradition of burdon, we will create **International Ethnomusic Days in Alsunga**, where you will be able to learn ancient singing and folk music techniques from Kurzeme and other Latvian regions, get to know the ethnomusic heritage of other European countries, and experience ethno music in a modern performance.

### Modern Skills

Our ancestors lived a full circular economy lifestyle, then it was a necessity and there were no alternatives, today it is a conscious choice for each of us to live in an environmentally friendly way and to adapt our habits accordingly. It is the lifestyle choices made in the household that determine the size of the personal ecological footprint, and more and more people are choosing to educate themselves, their children and their families and to revert to modern but environmentally

friendly daily living and lifestyle habits. Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Rot, Recycle – are on the agenda of today's responsible citizens. From the perspective of the future, these are the ancient skills of the future that we are developing today and that will serve as a testimony to the way of life of Europeans in Kurzeme in the 2020s.

In this project we want to highlight contemporary skills by organising a Contemporary Skill Exchange Market on the grounds of the Liepājas Metalurģs factory, which serves as an example of the principles of the circular economy, and by working with eco-living communities, home producers, senior organisations and young people, we will give a platform to showcase and inspire the planet and each of us individually for a better life. We will do this together with the association **Radi Vidi Pats**, which brings together local sustainable lifestyle enthusiasts with practical experience in building the freakbike movement, repair shop, maintaining a free store, community garden and promoting the learning of practical living skills.

### Meet Your Craftsman

As part of the Skill Exchange Market, we will identify the craftsmans of both ancient and modern lifestyle skills living and working in our territory and involve them in the **European Artistic Craft days**, together with the **Latvian National Centre for Culture** and the **Chamber of Crafts**, enriching the traditional Meet Your Craftsman campaign, where those interested will have the opportunity to look into the workshops of craftsman, see with their own eyes and perhaps even, under their guidance, forge, carve, sew something?

#### Partners of Skill Exchange Market:

**Local partners:** Latvian National Centre for Culture, Liepāja Folk Art and Culture Centre, Latvian Chamber of Crafts, The House of Craftsmen, Curonian Viking Settlement, Ethnographic House Zvanītāji, Cultural Centres of South Kurzeme and Kuldīga, Liepāja University Lifelong Learning Department, Liepāja State Technical School, Liepāja Children and Youth Centre, Kurzemes NGO Centre, Radi Vidi Pats and other NGOs  
**International partners:** University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy (EE), World Crafts Council (BE), Klaipeda City Municipality Centre of Ethnic Culture (LT), Estonian Folk Art and Craft Union (EE)

**Budget:** EUR 190 000

### Liepāja Celebrates!

/ Light Art

As we approach 2027, we will take the illuminated route event, which has become a recent tradition celebrated each 18 March, to a new level.

We see that not only the facade of a house and its beautiful form can be illuminated, but we can also let the people and their homes shine from the inside!

We want to encourage the professionals and the citizens of Liepāja in a meaningful and exciting way to illuminate their homes, backyards, streets and neighbourhoods from other angles, with "new eyes". And what if we were to give the event a theme – **Europe Shines in Liepāja!**

How colourful and exciting it could look – our southern neighbours Portugal, France, Greece, Spain, Italy and others all in Liepāja!

We are aware that this is not that easy, so we will organise public workshops for those who are actively interested in learning the simplest lighting techniques and skills – we will teach how to use light and colour, and introduce the possibilities of shadow games and video projectors. For the most enthusiastic visitors and neighbourhood groups, there will be the opportunity for individual consultations with lighting professionals, allowing them to add a special visual quality to the themes and places people have in mind for their city or for their homes. As part of the workshops, we will organise a lighting "expo" for amateurs – where one will be able to see and try out lighting equipment from the warehouses of professional event equipment companies. And we will provide free rental of lighting equipment for the duration of the festival – "first come, first served"!

The result will be a wide-ranging light festival programme with colourful, varied and spectacular routes, objects and stories, created by local and international professionals, and by the people of the city. Let the forgotten and city. Let the forgotten and the new wonders shine brightly at the Festival of Lights!

### We Are All United

Did you know that most towns in the South Kurzeme Region have a Liepāja Street? In Kuldīga, the main pedestrian street is Liepāja Street. But did you know that Liepāja Street (Libauer Strasse) is also in Berlin, Munich, Bremen and Stuttgart?

To promote a sense of belonging to the city and enjoy a sense of community, we will invite people in the regions and abroad to participate in the project **Liepāja Celebrates!** by illuminating their places of residence and their Liepāja Street. With the involvement of the Latvian diaspora through the platform [latviesi.com](http://latviesi.com), involving European Latvian Association, we will invite people to light up their homes also abroad.

#### Partners of Liepāja Celebrates!:

**Local partners:** Light Artists Mārtiņš Feldmanis and Mārtiņš Jansons, Kuldīga Cultural Centre, Liepāja Culture Department  
**International partners:** Light Artist Anastasia Isachsen (NO), Light Design Companies Lucion (CA), Onionlab (ES), Theoriz Studio (FR), Latvian Diaspora Organisations, European Latvian Association, Platform [latviesi.com](http://latviesi.com)

**Budget:** EUR 140 000





## Open Theatre Quarter

/ Theatre Projects Platform

### The Platform

Liepāja Theatre is the oldest theatre in our country that has worked in the tradition of psychological theatre for many decades. Now and in the future, the theatre is truly happy to develop and speak in a modern, contemporary stage language. With this project for the ECoC the **Liepāja Theatre** team wants to open up new dimensions of theatre and create an Open Theatre Quarter. It will be a new theatre platform that encourages active community participation, develops empathy and builds genuine relationships. Social responsibility, documentary theatre, contemporary forms to carry the theme to the people. Theatre as a valuable and useful place to spend time, with cognitive, educational and entertaining functions for the whole family, where intellectuals, pragmatists, housewives, students, seniors and children are represented, an open environment for all (free and creative) ideas.

### The Place

Open Theatre Quarter will be composed of the historic theatre building at 4 Teātra Street, the historic bank building transformed into a modern theatre space at 3 Teātra Street, and the inclusive square and courtyard of the two buildings at 2 Teātra Street.

Within the Platform, Liepāja Theatre will organise behind-the-scenes tours, Theatre Museum exhibitions, creative meetings and workshops for children and young people, theatre music and scenography workshops for young artists, theatre dance and choreography classes, play competitions for playwrights, and champagne breakfasts with your favourite actors and directors!

### New Place – New Plays

In the year of the European Capital of Culture, we want to seize the moment and the chance for new experiences. This will facilitate international workshops and residencies for guest directors and playwrights, who, being inspired by the city and its people, will be commissioned with new plays. The plays will be staged in an inclusive theatre performance.

### Go Ahead and Play

In 2027, a series of interactive fun activities for children called Go Ahead and Play! based on **Latvian, Polish and Lithuanian folk play traditions** will be launched. Folk play is a tradition-based way of transmitting world views, knowledge and skills, a joyful and entertaining activity that builds both creativity and hands-on experience. In a three-year period, there will be an opportunity to participate in and discover the genre of folk play and have fun. In 2025 – the phase of research into the traditions, the elaboration of methodological material for workshops. 2026 – development of dramaturgical material for a three-part play, a folk play-themed summer camp for community children and co-creation workshops. 2027 – development of

a co-produced production in 3 parts to be performed as a trilogy or 3 separate performances.

### International Mono-Play Festival

On the platform of the Open Theatre Quarter, in cooperation with international partners – **Kiel Festival, Polish Mono-Play Festival and Ukrainian director and playwright KLIM**, Liepāja Theatre will launch an international mono performance festival. Mono-plays are a format that allows the delivery of stories to the audience in a very personal way and direct interaction with the public, creating a special connection between the actor, the audience and the urban environment. The mono-performance is also the ultimate display of the actor's skill, where for an hour or an hour and a half the performer is both the storyteller, who may even be several characters, and in dialogue with the spectators. A cast of outstanding international actors – Lithuanian actors Birute Mar and Alexander Rubinov, Ukrainian – Vitaliy Bondarev, Polish – Piotr Kondrat, Belgian actress Viviane De Muynk, Italian actor, director and director of the Mono Performance Festival – Teodoro Bonzi Del Bene are ready to create exciting performances in 2027.

### Puppet Theatre Hither-Thither

The Open Theatre Quarter will also be a place of creative expression for **Liepāja Puppet Theatre**, which has many exciting activities planned for the ECoC programme. Visuality, the dynamics and the capaciousness of the relationship between people and objects are growing phenomena in the performing arts. In cooperation with puppet theatres in **Nordland, Chemnitz, Czech Republic, Tartu, Kaunas, Tallinn, Skopje, and Coimbra** (see below), Liepāja Puppet Theatre will host an international visual theatre festival Hither-Tither. Liepāja Puppet Theatre wants to join the circle of international theatre festivals, to develop creative and professional skills of visual theatre artists, to collaborate and co-create with like-minded European colleagues. During the festival there will also be a variety of creative activities, including international thematic discussions, workshops and seminars, as well as an engaging parade of artists and their puppets/objects through the streets of Liepāja.

### Floats Parade Kuldīga

Revitalising the traditions of street theatre, circus and music-making, which were banned in Latvia during the Soviet era, a performance parade of floats will be created in Kuldīga in cooperation with **street theatre groups from France, Belgium, and the Netherlands**. In the middle of summer, for three days, the old town of Kuldīga will be filled with decorated floats, which are in themselves works of art – masterpieces of the human imagination. Musical, often humorous performances, each with its own unique message, will invite, address and involve locals and visitors to tell both imaginary and real stories in a peculiar inter-genre artistic language, fitting perfectly into the environment of the old town, which becomes the stage.

The event will be organised by **Kuldīga Cultural Centre** in collaboration with the **French Cultural Institute** and street theatre groups **Des Quidams, Le Pipototal, Stromboli, Du O des Branches**.

#### Partners of Open Theatre Quarter:

**Local partners:** Liepāja Theatre, Liepāja Puppet Theatre, Kuldīga Cultural Centre

**International partners:** Actors Birute Mar and Alexander Rubinov (LT), Vitaliy Bondarev (UA), Piotr Kondrat (PL), Viviane De Muynk (BE), directors Klim (UA/RU) and Teodoro Bonzi Del Bene (IT), Kiel Festival (DE), Polish Mono-Play Festival (PL), French Cultural Institute (FR/LV), Nordland Visual Theatre (NO), Die Theater Chemnitz - Figurenteater (DE), International Union of Puppet Theatres Unima (CZ), Tartu Puppet Theatre (EE), Kaunas Puppet Theatre (LT), Tallinn Visual Theatre Festival NuQ Treff (EE), International Festival of Puppet Theatre Fener (MK), Luiš de Matoš Street Art Festival (PT), The Theatre Centre Vaba Lava (EE), FAI-AR Centre for Art in Public Space (FR), Théâtre de la Tête Noire (FR), Street Theatre Groups Des Quidams, Le Pipototal, Stromboli, Du O des Branches (FR)

**Budget:** EUR 896 000

## Everyone is Welcome!

/ Inclusive Culture

### International Immersive Theatre Festival

Dreaming of a more open and inclusive society in our city, region, country and Europe as a whole, the young creative forces of Kuldīga – directors, producers, representatives of non-governmental organisations, united in the organisation **Democracy Foundation**, have approached the world's leading immersive theatre professionals – **Borok Nagi (US), Jason Warren (UK), Stefan Miller (US)** – who have committed to participate and work together with the support of the Latvian Ministry of Welfare from 2026 till 2028 to create the Immersive Theatre Festival and the events around it. Together with local organisations they will create performative artworks involving local communities, people with special needs and disabilities, the general public, amateur theatre actors with whom they have previously worked in workshops. The performances will take place mainly in the urban environment of Kuldīga and Liepāja.

Further project activities include:

**Masterclasses.** In cooperation with the **Latvian Academy of Culture and Liepāja Theatre**, masterclasses for theatre professionals will be held, which will provide training in the method of inclusive theatre for future and already graduated directing professionals. The workshop is based on the methodological guidelines compiled by Jason Warren. We will also introduce the method of immersive theatre to amateur theatres in Liepāja, South Kurzeme and Kuldīga.

Together with **Sustento** (Latvian organisation for the Cooperation of People with Special Needs) and **Liepāja Society for the Blind**, associations for people with disabilities and special needs, we will create workshops where they will have the opportunity to get involved in the process of making theatre – from joining a local theatre company, to technical support – lighting, set design or servicing the event.

**Training.** The project team, event producers, organisers, technical and administrative staff will receive training on working with marginalised groups, which will give them the opportunity to learn skills in organising inclusive events when people with special needs and/or disabilities

are part of the project team and when they are attending the event. The training is planned to take place in the first half of 2026, so that it has immediate and real application in the implementation of cultural and social activities in 2027.

**International Immersive Theatre Conference Theatre of the Future.** An international conference will take place in the Kuldīga Democracy Quarter, where participants will reflect on the possibilities of art and its impact towards a more inclusive society. They will also discuss the role of local communities, amateur theatres, theatre professionals in this process, and share experiences that have already been gathered around the world.

We are also planning to hold discussions between the participants of the Immersive Theatre Festival project and the public about the progress and the production of the performances. We will assess the benefits for both those involved and the local community, allowing audiences to see and engage in conversations about and around the making of the performances beyond the performance.

### Empathy Gallery

In order to promote empathy through art, a more inclusive society and to reduce prejudices about certain social topics and groups, the **pop up gallery AVA** will open its doors in 2027 at the Kuldīga Artists' Residence. Artist **Undīne Celitāne** will create an exhibition of works in immersive media art where visitors will have the opportunity to practice empathy with and through art. Working with inclusive technologies and socially oriented themes in techniques such as Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), inclusive projections, and spatial sound, which involve partial to full engagement of the human senses, the gallery's artists will offer, in their work, to put yourself in the shoes of another.

Both local and international artists will be invited to participate in the Empathy Gallery. The artworks will be created in the Kuldīga residence and in close collaboration with local residents. Focus group events will take place both in the gallery premises and in person with the target group, e.g. at a retirement home for the elderly, children at boarding school, or people with special needs.

### We Are Different. Inclusive Symposium

Thinking about inclusive schools and society, starting from 2023, experts from the **Liepāja City Education Department** will organise annual seminars, best practice exchanges, professional talks, participatory events both in Liepāja and the Kurzeme region, bringing together international experts and specialists. Each year, a specific range of interests will be activated, especially those that demonstrate the diversity of an inclusive society and the diversity of both people and interests. For the final phase in 2027, a Symposium, Inclusive Family, Preschool, School, Society will be held.

The summary of the previous years' professional talks and panel discussions, activities will be published in a methodological material with recommendations on

building an inclusive society, implementing strategies of the philosophy of inclusive educational institutions, with the confirmation that Liepāja is an inclusive and open to diversity European city.

## Zenta Mauriņa Summer School

The International Summer School for Young Artists in Grobiņa, named after writer Zenta Mauriņa, will raise a great deal of (un)rest on the issue of how to bring young European artists and writers with disabilities into a shared cultural space and visibility.

In Latvia and Eastern Europe in general, after a long period of isolation behind the Iron Curtain, the concept of inclusion not only in art and culture but even in everyday life and on the street is still relatively new. A huge group of society is not represented at all – in literature, visual arts, and other creative disciplines. We want to change that.

**Dr. philol. Zenta Mauriņa (1897-1978)** was a Latvian writer, translator and thinker who spent her childhood, school years and youth in Grobiņa and Liepāja. From the age of five she was wheelchair-bound but despite this she received an excellent education and became one of the first Latvian feminists and advocates of women's equality since the first half of the 20th century and an inspiring example to everyone, embodying true talent and strength of spirit.

Zenta Mauriņa was a remarkably insightful and progressive person for her time and also for today, and no one thought of identifying her or judging her by her physical handicaps, so in this project we also want to focus on professional contemporary art, not a hobby group. In collaboration with our experienced partners in the field of inclusive culture **The Lead Organisation for Disability Arts – Disability Arts Cymru in Wales, UK**, we will organise a summer school as a creativity laboratory where 30 shortlisted young artists from Europe will polish their talents together with internationally renowned artists in different fields of art – literature, visual arts, contemporary music, and dance. Each discipline will have its own mentor. The result will be a number of interdisciplinary contemporary artworks and/or performances to be exhibited or shown in the South Kurzeme city of Grobiņa. We plan to recruit young artists to participate in the summer school in cooperation with Latvian creative universities – Latvian Academy of Culture, Art Academy of Latvia, University of Latvia and Liepāja University and their partner academies.

The summer school will be held at the **Grobiņa Secondary School** named after Zenta Mauriņa, which is adapted for people with reduced mobility and participants will be able to arrive with an assistant or use local helpers. Anyone interested in the project will be invited to apply, regardless of physical ability or disability but first priority will be given to young people with disabilities.

We believe that this summer school will be a strong springboard for something bigger – a legacy like the creation of the Zenta Mauriņa Foundation or an art residency for young people with different limitations.

### Partners of Everyone is Welcome!:

**Local partners:** Latvian Ministry of Welfare, Latvian Academy of Culture, Art Academy of Latvia, University of Latvia, Liepāja University Writing Studies, Latvian Umbrella Body for Disability Organisations Sustento, Liepāja Theatre, Liepāja Society of the Blind, Democracy Foundation, Kuldīga Democracy Quarter, Kuldīga Artists' Residence, Liepāja City Education Department, Grobiņa Secondary School, Zenta Mauriņa Foundation, Amateur Theatres in Liepāja, South Kurzeme and Kuldīga

**International partners:** Immersive Theatre Professionals Borok Nagi, Stefan Miller (US), Jason Warren (UK), Expert in Inclusive Arts Nicholas D. Williams (NO), Visual Artist Gabrielė Gervickaitė (LT), Theatre Director Nikita Kobelev (RU), Disability Arts Cymru (UK), Splittergale (DK), Tartu 2024 (EE), Bodo 2024 (NO), Bad Ischl / Salzkammergut 2024 (AT), The Kondas Centre of Naive and Outsider Art (EE), Re:borN Dance Immersive (US), Shape Arts (UK)

**Budget:** EUR 220 000

## From Karosta to Radosta

/ Shaping a New Creative Quarter

Karosta is the neighbourhood of Liepāja with the most distinct personality and is an absolutely unique residential area in Europe, whose inhabitants are a very motley crowd and where the largest Russian-speaking community in Liepāja lives. Through the ECoC process, Karosta will become a model for other neighbourhoods in Liepāja – how to assert their independence while remaining part of a cohesive city.

We want to turn Karosta into Radosta (from the war harbour to the creative harbour) empowering local residents to take part in shaping their own living environment in this legendary part of the city. The Karosta – Radosta project is a platform for activities and events. An international open call for projects, whose content and objectives will be defined and implemented together with **Mário Caeiro, Portuguese curator**, cultural event creator, lecturer and researcher in urban culture and public art. Mário Caeiro is the author of *Art in the City – Contemporary History* (2014) and teaches at ESAD.CR, Instituto Politécnico de Leiria, where he coordinates the Masters in Cultural Management.

The former military barracks will be replaced by a creative quarter – the cultural space **Atmodas Dārzs/ Awakening Garden** – with the Karosta Scene stage, a community garden and interdisciplinary events. With activities and a creative residency in a disused water tower, the Karosta will become a port where artists come, work and move on. **The Karosta Festival** – a series of events in Redāns Fort, Lačplēsis Park and the Northern Forts, in the water tower, where we will invite residents and artists to paint large-scale murals, has already become a tradition.

The cultural space Atmodas Dārzs is a place for freedom, creativity and encounter, designed to encourage visitors to raise their potential for creative engagement and the interaction of different art forms in a playful way. The creation of this place is the initiative of local entrepreneur and creative architect **Madars Markus-Narvils**, with the aim of creating an ever-changing interdisciplinary cultural offer where art, gastronomy, dance, music, and drama meet and where the boundary between creator and visitor disappears,

the visitor indirectly becoming a co-creator of the event. An experimental centre for local community initiatives – a place that is sorely lacking in Karosta today, a place for locals to come together, to create, and to enjoy.

It is in this creative quarter that we will look for answers to the question of where the centre and arteries of life are in the so-called dormitory district, how to dispel stereotypes and stigmas about our place of residence that have lived in people's minds for decades, and how to create a new living environment on the ruins of a crumbling military legacy.

In 2023, we will place an object *Calcário* by **Portuguese artist Sandra Baía** – a 6 cubic metre limestone bolca brought from Portugal – in the Atmodas Dārzs. Its journey to Liepāja, Latvia, will symbolically tell the story of Portugal and Latvia's common path to becoming the European Capital of Culture. By placing it in the neighbourhood of Liepāja, we will try to transform the perception of a harbour of war to a harbour of creativity with the help of ECoC events. We will let everyone dream of turning a stone into an object of art, sculpture, architecture or urban design.

### Partners of From Karosta to Radosta:

**Local partners:** Atmodas Dārzs of Karosta, NGO Karostas Glābšanas Biedrība

**International partners:** Curator Mário Caeiro (PT), Artist Sandra Baía (PT), Association Arts Zone (LT), Klaipėda Branch of Lithuanian Photographers Association (LT), ibug Urban Culture Festival (DE), FAI-AR Centre for Art in Public Space (FR), Veszprém-Balaton 2023 (HU), ECoC Candidate City Brno 2028 (CZ)

**Budget:** EUR 142 000

## The Return of Towers

/ Religious and Spiritual Culture

The sacred architecture and music heritage in Liepāja and its surroundings is very diverse. **St. Anne's Church**, which was originally a wooden building with painted walls and vaults, is the oldest church in the city. The largest baroque altar retable in Latvia and one of the most significant wood carving works in the Baltics has survived from the 17th century to the building. The retable, completed in 1697, bears the signature of sculptor Nikolaus Söffrens from Ventspils. Such self-affirmation is a rare phenomenon, not only in the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia, but also in a much broader European context.

With careful research and supervision of the **Liepāja Museum**, we will restore the baroque altar retable and create a multimedia performance to present it to a wider audience.

The Liepāja **Holy Trinity Cathedral** is another special building from the 18th century. The city had a growing need for a new church and to build it was agreed through a mason from Koenigsberg Christoph Dorn. And again it becomes visible that European cooperation in skills and materials led to amazing results: Dutch bricks, sandstone from Gotland, at the time cutting edge technology used in the construction of the windows, and a rococo sculptor from Poland or Bohemia who gave the interior touches.

Not to mention the organ – the world's largest not rebuilt mechanical organ with more than 7,000 pipes.

In September 2027, in collaboration with the **Algarve Organ Festival in Portugal** we will hold the annual Liepāja Organ Music Festival, inviting both local and international organists.

The Holy Trinity Cathedral also holds an extensive library of sheet music and we will digitise its unique content.

We will use the opportunity to unite more than **40 churches in Liepāja and the region** – some of them remarkable on a European architectural or artistic level – in a series of concerts and performances by the most outstanding Latvian and European musicians, allowing to get to know and illuminate not only the most fascinating examples of Liepāja and the region's sacred architecture, but also to enjoy the sounds of music in their walls. The content of this programme will be developed by the artistic director of the ECoC team, while its implementation will be carried out through an open call to local cultural operators both in Liepāja and in the municipalities – this will be an opportunity for them to be part of a large European project network and to demonstrate the skills of mutual cooperation they have learnt in practice.

Let's sing not only in Latvian Protestant churches, but also in Polish, and Lithuanian Catholic ones, Jewish houses of prayer, Russian Orthodox churches, which are noteworthy testimonies of the sacred heritage in the city. We will cooperate with the Music, Art and Local Harvest Festival Zemlika in Durbe, the smallest town of Latvia.

### Partners of The Return of Towers:

**Local partners:** Restorer Ģirts Burvis, Latvian Composers Union, Liepāja Museum, Liepāja Holy Trinity Cathedral, Liepāja Organ Music Festival, 40 Churches in Liepāja and South Kurzeme Region, Festival Zemlika

**International partners:** Sound our Souls (Tartu 2024, EE), ECoC Candidate City Faro 2027 (PT), Music Cultural Association XXI (PT)

**Budget:** EUR 313 000

## A Day in the Life

/ Photography

This beautiful date – 27/7/2027 – will be just another Tuesday in human life. Only on this special day we will freeze a **snapshot of Europe** and beyond. It will be an outdoor photo project in Liepāja and 27 other cities in Europe and the world. The magic of the art of photography is nowadays easily accessible to everyone and allows the creativity of people from all walks of life to be expressed. Thanks to modern technology, the number of people who want to capture an important moment in life, relive it, admire it or share it with others is growing rapidly. Professionals and amateurs with modern digicams, smartphones or analogue cameras – everyone in Liepāja, Latvia, Europe and the world who wishes will be able to capture the events of a day. Holidays, friends, weddings, laughter, victories, funerals, nature, the sea, portraits, landscapes and all kinds of adventures. But also the deeper themes that unite us all – multicultural and multinational environments, ecology and the challenges

of climate change, heritage preservation, social issues. Can you imagine what happens in a day, what lives will be revealed to us! Every second and minute of the day 27/7/2027 will contain several images from Liepāja and at the same time snapshots from Nova Gorica and Gorizia, Bad Ischl, Brno, Gdynia, Elblag, Guldborgsund, Palanga, Darmstadt, Ijui, and many other places. The final part of the event will be a curated selection of works – a photo exhibition A Day in the Life, which will travel around Latvian and European cities.

To prepare for this event, in 2025, as part of the celebration of 400 years of Liepāja, we will organise various meetings, master classes, seminars and pop-up exhibitions with Latvian and international photographers for everyone interested.

**Partners of A Day in the Life:**

**Local partners:** Fotast Photo Studio of Liepāja Folk Art and Culture Centre, Association Viena Diena.lv

**International partners:** Klaipeda Branch of Lithuanian Photographers Association (LT), Association Arts Zone (LT), Lithuanian Artists' Association Kaunas Department (LT), Nova Gorica 2025 (SI), Bad Ischl / Salzkammergut 2024 (AT), ECoC Candidate City Brno 2028 (CZ), Twin cities of Liepāja: Gdynia (PL), Elblag (PL), Guldborgsund (DK), Palanga (LT), Darmstadt (DE), Ijui (BR), Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan (AZ)

**Budget:** EUR 70 000

# Deliberate Modesty

## No More Heavy Metal

/ Circus, Contemporary Art, Avant-Garde, Alternative Music, Street Art

This project is not about banning hard rock music. It is about reclaiming the site of a 130-year-old steelworks. The 120 hectares of the former **Liepājas Metalurģs** plant, which belongs to the city, is now being opened up for new uses.

Step by step, fences are being demolished and a network of streets is to be created so that people can access this unique place, which has been closed to the public for so many decades. The European Capital of Culture is a driving force for opening up the area, creating green spaces on the lakeshore, public spaces for ECoC events, art projects and creating a lasting legacy.

The vast territory of Metalurģs will become a platform for artistic acupuncture and will put New European Bauhaus theory into practice, allowing people to experience, see and feel green transformations and the recovery of environmental value in a hitherto completely alienated industrial area. From 2026 onwards, we will create several international open calls to activate the street art movement, organising lectures or film evenings in the area. This open call will be carried out in collaboration with **ibug collective** – their experience of more than 15 years in organising an urban art festival in abandoned industrial sites in Germany and the Creative Europe funded **RESCUE – Regeneration of disused Industrial Sites** will be an invaluable inspiration for opening our Metalurģs site to people. The ibug collective's approach that it is important to ensure that the industrial site and its history take centre stage – and that the emotions that people feel when they enter the site after having worked there, often for 40 years or more, watched it collapse and are now experiencing change are addressed – will be our guiding principle.

## White Night

To celebrate the arrival of autumn, in the surprising and mysterious territory of the Liepājas Metalurģs, inspired by and in collaboration with our colleagues from La Friche Belle de Mai and Festival Le Bon Air, Marseille – Musique électronique, we will create an unforgettable cultural experience, a sleepless White Night weekend.

The first act – performances on the roof terrace of the former chain workshop, which offers a unique panorama of the breathtaking industrial area on one side and the romantic Lake Liepāja on the other. The second act will be even more dynamic, starting at dusk, when the vast territory of Metalurģs will be

transformed into a passionate dance floor, performance, street art, and circus stage. A clever design of the area, symphonies of lights, more than fifty artists – circus, performance, dance, a music programme with legends of world electronic music, heroes and heroines of the local scene and new names await the visitor. Sounds ranging from rave to techno and house rhythms to disco and more alternative trends – bass, hardcore dance, ebm, dancehall or ambient – and many other visual and choreographic performances.

The internationally renowned Latvian festival will also be our partner in bringing experimental and avant-garde music into the huge abandoned metalworking hangars. The festival Sound Forest has been providing fresh musical perspectives by promoting international and Latvian new music on the interface of experimental sound worlds with other art forms. The festival organisers are also among Latvia's pioneers in exploring industrial territories through artistic developments. It will be their first work on the Liepājas Metalurģs premises.

In addition, Sound Forest will present three sound installations, focusing on the interaction between physical space and sound. It is said that music is sound in time, but sound art is sound in space.

## Dirty Deal Audio-Spiders

In 2027, three Ambisonics Spiders, or micro-spatial sound concert halls, will be created and located on the Metalurģs site in collaboration with **Dirty Deal Audio**, a company that promotes a favourable climate and strengthens fertile ground for the development of Latvia's innovative electronic and contemporary non-academic music scene and community. The Ambisonics Spider micro concert halls will feature spatial sound installations and concert programmes specially created for these unique listening spaces. By attending a screening, people will be able to select and experience content from 30 pre-prepared surround sound concert programmes by different artists.

**Partners of No More Heavy Metal:**

**Local partners:** Dirty Deal Audio, Sound Forest Festival  
**International partners:** ibug Urban Culture Festival (DE), Festival Le Bon Air (FR), Zollverein Foundation (DE)

**Budget:** EUR 220 000



## Shine Silently

/ Detox and Mental Health Rebalancing

Researchers say that a person needs at least 12 positive touches a day to feel in harmony with themselves and their surroundings. Caresses and touches can also be found in nature – in the feel of feet sinking into the sand and ankles tickled by the wash of the waves, in the sure support of a century-old tree trunk and in the energetic chirping of birds at dawn.

Latvians still live close to nature, in terms of natural environment and human impact, Latvia is the second greenest country in Europe (after Sweden). We will especially invite Europeans to seek rest in nature and enjoy healing walks on the trails and tourist routes of Liepāja, South Kurzeme and Kuldīga regions, alongside the restless and inspiring cultural events. Experience the vivid presence of nature, relaxing nature shows and even surprising revelations and transformations.

The Detox Walk will be created and guided by **Austrian choreographer and osteopath Tobias Draeger**, whose working method is his unconventional approach to artistic concepts, where choreographic structures intermingle with osteopathic competences – and by Latvian **dancer/choreographer Kristīne Brīniņa**, who works with a documentary dance method based on research of everyday life, translating seemingly simple actions/movements into unique art forms. Participants of the Detox Walk will be able to physically and mentally "cleanse" themselves, let go of everyday or long-lasting stress in a simple choreographed nature.

The project will pay special attention to strengthening the capacity of tourism operators and staff by offering courses and workshops in product development, verification and service design to create a common understanding and performance in the network of these tourist routes with the aim of becoming an example of best practice.

### Partners of Shine Silently:

**Local partners:** Choreographer Kristīne Brīniņa, Liepāja Region Tourism Information Office, South Kurzeme Tourism Agency, Kuldīga Tourism Information Centre, Liepāja University Music Therapy Programme

**International partners:** Choreographer and osteopath Tobias Draeger (AT), GR2013 Hiking Trail (FR), Bodø 2024 (NO), Art and Nature trails (Oulu 2026, FI), Carte Blanche 2.0 (DK), music therapists Vilmante Aleksiene (LT) and Reiner Hauss (DE)

**Budget:** EUR 150 000

## Face to Face with the Natural

/ Art, Green Thinking and Sustainability

During three summer weekends and a Salmon Watch Night in autumn, we will implement events and activities that promote public participation in the conservation of natural values and diversity, that highlight and showcase the treasures of our coastline, while teaching how to use them in a conscious and sustainable way. Through interdisciplinary artistic and cultural projects, involving the public as well as experts, we will create a common

understanding of sustainable living, ecologically wise management, biodiversity, empathy for the environment, and tools to change everyday habits.

Learning from the **Tartu and Oulu ECoC experiences**, we will develop eco design principles for sustainable events and link them to the coastal ecosystem management model jointly developed by Liepāja and South Kurzeme – these will guide events and open-call applications. The development of the coastal ecosystem management model is an initiative of the **Liepāja Municipality Environment Department**, based on the assessment of ecosystem services, highlighting the benefits and trade-offs between different land use options, integrating biophysical and socio-economic methods. It helps to analyse the interacting relationships between people and the environment and to make choices in favour of a particular action/development scenario taking into account these interactions.

This plan will allow economists to value our natural riches such as mushrooms, berries, medicinal plants and translate their importance into monetary value, and artists to express this value in music, performances, fashion, dance and other creative forms. Task Force **(Un)rest in action** – environmental governance institutions and culture working together to engage the public and together make a positive difference to the way we treat the environment.

## Arsenic and Green Lace

In the 19th century, arsenic was used to stabilise the pigment in green textiles and fashion became literally dangerous to human health. The British Medical Journal wrote that a woman could "carry enough poison in her skirts to kill all the admirers she might meet at half a dozen parties". Today, fast fashion, the textile industry's overconsumption of resources and the huge mountains of textile waste are dangerous not only to humans but to the sustainability of the entire planet. To give the textile industry a healthy green colour, young people from the **Liepāja Secondary School of Music, Art and Design, and Liepāja State Technical School**, class for Costume Design and Styling, involving local textile companies, will create and implement a vision for the future of Liepāja textiles under the guidance of **Kristīne Upesleja – Latvian textile artist** and founder of the Innovative Textiles and Materials Department at FIDM / Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising. Kristīne Upesleja has been invited as an expert on wearable technologies, smart fabrics, sustainable fashion and biomaterials/biotechnology to China, Taiwan, Japan, Canada, Europe and the USA, as well as in publications such as French Vogue and LA Magazine.

On a weekend in May the result will be a sustainable and innovative fashion show on the big catwalk of Horse Island. But until then, in 2026, the young people will also have the opportunity to take part in the GO!2025 Nova Gorica project **Ecothreads and Bien** and Trenčín ECoC project **Laboratory of Sustainable Fashion**.

## Good Natured Festival

The LABA DABA (Good Nature) Festival is one of the largest and oldest alternative and non-commercial art events in Latvia, providing an opportunity to get to know both local and international current artists, create international contacts and exchange experiences. The festival's philosophy and goal: to create an atmosphere at the festival that lives up to its name – **LABA DABA** is a summer event invariably characterised by a benign attitude towards people, events and nature. In addition to the environmental education activities included in the programme on an early July weekend in 2027, the event will propose a set of activities to reduce the environmental footprint and apply deliberate modesty in all stages of the project, eco-friendly packaging, a cup deposit system – a system that was introduced for the first time in Latvia during the 2019 edition of the LABA DABA festival and helped reduce the total amount of waste by 4.37 tonnes! and free mobile ashtray distribution (PET bottle blanks) to keep litter off the lawn – a showcase of the circular economy at a cultural festival.

## Face to Face with Nature

A weekend in August consists of the following four projects where artists blur the boundaries between human and biosphere. An open call for ideas on environmental empathy projects will complete the programme.

## Signal at Dusk

**Jeroen Strijbos** and **Rob van Rijswijk's** ambitious project opera *Signal at Dusk*, featuring four sopranos, an invisible choir and ship foghorns at sea one kilometre from the shore, will spark people's imagination through a sonic adventure on the beach. As the audience and the performers wander along the coast, women's voices sing of the waves as sources of seduction, desire, nourishment, danger, destruction, loss. Around an invisible choir, sounding from 24 loudspeakers, voices move across the sand, with the mournful tones of foghorns serving as reference points. Fragments of texts, poems about the sea beckon the audience along the kilometre-long stretch of beach as darkness falls. *Signal at Dusk* connects land and sea in sound, making them merge in the visitors' perception, but also allowing their sonic expressions to dissipate into the wind.

## Deep Fitocracy: Wild Songs

**Špela Petrič** is a new media artist based in Ljubljana and Amsterdam, trained in natural sciences and with a PhD in biology, currently working as a postdoctoral fellow at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam's Smart Hybrid Forms Lab. The participatory performance *Deep Fitocracy: Wild Songs* will be an expedition in which the audience is invited to explore plant communities (urban) in the wild with recombinant tools. Recombinant tools are onto-epistemological objects developed through a detailed study of the logics and values that define fields such as ecology, forestry, agriculture, mythology, local traditions, tourism, public policy,

economy, industry, etc. The different elements are mixed to create new tools for observation. These tools allow participants to "measure" the forces of attraction and repulsion of plant communities, to lose the separation between the observer and the observed and to realise that the values we place on plant communities are the forces through which plants act on us.

## The Sounds of the Air and Water Worlds

David Rothenberg – musician, composer, writer and naturalist philosopher has been writing and performing works about the relationship between humans and nature for many years. His books and recordings reflect his long-standing interest in understanding other species, such as birds or whales, as a composer and jazz musician, making music with them. As part of the face-to-face programme, **David Rothenberg** will give workshops for musicians in the interpretation and improvisation of natural sounds.

## Ecosexual Bathhouse

Ecosexual Bathhouse is a travelling installation that invites you to leave the urban wilderness and get intimate with the biosphere. **Australian artist collective Pony Express** will offer a wonder cave with different eco-erotic experiences – experiment with pollination, relax in the sauna or let a bath connoisseur lead you to your own ecological awakening. There is something for everyone, from the mild bio-curious to the hardened nature lover. Everyone is invited to embrace the Earth and let the germ of their naturalness blossom. Inspired by Annie Sprinkle and Dr Elizabeth Stephens' *Ecosexual Manifesto*, this project explores a radical environmentalism in which politics becomes very personal: if we can learn to passionately love the Earth, then maybe we can save it.

## Salmon Watch Nights

A series of events by the creative team of the **Chamber Music Festival Sansusī**. Five weekends throughout the Salmon conservation period from mid-October to mid-November in the Kurzeme salmon river basins, forests, banks, campsites and towns, inviting local people to intimate art events featuring Latvian and European music, literature, performance, dance, circus artists.

The rivers and their ecosystems are an integral part of restoring and maintaining the health of the Baltic Sea. Wild salmon populations in Europe have declined by 40–80%. In Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, wild salmon were completely wiped out between 1960 and 1998. The main causes of the salmon's disappearance are: river pollution, dams and intensive salmon fishing, including illegal fishing. The Venta river in the Kurzeme region is now threatened. Year after year, the number of salmon there is declining critically. It is threatened by significant global climate change, with rising air and water temperatures and a chain of successive changes in the river ecosystem. The disappearance of salmon and brown trout is not a phenomenon unique to Kuldīga or Kurzeme. This is a problem for the whole of Europe.

In order to promote empathetic attitudes towards nature and public participation in conservation issues, including artists' agendas, and in solidarity with the Environmental Service, the Chamber Music Festival Sansusī will organise *Salmon Protection Nights in 2027*. According to environmental inspectors, it is the protection of spawning grounds that is one of the best tools to increase fish populations and, by involving artists, we want to make the protection of salmon a family tradition.

### Partners of Face to Face with the Natural:

**Local partners:** Liepāja Secondary School of Music, Art and Design, Liepāja State Technical School, Liepāja Municipality Environment Department, Music Festivals Laba Daba and Sansusī, Latvian Scout and Guide Central Organization  
**International partners:** Multimedia artists Špela Petrič (SI/NL) and David Rothenberg (US), curator Vytautas Michelkevičius (LT), artist Duo Pony Express (AU), Bad Ischl / Salzkammergut 2024 (AT), Ecothreads and Bien (Nova Gorica 2025, SI), Natural Stages (Oulu 2026, FI), Trenčín 2026 (SK), ECoC Candidate Cities Faro and Braga 2027 (PT), artist Duo Strijbos & van Rijswijk (NL)

**Budget:** EUR 385 000

## The Other Sea Festival

/ Marine Awareness

The Other Sea Festival in 2027 will be a week of events dedicated to maritime awareness and public education on the critical state of the Baltic Sea with a variety of cultural activities, sports competitions, seafood tastings and new recipes, the creation and performance of the *Sea Symphony* (see *Agora of Values*), the creation of a community theatre show and a charming summer open-air dance.

Our long-term goal is to protect the sea from pollution and to raise awareness of how we can all help preserve it in order to enjoy a clean and healthy Baltic Sea together.

Some of the activities of the annual Sea Festival remain the same: food stalls, decorations and a stage performance before the open-air dance. For the 2027 edition we want to include the celebration of sea conservation in offering a more ecological, educational and community-friendly preparation phase, with the following activities.

## What Does the Baltic Sea Mean to You?

Involvement of **amateur theatres** in the region (Liepāja, Aizpute, Grobiņa, Kuldīga, etc.) in the preparation of a walking performance using community theatre methodology. It will be coordinated by the experienced community theatre creator and director **Jānis Balodis**. Amateur actors will engage local people in interviews and conversations, gathering their family stories, memories and major events in and around the Baltic Sea. From the obtained material, a walking show will be created along the shores of Liepāja, lakes and other water bodies. The central theme of the show, which will permeate the documentary stories, no surprise there, is water. Actors and people of all ages will take part in the creation and conclusion, creating intergenerational dialogues. At the end, the audience and participants of the show will meet at the closing green ball of

the Sea Festival. The documentary stories will also be published in a special, documentary audio format, which will allow you to walk the route after the Other Sea Festival and listen to the stories on your smart devices at the specified points. The walking show will also be suitable for people with disabilities.

## Sustainable Seaside Scrumptiousness

Creating new, sustainable food recipes that are friendly to the Baltic Sea and change habits. Recipes will be developed by students, scientists and chefs analysing endangered fish species and invasive species in the Baltic Sea and its coastal habitats. Within the framework of the European Capital of Culture, workshops will be organised with food enthusiasts, chefs, the most popular food bloggers in the region, and locals to create new flavours and combinations. For example, replacing endangered species with invasive ones (e.g. replacing cod with round-bottomed seabass). Fermentation, use of seafood, gentle use of local flora and reduction of food waste. The new recipes will premiere at the Festival, where they will be tasted and purchased at the **New Seaside Recipe Canteen**, replacing the usual festival practice of serving quick snacks in plastic containers.

### Partners of The Other Sea Festival:

**Local partners:** Theatre director Jānis Balodis, environmental journalist Eva Johansone, Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music, Amateur Theatres in Liepāja, South Kurzeme and Kuldīga, Latvian Institute of Aquatic Ecology  
**International partners:** Composer Mantautas Krukauskas (Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, LT), Artist Duo Varvara & Mar (EE), OSTRALE Centre for Contemporary Art (DE), Centre of Marine Sciences of the University of Algarve (PT), Bad Ischl / Salzkammergut 2024 (AT), ECoC Candidate Cities Faro and Aveiro 2027 (PT), Marine Research Institute of Klaipėda University (LT)

**Budget:** EUR 235 000

## An Island Adventure of Nature and Science

/ STEAM

Horse Island in Liepāja is a place of legends and myths – and science. In the past, the lakeside meadows on the peninsula were used for grazing horses. Until the late 1960s it was the site of the city's municipal waste dump, and long after it was inaccessible to visitors. Today, Horse Island is landscaped and open to the public, with an access road, a beautiful nature trail, wooden footbridges and wonderful viewing platforms on the lake shore slopes.

The island was artificially formed from the slag, a surplus product of the Liepājas Metalurģs factory. One of the important stops on Horse Island is also the **Science and Education Innovation Centre – Nature House**, which offers a wide range of STEAM and environmental education programmes, workshops, creative days and other activities. Thanks to technology and modern communication, they are accessible to children and young people from all over Latvia.

## Nature and Science – Conversation Festival

In 2027, together with the popular **Latvian conversation festival LAMPA** and in cooperation with the **Nordic and Latvian science centres**, a conversation festival on nature and science topics and their interaction will take place at Horse Island. The festival will bring together both local and international researchers, scientists and experts to discuss science in the natural world, its promotion and encouragement. There will also be a regional debate tournament for school pupils on scientific research activities in the natural sciences in a school setting. Workshops for preschool, primary and secondary school students, parents and grandparents with children. The knowledge gained will be reflected in selfmade works of art. Research programmes suitable for visually impaired people will be developed and implemented.

In the build up to 2027, activities will be held each year to strengthen the "taste for adventure" in young people and children, inviting them to discover and explore. Each year, different installations will be created around the Horse Island and Lake Liepāja – paintings, musical pieces, performances, video art works, also involving the **Liepāja University** and its resources that raise awareness of climate change and environmental issues. Visitors to the event will also be involved in the creation of a collaborative installation, such as an environmental object made from found rubbish on the Horse Island. The annual children's workshop Sounds of the Lake – music, art and technology – will highlight the value of the environment. Hear, see and feel what is not visible in everyday life. There will be a youth competition – Pupils Experimenting – and summer science camps in conjunction with the programme – internship at the Nature House – STEAM. Also a series of classes of Nature with Other Sectors, which will include various discussions with Liepāja NGOs and young people about Liepāja, the environment and opportunities to engage in sustainable activities. We will create a floating classroom at the Nature House, which will be a new multifunctional object, a wooden platform on the Lake Liepāja, on which various interactive group activities will be implemented.

To foster cooperation between Nordic Science Centres and to generate interest in STEAM activities, the annual **Nordic Science Centres Association (NSCA)** conference will be organised in Liepāja in 2023, during which presentations will be made on topics of interest to the Science Centres, looking at the latest technologies, the role of science and raising public involvement in research design.

### Partners of An Island Adventure of Nature and Science:

**Local partners:** Science and Education Innovation Centre Nature House, Liepāja City Education Department, Science and Education Innovation Centre Ziic, Liepāja University, Liepāja Secondary School of Music, Arts and Design, Liepāja Museum, Production Company Lake Music, NGO Radi Vidi Pats, Liepāja Society for the Blind, Society Debate Centre, Dots Foundation for an Open Society

**International partners:** Marine Research Institute of Klaipeda University (LT), Kulturhaus Arthur (Arthur e.V.) (DE), Klub Solitaer (DE), Trondheim Science Center (NO), Jaermuseet Regional Museum (NO), Go with Stream (Oulu 2026, FI), ECoC Candidate City Aveiro 2027 (PT), Nordic Science Centres Association

**Budget:** EUR 320 000

# Creative Foresight

## Liepāja Art Forum

/ Contemporary Art and Technology

In 2027, the International Contemporary Art Festival Liepāja Art Forum, which annually introduces new and innovative forms of performing arts, will explore technology and human cooperation, mapping the desired potential futures. Leveraging the outstanding contemporary artists and thinkers who practise art as a kind of social activism, speaking on topics such as gender equality, environmental challenges, digital and green transition, sustainability and resilience.

French composer, performer and multimedia **artist Pierre Jodlowski** will present his **contemporary opera Alan T.** about English mathematician, computer scientist, and cryptanalyst Alan Turing, who is considered the father of theoretical computer science and artificial intelligence. In 1952, Turing was indicted and brutally destroyed for his homosexuality. The opera's plot picks up issues such as artificial intelligence, cryptology, history, exclusion and homophobia.

We also plan to collaborate with the **Dutch artist duo Strijbos & van Rijswijk**, who inspire imagination through sound. Their installations and compositions (also see Face to Face With the Natural) transform everyday places, objects, rooms and people. Creating engaging musical and audiovisual art by abandoning the frontal concert situation that divides performers and listeners, we will create concert experiences where the compositions, installations, environment and all its participants are interconnected and become the creators of the moment of art experience.

Together with **Rimini Protokoll from Germany/Switzerland** and involving the people of Liepāja, we will offer community theatre performances in a private space and show that everyone can participate in the co-creation of contemporary art.

It is difficult to create the new without knowing the past. In response to the painful lack of a museum of contemporary art in the Latvian cultural space, we will organise an exhibition on the history of new media art, bringing to Liepāja the most significant media works from different periods (mailart, internet communications, satellite technology, artificial intelligence generated art, etc.). The limitations and glitches that appear in each new channel of communication, sometimes lead to a reassessment of existing social systems. The exhibition will be a meeting place for different generations to connect and for Liepāja's students of new media art to learn from outstanding examples.

## Live Coding Disco

The research of technological art will continue in the real-time audiovisual dance music programming (live coding) rave, where artists from different countries will meet to create wild algorithms and noise music with the help of code, and visitors to Liepāja Art Forum will be able to unload and dance. At the same time, those interested will be able to learn new programming languages, as the live coding community supports open source and inclusive art practices.

### Partners of Liepāja Art Forum:

**Local partners:** Concert Hall Great Amber, artistic director Baiba Bartkeviča, curator Anna Priedola, Dirty Deal Audio, Liepāja Secondary School of Music, Art and Design

**International partners:** artist Duo Strijbos & van Rijswijk (NL), multimedia artist Pierre Jodlowski (FR), Goethe-Institut Riga (DE/LV), Digitale Kunstfabrik (DE), Theatre Group Rimini Protokoll (DE/CH)

**Budget:** EUR 255 000

## UPDATE

/ New Media Art Week

The international New Media Art week UPDATE will explore marine ecology (2025), inclusive art and design creation (2026) and the meaning of locality in times of the global network systems and extended reality technologies (2027). The festival will be based at **Liepāja University Art Research Laboratory** and the Concert Hall Great Amber, hosting media art students, scientists and artists from Latvia and abroad to tackle the acute social and environmental issues through art practice and innovative technology applications. **Art students from all over Europe** will meet in creative work-labs led by experienced artists and designers of different backgrounds to tackle the issues from various perspectives discussed in talk-shows streamed online every night for a whole week. The festival will culminate in a public performance and presentation day and an exhibition of the created design prototypes and art pieces, the best of which will be incorporated in other ECoC activities and developed further – for example, in the Other Sea Festival and Everyone is Welcome.

UPDATE has been a hub for creative development since 2009, and a lot of the projects that started off during UPDATE workshops have been developed into travelling art pieces or commercial products and services. An important factor is also the networking abilities the international festival offers – facilitating exchanges and collaborations between **young European artists and designers** to benefit each other's careers. Free work-labs and seminars are also available for the general public

thus improving media literacy in society and helping to develop specialised skills in media production.

#### Partners of UPDATE:

**Local partners:** Curator Anna Priedola, Liepāja University Art Research Laboratory, Concert Hall Great Amber, Society ASTE. Art, Science, Technology, Education, Electronic Art and Media Centre E-Lab  
**International partners:** Bauhaus University Weimar (DE), Vilnius Academy of Arts (LT), POCHEN Biennale (DE), Goethe-Institut Rīga (DE/LV), Disnovation.org (FR), Ars Electronica Festival (AT), Bad Ischl / Salzkammergut 2024 (AT), ECoC Candidate Cities Faro, Aveiro and Braga 2027 (PT), CYLAND MediaArtLab (LT), DD Foundation (EE), University of Nova Gorica (SI), Estonian Academy of Arts (EE), Academy of Media Arts Cologne (DE), Utrecht School of the Arts (NL), Contemporary Arts Centre Kontejner (HR), Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk (PL), Budapest Metropolitan University (HU), University of Lorraine (FR)

**Budget:** EUR 60 000

## D10 United

/ Capacity Building

“The future should not be waited for, the future should be predicted,” Juris Binde, CEO of **LMT**, the largest Latvian telecommunications company, told us in a conversation about cooperation.

We heard him. We predict that D10 – a space and platform for smart solutions innovation, digital art experiments, lifelong learning activities and intergenerational and interdisciplinary crossover/spillover collaborations – is a must-have in Liepāja.

The former police building, currently standing empty, will be transformed by 2027 into a vibrant urban IT and creativity hub for emerging creative industries, new media artists and NGO activists. D10 will become a vibrant hub of creative energy, a magnet for collaboration and youth leadership development.

Three corner stones on which to build this ambitious project:

#### IT industry centre and AI technology labs.

The establishment of the Digital Innovation Park and the Liepāja Technology Cluster has already marked a significant milestone in the development of the information technology community in Liepāja, with one of the priorities being to strengthen the presence of this sector in the city. And there is a strong basis for this – Liepāja University offers IT studies at all study levels and in three areas of development – the internet of things, machine learning and artificial intelligence. The D10 IT Industry Centre will be a meeting and innovation platform where young people, students and IT experts will come together to implement joint projects. The **Digital Innovation Park** will develop and offer an Artificial Intelligence Talent Programme, which will give young people the opportunity to develop themselves in the high-tech field, industry experts and lecturers will not only pass on valuable knowledge but also help in the development of real solutions for the urban space of Liepāja.

AI is playing an important role in transforming our society and digitising our economy in many sectors. For the alpha generation of young people, who have grown

up with smart and responsive technologies, streaming entertainment and an intuitive understanding of how these technologies work, the AI skills they will learn, will enable them to tackle a wide range of economic, educational, security, social and other challenges in new or more optimal ways than before. AI can create new solutions and applications in almost any sector, given imagination and data.

During the Talent Programme, young people will learn the skills to create software that will allow them to work on projects that include: face and image recognition, data processing and analytics, for example to gain business intelligence, see how data interacts, find correlations and help find new applications.

It is currently impossible to imagine the artistic interpretations that will be created by combining these skills with the vision of new media artists in an art exhibition.

**New Media Art Centre and Media Library.** Have you counted the number of times the Liepāja 2027 artistic programme projects have mentioned the participation of Liepāja new media artists? Appreciating and celebrating this cultural specialty of Liepāja, which is unique in the Baltics, we will strive to achieve **UNESCO Creative City status for Media Arts** by 2027. In 2027 it will have been 20 years since Liepāja has been able to offer academic education in New Media Art, and in full-cycle educational programmes – from the Multimedia Department of the LMMDV at secondary school level to the PhD degree of the University. There are long-standing international media art festivals; what is missing is a permanent, specialised arts centre. This – the final step to the Creative City title – will be realised in D10. The **Media Art Museum (MMM)**, a media museum and exhibition space, also and online – using 360-degree digital exhibition tools or exhibition-viewing robots (controlled by the viewer, seen by the exhibition robot in their web browser, having the possibility to view the entire exhibition by driving around the exhibition with the remote-controlled robot). MMM will focus particularly on bio- and eco-art, which is created with the planet, society and ethical practice in mind. Bio- and eco-art is rarely purely aesthetic; it is mostly experimental, using a wide variety of media, including installations, workshops, visualisations, sound art, illustrations, performances and their documentation, ways of preserving nature or drawing attention to an issue.

**NGO Incubator Test Site and Volunteering Hub.** Impact HUB Liepāja – NGO Incubator is starting its work now and within the D10 platform we will give a place for NGOs to implement their activities. Here, through the **Impact HUB** and the capacity building programme curated by Liepāja 2027 (more in Q14–15), we will give NGOs the opportunity to implement youth leadership camps, “silver economies”, as well as D10 cornerstones – IT and new media art collaboration projects.

The test site will also be the place where, together with our partners from **Aarhus ReThinkers** and **Salzkammergut CultureBuddy volunteer programmes** and the Community Whisperers training programme curated by the **Kurzeme NGO Centre**, we will create the Liepāja 2027 Volunteering Hub – here we will train

our community ambassadors, train our volunteer cultural friends – ECoC experience curators and be the meeting point for the many ECoC programme activities for volunteers and volunteers themselves to get involved in.

Together with the Public Art Lab from Berlin, Latvian embassies in European and Eastern Partnership countries, the Liepāja IT sector, and the NGO Incubator we will implement a digital calligraphy project, inviting diaspora representatives to contact their relatives in Liepāja and the region through visual projections.

The D10 courtyard will be transformed into an outdoor cinema in the summer for films from the organisation **Europe Transit Films** collection, talking about the big issues of Europe, including films from former ECoC cities. Our aim is to get our young, creative minds to see Europe through new eyes, broadening the diversity of opinions and views that will shape the future.

#### Partners of D10 United:

**Local partners:** LMT, Digital Innovation Park, Liepāja Technology Cluster, Liepāja University New Media Art Study Programmes, Liepāja Secondary School of Music, Art and Design, Kurzemes NGO centre, Impact HUB Liepāja, Youth Development Platform YOU+, Liepāja Youth House  
**International partners:** Filmby Aarhus (DK), Volunteer organisation ReThinkers (DK), Ars Electronica Festival (AT), Public Art Lab from Berlin (DE), Europe Transit Films (ES), Starts Initiative (EU), LEAF Academy (SK), Bad Ischl / Salzkammergut 2024 (AT), Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan (AZ)

**Budget:** EUR 224 000

## Ukstiņš Education and Innovation Quarter

/ Lifelong learning

Klāvs Ukstiņš (1832–1904) was one of the first organisers of Liepāja’s cultural life, an entrepreneur, educator and public figure. He was the founder of the Liepāja Latvian publishing house and the founder of the first Latvian literature library. He wrote textbooks in mathematics, history, German and Russian, translated fiction and wrote poetry. Ukstiņš’ bookshop became a Latvian meeting place and a centre of intellectual life. He also organised the first choir and theatre group in Liepāja, which performed the first Latvian theatre play in Liepāja in 1877. **Klāvs Ukstiņš** is a symbol of strength of spirit, education and mission.

In 2027, inspired by Ukstiņš, we want to open a unique educational centre in Liepāja. A modern, coherent and inclusive school for all generations – preschool, full course general education and a multifunctional lifelong learning centre, including seniors. Learning from our **Japanese and Nordic colleagues**, we want to create an educational meeting place for curious and creative people of all ages in Liepāja.

On the way to the creation of the centre, various activities will take place over several years, which will contribute to the consolidation of the idea and the positioning of the centre in the city’s educational space.

## Opening of the FabLab

In collaboration with our partners abroad – **Jaermuseet Regional Museum, Trondheim Science Centre** and the **Latvian Science Centres** – the FabLab, a technology co-working space for playing, creating, studying, mentoring, inventing, a place for learning and innovation, will open in 2022. It will provide access to the environment, skills, materials and cutting-edge technologies so that anyone, anywhere can make (almost) anything.

From 2023–2027, together with **Fab Foundation (US), Elektrum Energy Efficiency Centre** and **Liepāja University**, we will organise the FabLab Talent Programme – an educational programme for high school students that will develop the foundations of design thinking and stimulate young people’s interest in the STEAM field.

In 2025, the FAB ACADEMY BOOTCAMP / PRE-FABACADEMY will take place, open to students, professionals, and lifelong learners from a wide range of disciplines who are looking for new approaches or expanding their field of practice. We want to contribute to the development of knowledge, skills and innovation in an international ecosystem in the field of digital production. The Fab Academy preparation phase will include workshops, marketing activities to attract local and international students as the first class of the Fab Academy. In 2026, the first year of the international Fab Academy programme will take place, an intensive five-month programme that will teach students to envision, design and prototype projects using digital fabrication tools and equipment. The programme will be integrated into a higher education science studies programme(s) at Liepāja University.

To facilitate the inclusion of seniors in today’s fast-paced digital environment, to bridge their technology knowledge gap, the **Liepāja City Education Department** will create a dedicated senior technology support programme at the Ukstiņš Centre from 2023, where seniors will be able to act as support staff as well as assistants to school teachers after completing the course.

An annual invention and science fair (MakerFair) will also be held at Ukstiņš. In cooperation with Latvian and Nordic science centres, Liepāja University, and FabLabs from all over the world, business incubators, science shows, workshops, trading, technology and invention development, and cultural engagement in science will be created. It will be an exciting offer across the whole Ukstiņš area, involving different audiences, combined with circus performances, theatre and even a market.

#### Partners of Ukstiņš Education and Innovation Quarter:

**Local partners:** Liepāja City Education Department, Liepāja University, Elektrum Energy Efficiency Centre, Latvian Science Centres in Ventspils, Cēsis, Daugavpils etc.  
**International partners:** Aalto Fab Academy (FI), Trondheim Science Center (NO), Jaermuseet Regional Museum (NO), Fab Foundation (US), Kulturhaus Arthur (Arthur e.V.) (DE), Klub Solitaer (DE), Centre Sirius (HR), Spektrum Educational Center (RO), School Peace Machine (Oulu 2026, FI), Nordic Science Centres Association

**Budget:** EUR 470 000

## Into the Future

/ Liepāja Animation Days

In recent years, Latvia has emerged as one of the most interesting animation arts countries in Europe. Highly competitive animations are created in Latvia every year. Each (short) film by Vladimirs Leščovs, Lizete Upīte, Edmunds Jansons and Jurgis Krāsons gets to at least 60 festivals around the world. In 2021, for the second year in a row, Latvian animated films have been included in the American Academy Award Oscars 30 film list, in the category of Best Animated Film.

Liepāja Animation Days is a series of events dedicated to animation and its various formats – cinema, audiovisual arts and augmented reality. At the festival, viewers will have the opportunity to get to know and experience the latest animated films and artworks with augmented reality experiences. However, a significant part of the animation industry is also the networking and business aspect which will be an important element of the Animation Days each year between 2025 and 2027.

The event will be organised in cooperation with partners from the nearest neighbouring countries – animation associations and higher education institutions where animation and new media can be studied. The package will also be developed in synergy with the **Animist Animation Festival in Tallinn, Estonia, and the BLON Animation, XR and Video Games Festival in Klaipėda, Lithuania**. Key partners in the development of this event will be the City of Liepāja, Liepāja University, Liepāja NGOs, Latvian cultural NGOs and schools.

### 2025 Animate and Celebrate

Liepāja celebrates its 400th anniversary and Liepāja Animation Days presents itself with a three-part program of cinema, art spaces and the urban environment.

The film programme has 12 screenings and is planned to include a selection of films that have won the European Animation Award, and the latest Baltic animated films.

Artworks created in the animation media will occupy one of the city's art galleries, installations and interactive works created by **Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Finnish and German artists**. Alongside exhibitions and the opening of a film program in the urban space, it is planned to place augmented reality animation works, which are dedicated to the history of Liepāja (to be used in Urban Dreams Liepāja and Tell me a Story, Liepāja).

The Baltic Animation Forum (BAF) brings together the **Baltic Animation Association** and film institutions. The purpose of the BAF is to define the current situation in the industry, its current needs and to develop a forum for development plans.

### 2026 – Growing Animation

The Animation Days continue to develop through cooperation with partner countries and the local creative industry. The programme introduces so-called Focus Programmes, which focus on specific themes each year – in 2026 it is "Society".

The film programme will include 15 screenings, a selection of European animation award-winning films, the latest Baltic animation films, as well as Focus Programmes for children, young people and adults. The film programme is produced in cooperation with neighbouring and partner festivals and the focus programmes are complemented by a conversation on the theme of the year "Society".

An exhibition of animation artworks by **international artists is planned for the Liepāja gallery Romas Dārzs**, dedicated to the same theme – "Society". Through this theme, the urban environment is brought to life through audiovisual augmented reality experiences and animated virtual sculptures. The Baltic Animation Forum will host the Baltic Animation Market. An educational programme for art students and other people interested in the subject will be launched, featuring workshops and lectures by the artists featured in the Animation Days.

### 2027 – Animated Looks Towards the Future

The overarching goal of the Liepāja Animation Days in 2027 is to look to the future – it is no secret that a large part of inventions and modern technology have once been the dreams of artists. Animation is one of the arts, whose task is to build a new world, with its own laws and practices of physics. Animation is the most grateful medium to capture dreams of the future. Within seconds you can build a flying city and turn all people into telepaths. It is extremely interesting to look at how artists imagined the present 50 years ago, and how contemporary animation artists see the next half-century.

Next to the screenings of the award-winning animation films the focus theme will be on the look towards the future with urban augmented reality experiences and animated virtual sculpture works for children, young people and adults.

The Baltic Animation Forum and Market is expanding its cooperation with the **European Capital of Culture in Portugal**. Baltic Animation House will open its residency programme in the territory of Metalurgs with two artists (one from the Baltic States and one from another European country) working for six months each year.

#### Partners of Into the Future:

**Local partners:** Liepāja Municipality, Liepāja University, Art Gallery Romas Dārzs, Liepāja Secondary School of Music, Art and Design, Dirty Deal Audio, Society ASTE. Art, Science, Technology, Education, Electronic Art, Media Centre E-Lab

**International partners:** Baltic Pitching Forum (LT), BLON Animation, XR and Video Games Festival (LT), Vilnius Academy of Arts (LT), Lithuanian Animation Association (LT), Estonian Academy of Arts (EE), Animist Animation Festival (EE), Central and Eastern Europe Animation Forum, European Animation Award

**Budget:** EUR 120 000





## The Future of Amber

/ Experiments with a Baltic Sea Gomstone

Amber is a very common visitor washed ashore on the vast beach of Liepāja, especially after spring and autumn storms. We have threaded the longest amber beads (123 metres of over 17,000 pieces of amber donated by the townspeople), we have amber soap, candles, teas, we even have amber gin, scarves from amber thread. You name it – we've made it! We have named our concert hall Great Amber. It's time to move on.

### ElektrON

The ancient Greek word for amber is "Elektron". The ancient Greeks observed the electromagnetic properties of amber, and the name of electricity was formed due to the study of the properties of this material. Liepāja is special both as a coastal city, the symbol of which is amber, and as a centre of electronic art and music in Latvia. The **exhibition ElektrON** in the Great Amber Concert Hall organised by the **new media art research laboratory MPLab**, will reveal that "technological progress" does not mean that the best of many ideas and patents survive – instead, there are many pathways, and society must decide with great care which path to take.

Humans forget that technology is not detached from nature. The artists of the exhibition ElektrON will work as historians, geologists, inventors, engineers, and ingenious storytellers, studying the electromagnetic properties of amber. The activities of ElektrON will take place from 2026 until 2027, bringing together art and culture centres, scientists and theoreticians from the Baltic Sea region to meet in a symposium on the Geology of Culture. The follow-ups will include work in residency centres, university laboratories and amber museums to develop interpretive installations and media artworks with amber and other fossil resources. Participating artists will be selected by an international jury in an open call.

We commit to continue the bold ideas launched by Rīga 2014 to shape the future of amber and celebrate Amber Day on 4 September 2027.

### Amber Revisited

Centuries before Pāvilosta became Latvia's surfers' paradise, it has been and will continue to be an amber paradise because the sea here is not short of amber, and locals have even been seen carrying buckets of it home, comparing their gains with their neighbours along the way. Locals pay homage to the jewel of the Baltic Sea by naming the town's main street Amber Street but Latvians don't always have a straightforward relationship with their national treasure. Amber jewellery, paintings and other amber paraphernalia from centuries gone by do not immediately evoke an association with amber as something that belongs to modern, contemporary society, and we aim to change that.

Amber will be revisited by the independent **interdisciplinary residency centre PAiR** in Pāvilosta.

In close collaboration with partners from **Res Artis: Worldwide Network of Arts Residencies**, of which PAiR is a member, and in collaboration with the **Latvian contemporary art centre KIM?** we will organise classes and workshops on the origins and properties of amber, go on hiking trips and night search expeditions for amber together with the Pāvilosta "amber hunters" enthusiast group and poets. An exhibition of contemporary art in the PAiR gallery will be dedicated to amber. Research artist residencies in collaboration with scientists will take place. Using local knowledge and traditions, we want to give it a new, contemporary context and expression. Amber will be the new black!

#### Partners of The Future of Amber:

**Local partners:** Great Amber Concert Hall, Liepāja University Art Research Laboratory MPLab, Society ASTE. Art, Science, Technology, Education, Electronic Art and Media Centre E-Lab, PAiR Residency in Pāvilosta, Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Liepāja Folk Art and Culture Centre, The House of Craftsmen

**International partners:** Goethe-Institut Rīga (DE/LV), CYLAND MediaArtLab (LT), Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina (RS), Contemporary Arts Centre Kontejner (HR), Ars Electronica Festival (AT), Bioart Society (FI), Disnovation.org (FR), Trondheim Electronic Arts Centre (NO), Palanga Amber Museum (LT), Res Artis (AU), Lithuanian artists association Kaunas department (LT), Baltic Sea Cultural Center in Gdańsk (PL)

**Budget:** EUR 98 000

## Youth FORUM

/ Creative Week and Closing Symposium

Following on from the flagship event of the European Dream thematic line Agora of Values, we want to give the voice to our youth. Those we will be addressing then are now between 11 and 15 years old and who knows what the world will look like then. What we can say now is that together, the young people will have space to co-create and celebrate, make new friends and new experiences and fill their memories to the brim with the joy of feeling part of a big, strong community of engaged European youth. We will organise a week-long international Youth FORUM in collaboration with **The National Youth Council of Latvia and its international partners European Youth Forum in Belgium**. The National Youth Council of Latvia brings together 26 member organisations. We want the themes, discussions and events of the Agora of Values to resonate with our young people and find their place in building the future. The Creative Foresight and the final event of the European Capital of Culture year, the Youth FORUM, will be shaped and experienced by young people themselves – an exciting mix of creative, intellectual and practical activities. It will inspire action, strengthen international links and help young people to envision future courses and their place in them. The International Youth FORUM's practical workshops and masterclasses will bring together renowned researchers, IT specialists, artists, writers, filmmakers and poets from Europe and Latvia to share their experiences, inspire and pass on their skills. It will be a great way for young Europeans to exchange knowledge, share their understanding of the world order, reflect and debate on existing European values, and perhaps propose a new topic for the European agenda. Also to make friends and build relationships, who knows, maybe for life. It will be an unforgettable opportunity for our younger generation to get to know the **multi-coloured cultures of European nations** through the help and example of their peers.

The Youth Symposium will also run alongside the Baltic Youth Symphony Orchestra, a summer camp and concerts for budding music professionals.

Liepāja Concert Hall Great Amber will organise a camp for young academic music professionals from the Baltic States. During two weeks, young artists will have the opportunity to take part in masterclasses by world-class music experts, as well as to create chamber and symphonic music concert programmes, which will then be performed in Liepāja and the Baltic Sea Region.

#### Partners of Youth FORUM:

**Local partners:** The National Youth Council of Latvia (Umbrella Organisation of 26 Youth Organisations), Concert Hall Great Amber, Liepāja Youth House

**International partners:** European Youth Forum (BE), DD Foundation (EE), Klub Solitaer (DE), The Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia

**Budget:** EUR 280 000

## Q7 Choosing events and projects

The selection process during both bidding phases involved extensive discussions with all cultural organisations in Liepāja and the region, with individual artists, NGOs of all types, representatives of the creative industries as well as minority groups and associations. From these **participative sessions** we developed our goals, our programme lines and our projects. Either by inviting partners to develop further their ideas, or by giving some input and allowing more time for projects to be developed. This is very much the way we will continue the project selection process in the future. In order to involve more artists and open the field also on an international level we will make additional, specific, calls for areas that we identify as underrepresented after thorough programme assessment in the case of winning the title.

We plan to continue using some key project selection criteria :

- Does the proposal fit the artistic program and the overall (un)rest story?
- Does the proposal include a European dimension, community involvement?
- Does it fulfill quality / excellence aspects?
- Does the proposal potentially attract a European and international audience?
- Does it contribute to ensuring a wide range of cultural genres? (Music, cinema, dance, new media art, theatre, etc.)
- Does it have the potential to attract many different audiences that are not yet part of the daily cultural life of Liepāja? Cultural gourmets, people with physical accessibility challenges, minorities, factory workers, neighborhood dwellers, foreign guests.
- Is the region included? Are events planned not only in Liepāja but also in some remote points of the counties – Rucava, Priekule, Pāvilosta, Kuldīga, Alsunga, etc. If it takes place in the region: Is it accessible for out of town/out of country visitors?
- Does it show what Latvia contributes to Europe's cultural diversity?
- Does the proposal contribute to a balanced programme of events, including free events for the irregular culture goer?
- Does it respect the principles of accessibility and ecodesign?
- Does the overall programme involve the local, regional and international artistic and creative sector?
- Does the overall programme present a good mix of more artistically ambitious projects as well as low-threshold activities?

### From local to international

Liepāja 2027 is not a celebration of local city festival. The inclusion of events in the artistic programme will first and foremost answer the question of what makes our European Dream come alive. To hit our goal of being less locally focussed and **reaching the heart (literally and metaphorically) of Europe**. Is it something very local, for internal use, or do we see an opportunity to define a European dimension? And how can we bring local resources together with international artists and producers, to achieve outcomes of much broader international resonance.

### Selection mechanisms:

**Individual talks.** The pandemic taught us one important thing – the strength of individual communication, in which it is possible to hear quieter voices between loud opinions. At the time, we had discussions with almost every local organisation for several rounds. Basically, all the conversations started with various problem stories and challenges but over time we reached solutions where the flight of future dreams was born. The core of Task Force (Un)Rest was also born in these conversations, as well as the vision of the European dimension, and the breadth of educational projects, projects like A Festival of Friendliness, Face to Face with the Natural and others.

The individual conversations with potential partners and project proposers will continue as much as possible. In a smaller city and region like ours this seems like the only way to gain trust.

**Discussions, public brainstorm events, conferences.** Conferences, public debates, brainstorming, consultations are an old and proven means to assess the current situation and make new ideas in a collaborative way. We had good experiences playing a cultural game together with those working in the cultural sector and had some surprising results and responses from completely different points of view. We would like to continue this method of collaborative idea and project making if we have the privilege to be designated. Expanding this process to invite international and Latvian specialists from various fields, local people, NGO representatives not only to produce new ideas for projects but also to find everyday solutions to the topics that are relevant at any given moment.

**Project calls.** We will do everything to make (un)rest gain momentum, and to make the paths of the people, artists, producers, NGOs intersect with new ideas, contacts, and initiatives. Fresh, experimental, bold proposals will expand the dimension of our program, reach new horizons of excellence, and provide solutions to current topics. We see Liepāja 2027 as an open process. Therefore we have spared the space in all our programme lines **for open calls and put aside for that reason an amount of EUR 1 200 000** in several specific projects, including Urban Dreams Liepāja, Cultural Canon, Locus Mundi, The Karosta Paradox, A Festival of Friendliness, Home of Happiness, Open Theatre Quarter and several others.

**Trust.** The Artistic Director will play a particularly important role in selecting the projects. In order to

develop the existing and future projects, we will also include our advisory board and independent advisors where needed – especially to bring a **view from the outside**. In a way, Liepāja 2027 will also be the story of a mandate of trust – to enable a strong team to involve the public, make decisions, create arguments and implement ideas. We will have to gain the trust of the public to rely on the ability of professionals to attract local, national or international level performers, organisations, producers, build wide networks, and boldly cooperate across disciplines.

## Q8 Combining cultural heritage and experimental cultural expressions

In this (un)rest journey, history and traditions are what we own, where we have deeply rooted our stubborn character and identity, and built our cultural roots and foundations. Dressed in historical opposites and paradoxes, **heritage seems to connect the incompatible** and is calling for new and experimental cultural expressions. And vice versa. So by combining with a truly innovative idea and experimentation, we discover the roots of our local heritage. A win-win situation – especially in our Liepāja area where the introduction of contemporary art is so slow, and where huge resources are devoted to the preservation and development of traditions. This is also due to the fact that some in our country feel they have to make up for many years when we were not allowed to cultivate our own traditions. However, preserving heritage also means to transport it safely into the 21st century and still use it.

### New Eyes on traditions

It is likely that many people in Europe have heard of or even experienced the celebration of the unique Latvian tradition of the Song and Dance Festival, which is included in the UNESCO Intangible Heritage List. In Latvia's regions, this translates to meticulous daily maintenance of traditions, intergenerational transmission of skills, and regular public involvement. Our opening programme will take the traditional Kurzeme folk song song **Pūt, vējiņi and build a whole European story** around different and similar singing traditions from the Basque country to Sardinia to Estonia and Latvia. Especially the competitive "dialogue" singing which is improvised and will be explored and presented to the audience – contrasted with contemporary forms of rap and poetry slam.

- Europe Sings in Liepāja will invite choir singers and conductors to perform Latvian classics in their competition programmes and masterclasses, and to experience with an open heart the interpretations of singers from other countries including **contemporary methods of singing** like vocal painting and live collaborative composition.
- At Skill Exchange Market, we will not only pass on **old crafts in their traditional form** but also look for modern and interesting ways to solve and improve certain processes, such as making different instruments, storing folk costumes, etc.
- Within the framework Nordic Solstice, we want to compare and look for the differences in the traditions of different peoples, including our own, to give room for interpretation. We will invite **contemporary art innovators** to reflect on our Midsummer tradition, through dance and other art forms.
- In artist residencies, we will invite six artists from different genres from **European countries to research, interpret and reflect** on Latvian art values and traditions, gathered in the Cultural Canon. For example contemporary dance artists Krišjānis Sants from Aizpute, Latvia and Ieva Gaurilčikaite-Santa from Vilnius, Lithuania, will collaborate with Heine Avdal (Norway/Belgium) and create a contemporary interpretation of the folk dance tradition of the Latvian cultural canon.
- In the framework of the project Home of Happiness, we will experience a revelation of what can be prepared if we stick to a certain recipe and, on the contrary, how various **traditional dishes are transformed** into modern interpretations when both the general public and professional chefs are involved.
- The Future of Amber is a project on how to completely **change the artistic approach** to this traditional material. After we have made everything out of amber, we set up an exhibition ElektrON where artists, scientists, inventors and geologists make amber their object of research, looking for the properties of its electromagnetic field.

### New places for the contemporary

The preparation of the European Capital of Culture will give us the opportunity to explore new territories, to look at our city, region, events from a contemporary perspective. It is possible that such an exercise will confirm that the traditional point of view has been a good one but it is also possible that **stepping outside the usual square metre** brings a clear added value.

- Urban Dreams Liepāja – already through the prism of the Green Infrastructure trends and the **New European Bauhaus**, we will assess the role of the historical architectural heritage in shaping the greener city of the future.
- As a special magnet, because access was denied to people for 130 years, the former Liepājas Metalurģis site, will offer both the location of the contemporary art exhibition Locus Mundi and the events planned in the project No More Heavy Metal. A unique and long-used environment is now **crying out for contemporary use**, inviting all the senses to see, hear, feel, experience.

- Similarly, in the From Karosta to Radosta project, a **disused military site** will welcome artists and creatives. The historic fortifications will be the site of contemporary interventions and the charming officer's houses will become the venue for the Karosta Has Balls! project bringing back different eras and their 21st century interpretations.
- Liepāja Celebrates! will make us look at buildings and architectural elements with an (un)rest perspective, dressing them in lights. In the UPDATE New Media Arts Week, we will explore aspects of both place and marine ecology through **innovative technologies** with new contemporary art experiments.

### Contemporary traditions

Liepāja 2027 will be the beginning of new traditions, which is why we are already working towards commissioning the creation of new compositions, artworks and literature, to nurture a new guard of artists and to broaden our audience. These may be experiments at the moment but we may not realise that **new elements of the cultural canon** of Latvia and other nations may also be emerging before our eyes as we speak. In 50 or 100 years' time, our successors will study our attitude to the extension of our heritage and will also find such a list:

- Opera on the Beach will offer both, operas from past centuries as well as the creation of works and commissions for **contemporary composers**.
- Rock the Rock challenges us to think about how we will raise a new generation of musicians, what **support mechanisms** are needed to continue the tradition of Liepāja's rocking soul.
- Ukstiņa Education and Innovation Quarter we will establish a **new tradition of educational projects**, where the younger generation meets seniors, inheriting and reciprocating not only knowledge but also skills and values.

## Q9/Q10

# Involvement of local artists and cultural organisations and cooperation plans

As indicated earlier, we involved a wide range of cultural operators, professionals from various fields, non-governmental organisations and social groups, residents of the district and region, municipal officials, politicians, intellectuals, businesspeople, poets, athletes, philosophers, anthropologists, biologists and many more. Basically, we asked them two questions: What is your main challenge at the moment? What should happen in your field by 2027?

Our preparation during both phases coincided exactly with the repeated waves of the pandemic, and opportunities for face-to-face meetings were limited. However, there were some positive aspects. Instead of sharing courtesy phrases, making coffee and discussing the weather, **online conversations were much more focused**. Talks with cultural professionals went through several rounds until we not only defined the opportunities and needs, but also defined the dreams and the desired outcomes, and crystallised the form and content of projects and activities.

Only a few conversations were limited to the development of a particular cultural genre. Most **often the vision was broader** – how to involve society more deeply, how to address accessibility issues, how to attract national organisations, European professionals for cooperation, etc. This gave birth to the core of the Task Force (Un)Rest, the view of the European dimension, and cross-sectoral cooperation for our Cultural Renovation.

This **wave of ideas hit a rock** and formed the next wave back in the opposite direction. Our team started receiving project ideas and applications.

The team that selected the events to be included in the programme consisted of people with 20 years of international experience in the arts sector in Europe together with professionals with technical production experience in a wide range of events, representatives of local and national NGOs and contemporary art organisations. Our **guiding influence** has been one of our five goals: Learn to cooperate – from provincial to European centre stage.

An example of collaboration with national and international level producers comes from the Liepāja Museum. When the Museum developed the initial idea for the exhibition Inside - Outside, we asked for a wider perspective and a more contemporary twist. So the step we made together was to reach out to the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art – which led in turn to the idea to

set up the exhibition in the former Liepājas Metalurģis industrial space. Now something truly unique has been achieved, and we are really excited about it.

Here we've put together some examples of projects that have been developed by our local partners or which they are involved in.

**Rock the Rock** – Company Circle Pit Shows and producer Edgars Āboliņš together with festival manager of The Summer Sound, Uldis Akseļrods, will coordinate the Rock the Rock programme in Junian's Courtyard, Fontaine Palace, and Bunker. Local performers at the festival: Jānis Ivuškāns and Liepāja Music Orchestra, Liepāja rock legend Ivo Fomins. New local and national talents on the stage in collaboration with Liepāja Pop-rock School and Eric Hanzovskis.

**Agora of Values** – We will involve professionals in their field of expertise, including music therapy specialist Olga Blauzde, Liepājas IT sector with Agate Ambulte and association Digital Innovation Centre, Liepāja University New Media Art with Anna Priedola, researchers from Liepāja University – Lilita Ābele, Roberts Jūrmalietis, and others. Part of the conference on European Democracy will take place in the Democracy Quarter of Kuldīga, hosted by Maija and Ģirts Jankovskis, with the participation of Kurzeme NGOs and Elīna Futraka.

**Nordic Solstice** – Baiba Kļava and her team from Liepāja Folk Art and Culture Center together with cultural centres in the region will coordinate the public event with various traditional activities in Liepāja's venues like cultural place Namīns, open-air stage Pūt, Vējiņi! The Sauna Festival will be hosted by Inese Guste from Grobiņa.

**Urban Dreams Liepāja** – The routes for European Time Traveller Walk and Manor House Walk will be created by the outstanding restorer Juris Zviedrāns in collaboration with tourism offices in Liepāja, Kuldīga and South Kurzeme regions. Old House, New Story – by Ilze Zariņa, the head of the Kuldīga Restoration Centre which will involve the owners and interested parties of the historical heritage of Kuldīga in various events. Lecturer, artist and designer Ivars Pīlīps Matisons will lead restoration workshops in Liepāja. In the Design Walk there will be involved Liepāja Architects, Liepāja State 1st Gymnasium and its principal Helvijs Valcis, Liepāja Museum branch Liepāja Interior Museum – The Hotel of Madam Hoyer and its director Ieva Dzintare, whilst Urban Story Walk is initiated and will be organised by Kuldīga Culture Centre Kūrava and Ina Celitāne.

**Karosta Has Balls!** – Ideas and presentation of the balls are welcomed from event producers like Šarmants and Ūdensputni collaborating with music history researchers Ilze Valce and Vēsma Lēvalde. We will also involve ballroom dance studios and their choreographers like Liepāja choreography studios KĀ and Agate Cukura as well as knowledge of local minority NGOs – including the Jewish, Baltic German, Ukrainian, etc.

**Cultural Canon** – Together with Signe Pucena and The Residency and Workshop Centre Serde we will host the artists of the programme, including choreographer and dancer Krišjānis Sants from Aizpute.

**A Festival of Friendliness** – Wide involvement of local NGOs, including NGO incubators: Impact Hub, Kurzeme NGO. Concerts in Liepāja neighbourhoods will be organised by local producers like Irita Kalēja, production company Lake Music, initiatives of NGO Austras Biedrība led by Inese Muižniece and NGOs of national minorities.

**Skill Exchange Market** – Traditional Skills will be brought to the public by Liepāja, South Kurzeme and Kuldīga, children and youth centres, non-governmental organisations, including minority organisations, for example The House of Craftsmen and its head Ira Cīrule, Ethnographic House Zvanītāji and Sandra Aigare, Curonian Viking Settlement. The NGO Radi Vidi Pats will organise an e-bike rental point, a swap point and a community garden for skills learning.

**Open Theatre Quarter** – The quarter will be created by Liepāja Theatre, the troupe of actors, directors Herberts Laukšteins and Eva Ciekurze, artistic director Dmitrijs Petrenko in collaboration with Liepāja Puppet Theatre, its director Lelde Vīksna, artistic director Lelde Kaupuža. Project will include activities from private theatre troupe Goda Teātris, its driving forces actors Kaspars Gods, Egons Dombrovskis, choreographer Kristīne Brīniņa and her company Cita Abra. The Kuldīga Floats Parade will be organised by the Kuldīga Culture Centre and its head Inta Burnevica.

**Everyone is Welcome!** – The author of the idea Jurgis Spulenieks and the immersive theatre will raise the themes of accessibility together with Liepāja and surrounding theatres – Liepāja Theatre, Liepāja Puppet Theatre, amateur theatres. With its expertise will also be involved the Society for the Blind, the amazing leader of the people with disabilities community Māris Ceirulis. The Empathy Gallery will be hosted by artist Undīne Celitāne.

**D10 United** – Liepāja IT companies, association Digital Innovation Park and its leader Agate Ambulte, Liepāja Technology Cluster are ready to implement their idea of an IT industry centre and AI technology labs.

**Ukstiņš Education and Innovation Quarter** – It only can be done with the help and participation from professionals in the field, like Liepāja Centre Primary School and its teachers, local kindergartens, Liepāja Education Department, Liepāja University, Science and Education Innovation Centre Ziic involving also experts in culture, for example Liepāja Puppet Theatre, Liepāja School of Music, Arts and Design, as well as Kurzeme Business incubator, senior citizens' NGOs.

# European dimension

## Q11

### Cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and European themes

In our (un)rest journey, the European dimension is our guiding star. It helps us not to get lost between the horizons in the vastness of our task. It prevents thinking of ECoC as just a larger than normal city festival. It helps us **not to forget that Europe will be looking at us**. It helps us to look around and see what's beyond our horizon.

Our European and international partners, the pursuit of the European dream, Europe's common cultural space, our shared values and untapped possibilities – all of this is at stake now as we watch a war once more rage between Europeans. But we want to hold on to these values. They will help us to embark on our (un)rest journey. As we showed in Q2 and Q5, the European dimension is an orientation for our artistic programme. It shapes our objectives and expected impacts, it drives our capacity building plans and the way we tell our story (hopefully in a way that everybody in Europe can understand). It makes us also question the **relevance of what we do**. Does it connect to other cities in Europe? Does it speak to international artists? Does it have the potential to attract and interest European and international audience?

The courage to travel far, to keep expanding our horizons, our knowledge, to strive for something new, to find out where the sun disappears every night, to search for ideals, not to fall into a monotonous routine, is our (un)rest genetic code. References to this can also be found in our cultural heritage, both in literature and in folk music... "Put, vejini, dzen laivinu, aizden mani Kurzeme..." / "Blow, wind, blow, drive my boat, take me to Kurzeme."

Through the Baltic Sea and some historical twists and turns we have for a long time had our finger on the pulse of European cultural diversity. Similar to our Baltic neighbors, Europe met in Latvia and especially

in Liepāja as one of its intellectual and cultural centers. For several centuries **Latvians, Russians, Baltic Germans, Livs, Jews, Poles, Lithuanians and Estonians** lived in Liepāja and shaped the city. In its architectural and urban appearance, in its visual art, science, literature, music and social life. Although Liepāja has a small port, it was a busy place to travel to and from. It was used by Vikings, imperial tsars, artists and intellectuals (including Mark Rothko and the brothers Gabriel and Maxim Shamir who were born in Liepāja and then emigrated to Palestine to create the official Israeli state emblem and currency), and by foreign armies in battles that changed world history. Here, people have grasped the last chance to reach safety, whether fleeing Soviet repression in simple boats across the sea or emigrating by steamship to New York. Liepāja has been **the final frontier of opportunity** and a place where people found their voice and expressed themselves: whether with Rock music in the legendary rock festival The Amber of Liepāja (Liepājas dzintars), as the rebel city or with the Singing Revolution that started here with our songs such as "Dzimtā valodā" (Mother Tongue, 1985), "Dzelzgriezējs" (Iron Cutter, 1988), "Tikai tā!" (Just like that!, 1988)...

As we said in our artistic strategy we are using "the view from the outside" as a way to reconnect to the **nonchalant ease of Europeanness** we once had here in the Baltics. We strive to move forward to a 21st century version of what we had before. An open and welcoming society that accepts and cherishes differences in cultural expression. We are very grateful to have among us true citizens of the world, who continue to remind us that "think bigger, look beyond!", those who have acquired their education and experience by spending many years abroad. This is an important European dimension within our team itself.

Here is how our 5 ECoC objectives translate into **European themes and topics** within our artistic projects:

#### Learn to cooperate – from provincial to European centre stage!

In order to build **closer cooperation with Europe**, we will invite many European partners, friends, fellow citizens to discuss common topics and values. We will identify our common history and the key turning points that have shaped us into who we are today. We will celebrate our multicultural past and assess how to build a future with

different nationalities here and with partners in other European countries. Through the care for our traditions, we will learn to understand and appreciate diversity on a larger scale with projects like:

Cooperating with **250 international partners and participants from 35 countries**

**Europe Sings Liepāja** – 4000 singers from many European countries and from around the world will present their culture, heritage and talents

**Zenta Mauriņa Summer School** – cooperating with European partners on inclusive art creation (artists with and without disabilities)

**Rock the Rock** – permission to be our wild self again as the rebel city of Rock, inviting our friends from Europe to jam with us

**Karosta Has Balls!** – celebrating the multicultural heritage of Baltic Germans, Jews, Russians, Poles and many more who lived in this area

#### Co-create your habitat – from mental to environmental!

We want to involve the New European Bauhaus approach in the planning of living space, and attitudes towards it. Climate change is a consequence of long-term actions for which we need to take responsibility. Just like we have to take **responsibility for the common European space** – the natural as well as the rural and the urban.

**Urban Dreams Liepāja** – following along the lines of the New European Bauhaus, creating a smarter environment

**No More Heavy Metal** – reclaiming a heavy metal industrial site learning from European best practice

**Face to Face with the Natural** – a review of habits, life between urban and natural

**An Island Adventure of Nature and Science** – STEAM as a European standard, showing young people that their actions matter on a global scale

**The Other Sea Festival** – a change of attitude towards life on a shared European space the Baltic Sea

#### Build a smart future – from human to digital and back!

Digitisation as a tool to preserve Europe's precious heritage, to help with learning, to ease the life of people with disabilities, to share ideas and to find solutions together. Aware of the value of data, the power of social networks, and the speed of technological development, **Europe needs both individual experience** in using these tools and a common exchange of experience the young generation.

**Liepāja Art Forum** – contemporary art and technology from all over the world to inspire Liepāja

**Update** – using new media art to express life in the world of the 21st century

**D10 United** – creating an IT and art meeting place and for international exchange

**Reality Turn** – hearing international voices on the border between reality and the virtual wearing thin

**Ukstiņš Education and Innovation Quarter** – intergenerational learning, creating a new model of education

**The Karosta Paradox** – an adventure created with XR games about a very special European heritage

**Into the Future** – animation as an effective storytelling tool for different generations

#### Keep your identity (fluid) – from Latvia with love!

To speak for ourselves in European space, we need to explore our own roots and historical heritage. Together with our Baltic and Northern European neighbours, we need to look for the common and the different. We want to highlight the historical heritage that has shaped us into proper European citizens, even during the hard times of occupation, when our Latvian identity was suppressed. Many here at **home will understand Europe better** through ECoC. Building close collaborations with partners elsewhere in the world does not mean losing our identity. On the contrary, it means carrying a special "Latvianness" with pride and meeting others as European equals.

**Nordic Solstice** – celebrating the solstice traditions with European neighbors – the common and the different

**upWIND downWIND** – wind as a creator of local identity and a connecting element with the world

**Cultural Canon** – Looking at our cultural canon through European spectacles

**A Festival of Friendliness** – understanding that cultural diversity is a key European element and does not oppose a sense of belonging

**Liepāja Celebrates** – European countries presented through light art

**From Karosta to Radosta** – multicultural heritage and minority involvement

**The Return of Towers** – European spiritual heritage

**The Future of Amber** – looking at our precious stone with the "view from the outside"

#### Reset mindset – from inertness to meaningful action!

European civil society is based on the ability of a society to detach itself from its private context, opening up to the social. Strengthening the non-governmental sector is our priority. It is our pillar for strengthening the cultural sector, building a network of volunteers, providing a voice for access issues and for an inclusive society. **We will aim to counter the rise of populist ideas in Europe** and the "it will be decided without me anyway" view with events with European partners where everyone has a place, an opportunity to participate, to present their ideas. The partners' participation, discussions and the view from the outside will shake us up.

**Open Theater Quarter** – the theater as a birth place for social engagement and active audiences

**Home of Happiness** – experiencing Latvian cuisine through the eyes of Europe

**Everyone is Welcome!** – reaching European standards of inclusiveness

**D10 United** – Youth Leadership Camp to empower the next generation to act for the shared European and global space

**A Day in the Life** – working together to capture life, individual contribution to a common result

**Skill Exchange Market** – intergenerational learning, empowering non-governmental organizations, bringing traditional European crafts to the 21st century

**Agora of Values** – empowering people to critical thinking without falling for fakes, developing professional local and international discourse, promoting cooperation, and calling for meaningful action.

### The practical European dimension

Just when we think that our artistic programme has said it all, that we have conceptualized the ideas of communion with Europe and its current themes, we come back to the practical implementation aspects. What is it that distinguishes the European Capital of Culture events from the celebration of a beautiful city festival, which makes the themes relevant to everyone in Europe? How to tell our story about Liepāja (un)rest, to those who find out about it – here in Liepāja or in distant Portugal? How to manage sustainably the territory entrusted to us on the Eastern shore of the Baltic Sea? One of the answers is of course our communication approach. Please see Q37–40.

### Testing the European dimension

To make sure that we are still speaking “common European”, we will regularly carry out a “European Dimension Check”. This will consist of several steps. The whole team involved will have review milestones when we will review aspects related to the implementation of the European dimension. Putting themselves **in the shoes of the user**: usability, accessibility, respect for the ecodesign principle, ability to navigate communication channels, the sea of information. External partners will provide their expertise to help identify “Euro weaknesses”, give us the “view from the outside”, and find successful solutions.

Liepāja 2027 will regularly take part in international networks, take the opportunity to gain new experiences, broaden our horizons, travel around Europe and get the opportunity to look at ourselves from a different perspective. With the **Circulation of Creative Forces** we will organise this kind of experience not only for creative staff but also for those who take care of the foundation's administration. What is Europe if we can't have creative bureaucrats!

## European partnerships

A pleasant surprise in the application process is the real interest of international artists and representatives of Liepāja's creative sector to cooperate. Below are just a few examples of how we collaborate with our international partners. The map illustrates the extent of our connections.

**Agora of Values** – We cannot build the European Dream alone so we collaborate with the brightest minds of Europe to discuss the current European challenges. The international Nordic Summer University (DK) will help us reach a wide network of Nordic and European academics, Pochen Biennale (DE) will share their expertise on promoting data literacy which is an essential skill in the times of cyberwar and political propaganda.

**Everyone is welcome** – In building more open and inclusive society we will learn from the international colleagues who have already experience and expertise in the field, like – Disability Arts Cymru (UK), Re:borN Dance Immersive (US), Immersive Theater Professionals Borok Nagi (US), Jason Warren (UK) and Stefan Miller (US)

**The Other Sea Festival** – Climate change is another challenge which can only be tackled by joining international efforts and art and science collaboration like Marine Research Institute of Klaipeda University (LT), which will data about the state of the Baltic Sea to be sonified and visualized by composer Manautas Krukauskas (LT) and interactive media artist duo Varvara & Mar (EE), scientists and artists from Portugal ECoC which face huge marine ecology challenges.

**Nordic Solstice** – we will celebrate the unique immaterial cultural heritage of the Nordic-Baltic nations. Finnish Folk Music Institute (FI), Klaipeda City Municipality Centre of Ethnic Culture (LT) and other partners will help us reach a wide network of Nordic folk ensembles. But contemporary artists and curators like Andrew Gryf Paterson (SCO/FI), choreographer Heine Avdal and Yukiko Shinozaki (BE/JP) will re-examine the role of traditions in contemporary society.

**UPDATE festival** – We collaborate with diverse group of European media art universities with vast expertise – Bauhaus University Weimar (DE), Utrecht School of the Arts (NL), Aalto University (FI) etc. – to work together in worklabs on marine ecology, inclusive culture and glocality.

To disseminate our **Open Calls** we have engaged partners with a wide range of international contacts. Organisations such as onthemove.org, disnovation.org, spinnerei.de, ars.electronica.art and others will help us reach a worldwide audience of artists.

### ▲ – ECoC cities partnerships:

Marseille-Provence 2013, France  
Aarhus 2017, Denmark  
Tartu 2024, Estonia  
Kaunas 2022, Lithuania  
Novi Sad 2022, Serbia  
Veszprém, Hungary 2023  
Bad Ischl / Salzkammergut 2024, Austria  
Bodø 2024, Norway  
Chemnitz 2025, Germany  
Nova Gorica 2025, Slovenia  
Oulu 2026, Finland  
Trenčín 2026, Slovakia  
Aveiro 2027 candidate, Portugal  
Braga 2027 candidate, Portugal  
Faro 2027 candidate, Portugal  
Coimbra 2027 candidate, Portugal  
Brno 2028 candidate, Czech Republic

### ● – Twin cities partnerships:

Palanga (LT)  
Klaipeda (LT)  
Kaunas (LT)  
Elblag (PL)  
Gdynia (PL)  
Guldborgsund (DK)  
Darmstadt (DE)

### Cooperation partners also in:

Australia (2) ↓  
Azerbaijan (1) →  
Canada (1) ←  
Brazil (1) ↓  
Iceland (1) ↑  
Iran (1) →  
Japan (1) →  
Korea (1) →  
USA (14) ←  
Zimbabwe (1) ↓



## Q12

# Attracting the interest of a European and international audience

**Liepāja calling Europe...** We call upon all Europeans to abandon the trodden path of the route Vilnius-Rīga-Tallinn and embark on a much more adventurous route: **Kaunas-Liepāja-Tartu**. Putting the Baltic States on the European map as an exciting cultural space between Poland and Finland means going beyond their capitals. We are wildly determined to throw everything we can possibly think of into **the strategic mix to attract people** from all over Europe to come here. Irresistible artistic content, mouth-watering marketing, enthusiastic citizens. Our volunteers, our tourism experts from Liepāja, South Kurzeme and Latvia travel, magnetism (as in Magnetic Latvia – the national slogan), and an exciting journey of (un)rest.

**... with unusual artistic and cultural activities.** An art festival in the military fortifications (From Karosta to Radosta); world stars in concert with the best acoustics in the Baltics (Stars in Amber); cemetery traditions interpreted by AiR (Cultural Canon); gourmet meals at home with locals (Home of Happiness); conversations with leading thinkers of Europe (Agora of Values); against the wind shouting contests (upWIND downWIND); Adventures for children and their parents (An Island Adventure of Nature and Science); A selection of the best unknown European films (Kino Sapnis); Laibach and more European top Rock bands on the beach (Rock the Rock); Virtual reality adventures for thrilling historical experiences (The Karosta Paradox).

**... with an unforgettable opening weekend.** The opening event will bring Latvia and Liepāja closer to the hearts and ears of our European neighbors near and far. By contrasting and combining Latvian singing traditions and those of Sardinia, the Basque country, Lithuania and Estonia we create a polyphonic sound of Europe. A full weekend of activities and the weeks that follow(!) with good English accessibility so that visitors can experience ECoC and our partners' programme if they stay beyond the weekend.

**... with topics that are viral in European discourse.** A fashion show of recycled textiles on a former landfill site. Heated discussions in the Kuldīga Democracy Quarter, the European dream as public art in The Shape of the Dream. A Minorities Festival with borscht tasting in A Festival of Friendliness. Turning heavy industry sites into cultural spaces (No More Heavy Metal), the New European Bauhaus in Urban Dreams Liepāja,

environmental topics in Face to Face with the Natural and The Other Sea Festival. Quirky trends of DIY in the Skill Exchange Market. Social inclusion and reaching European standards for people with disabilities in Everybody's Welcome!

**... with taking our buddies from Europe by the hand.** We all know what it is like to arrive in a foreign place and be unable to find your way around the environment and use the information. In Liepāja 2027 we will have our volunteers who can be booked as a local to make you feel welcome and give you the inside track.

**... with challenging ourselves to create the best marketing for Europe.** Travelling to other countries to look at our city from afar and identify the factors that attract and interest Poles, Portuguese, Lithuanians, Estonians, Croatians, French, Germans..., families with children, scholars, artists, seniors, art-lovers, explorers...

Our colleagues from the tourist departments will have a new product to promote when travelling the world to the travel trade shows (like ITB Berlin and Matka in Finland). But they are telling us that the pandemic has changed everything and it seems for good. The present and future of tourism "fairs" are digital platforms with professional meet & greet events (Aviareps Roadshow, Nordic Tourism Collective) and major expos (like Dubai Expo). And if that's the new way of doing it, we will follow suit.

Wide European and international coverage of our opening with diligent PR work in the years and months ahead and on the opening weekend is a must. The images we can bring to the world on that occasion can set the tone for communication with an international audience for the whole year and beyond. Liepāja 2027 naturally will compete with a number of other cultural destinations in Europe – but as the newcomer, the adventurous and untrodden path, this new destination in Europe's cultural calendar for 2027 can offer an exciting alternative.

**... with a new European story.** The story of Liepāja's (un)rest. In clear and understandable language, with storytelling and interactive methods we will invite our fellow Europeans to follow us down the rabbit hole of stories and images, oral history and widely connected threads that tie our stories to people and places all over

Europe and overseas. Standing on the shore of the Baltic Sea where so many left towards the American Dream, we invite Europe to dream big. To live the European Dream of cultural diversity with a sense of home, pride for your own and openness for the other, a democratic mindset and digital literacy, a healthy environment and a healthy society.

**... with a 365° outlook.** Our 365° policy means that doors are open 365 days all around. Even on days when there might not be a concert, play or performance, we will make sure that there is a clear sense of the European Capital of Culture in the city and regional centers. Clear signage at the entrances, city dressing, places to go and sites to see. This will be the case in the previously inaccessible territory of Liepājas Metalurģs within the framework of the projects Locus Mundi and No More Heavy Metal. The colorful pop-up cultural centers in the city districts, including From Karosta to Radosta, the city's small galleries, also in the centre D10. We will also have to talk about museums' closures on Mondays. People who come for an extended weekend too often end up at closed doors.

365° also means evenly distributing events throughout the year, including indoors activities in the weeks after the opening as well as free events throughout the years and a good offer in the shoulder seasons.

**... with nerdy content for European experts.** We will target niche professionals. For the Agora of Values we will invite professionals from those respective fields to Liepāja to discuss big data, challenging mental health, the Baltic Sea rescue plan. For Into the Future we call those who work in the field of film animation to come to one of the most renowned places for animation in Europe. For the Ukstiņš Education and Innovation Quarter we want to focus on educators and education professionals on methods of learning and intergenerational exchange. With Urban Dream Liepāja we want to address the activists and experts of the New European Bauhaus movement in the urban planning community.

**... with Liepāja 2027 on (the) line.** Our digital platform Liepāja in the Cloud will give everyone in Europe and the world who has access to the internet the opportunity to experience Liepāja remotely with regular live online events as well as archived material. Social media and the cloud platform will make taking part in active communication easy and provide us with some quick feedback on (remote) audiences preferences and requests.

**... with a good sense of humour and fun.** We enjoy highlighting the quirks and paradoxes of our city and country, which can turn into a fun adventure for our European visitors. We guess you haven't taken part in a wind shouting contest yet, nor a gourmet dinner in the fortification tunnels or a night in a military prison cell – including interrogation. Or a surreal electronic music performance on a footpath over a swamp, or an opera by the sea... Together with the international partners who come to work and create with us during the preparation years we will identify the quirks of our area even more and make Liepāja a fun experience for all types of audiences from everywhere.

## Q13

# Links and cooperation plans with other European Capitals of Culture and candidates

In all the (un)rest of our journey it is comforting to sit down at the European family table, pour tea into our favourite cup and talk to other family members about what to do next, how it went for them, what worked and what didn't. We did not expect to find not only serious partners in many countries but also acquaintances and friends. The close exchange with European ECoC cities and candidates makes us feel supported in our ambitions and encourages us to strive for some of the results ECoC teams told us about. We have found common denominators and opportunities to highlight each other's unique qualities in Europe's already rich cultural life.

Here are some examples of the connections we have found in our online and some offline meetings with teams from designated ECoCs all over Europe.

### Kaunas 2022

- Our shared harsh history makes us think about the consequences of the Holocaust in Liepāja and Kaunas, finding a common depth of theme in the Kaunas project **Memory Office** and the Liepāja project **Tell me a Story, Liepāja!**
- The Kaunas capacity building project **We, the People**, will be valuable for us to review in preparation for Task Force (Un)Rest.
- Together we will create the ECoC cultural tourism route – Kaunas-Liepāja-Tartu for foreign visitors.

### Novi Sad 2022

- Novi Sad partners from **Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina** will collaborate on our projects **The Future of Amber and Atmospheric Waves** in upWIND downWIND.

### Veszprém 2023

- **Art House in Veszprém** will be our partner in the A Day in the Life project, inviting local professional photographers to capture Hungarian city life. Through Art House, we will have access to Hungarian artists for our Liepāja Residency Programme.
- We will cooperate with Veszprém's **Street management programme**. Sharing experiences in supporting local businesses and planning activities will help us to develop both our project **Home of Happiness** as well as strengthening the capacity of the cultural sector.

### Bad Ischl-Salzkammergut 2024

- **H2Oh-No!** will share the legacy of Salzkammergut water science and art projects exploring marine and water ecology with our Conference on Marine Ecology Agora of Values, UPDATE, and The Other Sea Festival.
- **CultureBuddies** is an inspiration for our volunteers programme, and the **Lab of Arts and Craft** is an interesting collaborator in our UPDATE.

### Tartu 2024

- From Tartu we learn about capacity building by participating in their **Kultuurikompass**, and about best practices on ecodesign for sustainable events.
- In cooperation with the Tartu projects **Men's Shed** and **Beetroot Washing Machine** we will expand Task Force (Un)Rest activities in the projects **A Festival of Friendliness** and **Skill Exchange Market**. In the same context we will establish cooperation with various vocational schools, including partners from the **University of Tartu Vjlandi Culture Academy**, Bachelor's and Master's study programs in Estonian crafts and folk art.
- Digital technologies and new media art connect us with the Estonian technology and art farm **Maajaam**, where Liepāja's artist Paula Vītola has already had a residency.
- Liepāja and Tartu, as university cities, will cooperate on Liepāja's **Youth FORUM** where young people from Tartu's project **European Student's Opinion Festival** will participate.

### Bodø 2024

- With Bodø we will explore interdisciplinary art, community and culinary projects, specifically **Home of Happiness** and **A Festival of Friendliness** from Liepājas side and Bodø's **Mousse the Moose** and **The Flying Stockfish Festival**.
- Bodø 2024 is also going to participate in our project **Nordic Solstice**.
- We will foster the capacity building of creative forces by learning from Bodø's experiences in projects involving children creators and audiences, like their project **My European Story**.

### Chemnitz 2025

- During the ECoC process, Liepāja Puppet Theatre found excellent contacts with **Chemnitz Puppet Theatre** and its director Gundula Hoffmann.
- **POCHEN Multimedia Biennial** in Chemnitz will collaborate with the management and students of the **New Media Arts Programme** at the Liepāja University on projects such as **UPDATE New Media Arts Week**, **The Future of Amber** and the **Digital Transformation Conference**.
- The Chemnitz contemporary art community **Ostrale** will collaborate in the project **The Other Sea Festival**.
- For our projects **No More Heavy Metal** and **From Karosta to Radosta** we will cooperate with the **Urban Culture Festival** in Chemnitz and its producers **IBug** to develop our street art traditions.
- Chemnitz's NGO **Klub Solitaer e.V.** will join forces within our **Youth FORUM**, **An Island Adventure of Nature and Science** and **Ukstiņš Education and Innovation Quarter**.

### GO!2025 Nova Gorica

- As part of the student and artist exchange with **University of Nova Gorica, Prof. Dr Peter Purg**, we will prototype different accessibility solutions, also addressing the themes of marine ecology and glocality, collaborating on our project **UPDATE**.
- We will publish translations, collaborate on various readings with **Razpotja magazine** and its literary editor Miha Kosovel in our project **Tell me a Story, Liepāja**.
- In the **Face to Face with the Natural** we are planning a fashion show where we will include the most inspiring collections from the **Ecothreads and Bien** project and sustainable textile traditions.
- For our project **Home of Happiness** we will learn from the **Future of Food Academy** on gastronomical science, production and hospitality.

### Oulu 2026

- To develop the **Ukstiņš Quarter**, **STEAM** and cultural education programmes, we will collaborate with the best in the world - Finnish education professionals in the **Go with the STREAM** project. And, to further develop the **Youth FORUM**, we will host Finnish young people from Oulu to share their experiences on solutions **against bullying** in schools.
- We will involve Finnish sauna masters in the **Nordic Solstice** project, highlighting the nature and importance of the sauna tradition, continuing their **Hot Sauna Debates**.
- In our **Cultural Capacity building** projects we will learn from experience realising projects like **Natural Stages** and **Agent 026**.

### Trenčín 2026

- Together, we will focus on the cultural significance of revitalising disused military quarters in two strong projects – Trenčín's project **Counter Effect** and Liepājas project **From Karosta to Radosta**.
- Liepāja – one of the largest producers of women's underwear, and Trenčín – Slovakia's leading fashion producer. The Liepāja project **Face to Face with the Natural** search for natural sustainability in the use of fashion and textiles is a complement to Slovak Fashion council and Trenčín's ECoC project **Laboratory of Sustainable Fashion**.
- Capacity building projects and Trenčín 2026 experience in **Curiosity Engineers** and **Cultural Ambassadors** connect with our Task Force (Un)Rest linking their experiences with our **Community Whisperers**.
- Digital art projects like Trenčín's **Festival of Illusion** and Liepāja's **UPDATE** bring together a new generation of professionals at the Liepāja University and the **University of Trenčín**.

### Collaboration with candidate cities:

#### Braga 2027

- We see potential collaboration in Braga's **Metamorpho** and Liepāja's **UPDATE** projects. On sustainability we will connect to their **Decolonising Nature**

#### Faro 2027

- On sea-related projects we will cooperate in **The Other Sea Festival** and Faro 2027's projects **Sensational Borders** or **Water's Don't Sleep**.
- In **Return of Towers**, we are collaborating with the **Algarve Organ Music Festival**.

#### Aveiro 2027

- We will work with Aveiro 2027 on **marine environment, military heritage, and Art Nouveau architecture** as well as on the **Tech programme**, with a particular focus on **Art & Tech** and **New Media** initiatives. Other cooperation areas are **STEAM** education and **D10 United**. Liepāja will contribute to Aveiro's **Bairro da Europa**.

#### Brno 2028

- With Brno being a UNESCO Creative City of Music, it would be interesting for us to collaborate on both **Opera on the Beach** and **Return of Towers**.
- Our **Urban Walk** project will benefit from sharing our experience of the **Brno Architectural Manual**. Brno will be our partner for **A Day in the Life**.

# Outreach

## Q14/Q15

### Involvement of the local population and opportunities for less privileged groups

During preliminary selection, we spoke of a 15:85 split between rest and unrest. Suggesting that we had a very active and engaged 15% – more or less our core cultural audience – and a less active 85% which was the remainder of our population. Looking at this with the “new eyes” of a further round of discussions and consultations, and guided by the Panel’s own analysis, we realised that **the situation was more nuanced** and more complex. Cities and communities are complex. We needed to understand ourselves better and to act more decisively. As our Latvian poet Imants Ziedonis said: “To get near, you yourself have to move to get closer, not wait for it to come towards you”.

#### How did we get closer?

In Phase 2 we built on the surveys and studies we made during preliminary selection about Liepāja’s most important development priorities, and especially its **connections within Latvia and Europe**. We learned that the public is very supportive of Liepāja’s participation in the ECoC competition and sees several real benefits – both economic and (surprisingly!) emotional.

Getting closer and communicating better was key to reaching our goal of a more active society. Issues related to **climate change and green lifestyle** are becoming more and more important both in the world and in Liepāja, and Liepāja residents are also starting to pay attention to it. On these two topics – “fellow human beings” and “green thinking” we announced a call for project ideas. Some of our residents’ ideas are included in the programme. So we have them on board the (un)rest voyage...

#### Discussion-seminars

As Phase 2 developed, we took every opportunity to return to the good old analogue face-to-face meetings. We created small, intimate discussion forums as focus groups that met with motivated and interested people to create ideas and solutions for local engagement.

Each seminar looked at a specific topic but together these seminars are an illustration of how we envisage continuing the process of involving city residents and communities, building organisational capacity and developing ideas for activities. There were 6 main topics:

- Are traditional **methods for participation** dead? (led by local expert Vilis Brūveris)
- A seminar for **young seniors** led by Latvian Senior University founder Iveta Cīrule tested the creative potential of our “silver economy”. Seminar participants emphasised the opportunities for intergenerational experience and knowledge exchange and were keen to volunteer more.
- (un)rest in my yard – was a seminar for **active residents of neighbourhoods**, led by the head of the Rīga Neighbourhood Alliance, Māris Jansons. The conversation brought together residents from different age groups who are interested in making life in their neighbourhood better, more fulfilling and enjoyable. We saw and got to know some potential Community Whisperers who are already leaders in their neighbourhood, encouraging others to get involved.
- A **capacity building seminar** for local event producers was led by organisers of the Latvian conversation festival Lampa, Ieva Morica and Egita Prāma.
- In the final seminar, we met with representatives of **Liepāja’s national minority NGOs** – from the Lithuanian, German, Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian and Jewish communities. Here we appreciated how much people are ready to share the riches of their culture and how they could complement our programme (gastronomic and hospitality traditions they want to bring to A Festival of Friendliness, Karosta Has Balls! and sharing traditional skills at the Skills Exchange Market).

#### So how will we do it?

Our solution to getting more people engaged and involved is to create our own (un)rest navigation crew: Task Force (Un)Rest who we introduced you to in Q2. Task Force (Un)Rest is a crew, is a group, is a movement. It brings together all those things, people and institutions who – when putting their powers together – can create a **community superpower** to shake up and reach out, to navigate and secure our key goal of more active and engaged communities.

So, we need to look at Europe’s communities with New Eyes. That’s what we have tried to do with Task Force (Un)Rest.

To develop a plan and solutions which would make a genuine difference meant that Task Force (Un)Rest needed to go beyond the prism of culture alone. We needed to embrace areas like education, environment

and urban development, sports and other areas, too. Any description of the strategy on paper will come across in a linear way but **in reality these processes are cyclical** and have an effect in different directions.

Task Force (Un)Rest is underpinned by the 3 core “engagement blocks” which we also set out in Q2:

- Audience Research and Development
- Cultural Renovation – strengthening cultural organisations, creative industries and the non-governmental sector
- From Hotel to Home – attitude change.

A further key element in our plan is **creating local leaders** to support Task Force (Un)Rest who can connect with and engage people in their peer groups and communities. They will be our **Community Whisperers**. We know very well that peer encouragement is what makes the greatest contribution. Leading by encouragement and example can really change views, break down barriers and obstacles, and is the best way to involve people. Let’s explain some more.

#### Audience Research

As we wrote in the first application, we know the size of our audience for cultural organisations and events but we only have a vague notion of who they are. So, to find out more about the people sitting next to us in concerts, theatre performances, seminars, public consultations, and so on, we started surveying the audience of Liepāja’s cultural sites and organisations. Both in the digital format and also in person when public events were allowed. More about the results and our proposed actions are described in Q16.

#### Cultural Renovation

Cultural organisations, creative industries and the non-governmental sector will act as an intermediary between residents, the state and the local government and will become key messengers for ECoC values and goals. Investing energy and resources, we are ready to raise a new generation of professionals, cultural organisations, NGOs, and representatives of the creative industry by 2027. This will be a **major transformative tool to drive public involvement**, an information medium and also a meaningful group of key partners. To achieve this we will develop capacity building and skills strengthening programmes and also an NGO Incubator.

**NGO Incubator.** In total, about 1,000 different associations and foundations are registered in Liepāja. They bring together people with a variety of interests, from cultural activists, young people, those interested in sport and health promotion, support for socially vulnerable groups and charities, and a variety of other interests. Cultural Renovation will focus on **strengthening the activities of NGOs** and awakening their dormant potential – using their experience, giving them incentives and a mandate to help change our culture from passive to active.

The artistic programme includes many projects where the involvement and active participation of local people as co-creators will be essential. So one of the tasks

of the NGO Incubator will be to create a programme of educational seminars and workshops for children, youth, seniors, representatives of various formal and informal organisations and NGOs, about creating events, marketing, attracting volunteers, etc., so that co-creation becomes a way of working in Liepāja for the long-term.

There is already an NGO formed in Liepāja, which is ready to help other organisations grow by joining the international Impact HUB network, **creating the first such hub in the Baltic States**. The target audience of the incubator will also include NGOs and activists from South Kurzeme and Kuldīga counties. The NGO Incubator will include:

- Co-working space, meeting and seminar rooms
- Legal and accounting services for NGOs
- Fundraising consultancy
- Joint activities, networking, information flow – NGO ecosystem
- Promotion of and support to volunteer work.

**Capacity Building.** This includes a structured training programme, seminars and exchange of experience for existing and emerging culture professionals, creatives, activists, NGOs and local culture industry institutions.

Together with the members of the Kurzeme NGO Centre as a part of the capacity-building programme we set up guidelines for the creation of a group of Community Whisperers as mentioned above. Activists whose role would be to activate others. Human resources are the most important component because, without people who take the lead, nothing will happen. People who will be selected will be given the opportunity to take part in **two-year practical and experiential training (2025–2026)**, which will allow them to develop the competencies needed to become local leaders:

- Participants will be trained by both local professionals and invited experts who will provide the necessary knowledge
- Trips will be organised to different places in Latvia and other European countries to visit organisations and meet people, which will allow expanding the notion of civic participation
- Participants will have to apply the acquired knowledge on the spot in Liepāja, by implementing participatory activities (because learning is best done by doing)
- They will work with the community, team building, event planning, publicity, interest representation, organisational management, financial engagement, etc.

**Circulation of Creative Forces.** Networking with other ECoCs will complement our capacity building – by joining the ECoC cultural field and visiting our artistic programme implementation partners. This activity will also strengthen the European dimension: our creative forces will become **navigators of European cultural currents**. The initiative is meant to use ECoC events as a platform for sharing experiences – the Liepāja Art Forum, the UPDATE Festival, the Karosta Festival, etc., and connect it to international projects, such as the Kontejner festival (HR) and ibug Urban Culture Festival (DE). In our capacity building, we will include



artists, photographers, musicians and other culture stage personalities but also producers, technical staff and the young student generation of culture professionals.

We will also learn to make more active use of the **European Solidarity Corps, Erasmus+, i-Portunus** and other EU mobility programs for arts and culture professionals to implement this initiative.

**Volunteering.** An important way to feel a sense of belonging not only to ECoC but also to the city is to strengthen people's involvement through volunteering. We have to admit that we have not been so strong in this area so far. So cultural renovation is also needed for our volunteer work in Liepāja. The **NGO Incubator would be a meeting point for volunteers** and those who need them. Through active and capable NGOs, it would be possible to carry out both regular volunteer work with a social and environmental improvement orientation as well as cultural volunteer work so that we can develop a support and development system for volunteers lasting well beyond 2027.

We will:

- Set up a wide-ranging programme of events with the opportunity to participate as a volunteer, for example, people from neighbourhoods: A Festival of Friendliness, From Karosta to Radosta; culture lovers: Open Theatre Quarter, Europe Sings in Liepāja; nature supporters: Face to Face with the Natural, The Other Sea Festival.
- In cooperation with the Austrian ECoC Bad Ischl-SKGT24 (CultureBuddies) and Aarhus ReThinkers, we will set up a volunteers programme that also makes it easier for people from socially excluded and disadvantaged groups, people with mental illness, physical disabilities or ex-prisoners to participate in every ECoC event. There will be volunteer companions who will meet their partner friend during the cultural event, tell them about the programme, what is happening and make it easier to feel at ease.
- Improve and expand our existing Volunteer Work Days, for which we will expand the target audience and encourage active people both in the city and region. The NGO Incubator will also be the organiser of the Volunteer Days.
- The most active NGOs will have the opportunity to organise youth exchanges through Erasmus+ and The European Solidarity Corps.

## From Hotel to Home

We want to encourage people to feel ownership about the living environment outside their personal space. That's where our From Hotel to Home concept comes from. If we're honest, many of us live in our own bubbles of like-minded people and we **connect with each other like hotel guests**. Maybe not at all talking or maybe saying good morning as we queue for a juice at the breakfast buffet. That's fine but it's not like sharing a home that we have built together and where we really know and support each other. That's our goal.

So, the aim of From Hotel to Home is to create a discussion with and about our neighbourhoods, to review and revitalise the centre of Liepāja and to promote a genuine sense of belonging, activation and involvement in cultural and civic life, crucially, decision-making. This, in turn, opens up possibilities for successful implementation of **public participation budget projects**, which Latvian municipalities must implement from 2023. So we can make a major ECoC people's first connection to what could be a really successful national initiative. We're especially keen to ensure that projects reach parts of the city that normally miss out whilst their more well-to-do and better organised neighbours Hoover up all the project funding.

We also wanted to recognise the inspiration we gained from the realisation that the strong feelings of patriotism from Liepāja's national minority residents are not so much about Latvia as a country but as the place where they love to live. This gives us a real passion and a shared sense of belonging to tap into to build a real home together, through our ECoC programme.

## Community (and other) Whisperers

We introduced our Community Whisperers a little earlier and we want to expand about how they will also help us to move from Hotel to Home. We will also highlight local community and neighbourhood leaders, like the garage cooperative coordinator, book club manager, youth worker or football coach who can connect people and encourage them to join groups and communities.

We will use the places which people use in every quarter or apartment complex in Liepāja – for example, **hair salons**. Pretty much everyone uses them and they are an untapped source of culture and connection, where barriers come down and conversation flows. We will invite local hairdressers and manicurists to meet with artists and curators about cultural events, art installations, concerts and shows – which will take place in their neighbourhood – to motivate and give them the opportunity to become cultural conversationalists and champions of community culture.

It is also important to adapt our communications to maximise the reach with the representatives of **national minorities**. To involve our NGOs that have knowledge and connections to communicate more flexibly with non-native speakers in their mother tongue.

## Active Seniors

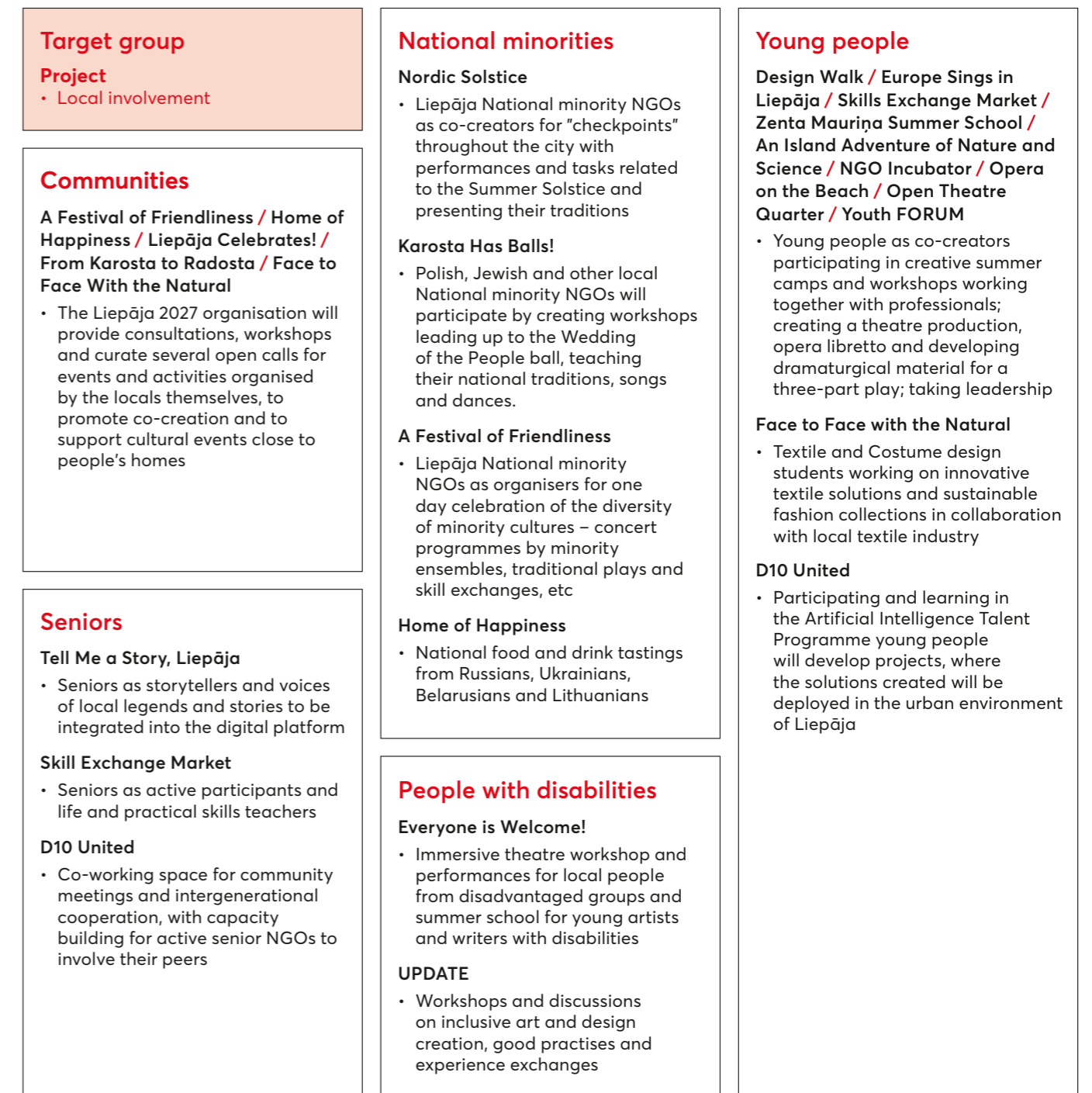
Until now, we have become so accustomed to seeing our seniors as a "problem": a socially excluded group that needs support. We now know from the discussion seminars that many retirees are really active and are ready to engage vigorously and share their experience or competencies, time and ideas. The best example is the example itself, so we will give the most active pensioners' associations the opportunity to act as **barrier breakers**.

## The Appliance of Science (or technology in fact)

Our final connection is the possibility to use technology not only to attract the younger generation but also to offer these opportunities to **people with mobility impairments**. One of our key engagement plans is to use technology to help include people who are – permanently or temporarily – unable to leave their homes. Not just about what is happening in Liepāja but also happenings in the surrounding counties – walking on the manor route, local rye bread master-class, poetry readings, opera, and more.

With the help of virtual reality technologies, we could be the first city where belonging to the city and its cultural field will not depend on your physical location.

The diagram below summarises the specific projects in the Liepāja 2027 cultural programme where local people from various groups will play a key part as participants and co-creators.



## Q16

# Audience development, education and schools

In Q14/15 we introduced audience development as one of the 3 key elements in our Task Force (Un)Rest. Here we set out our plans in more detail, also describing how our work with young people will sow the seeds of future audiences and of a society that is open, engaged and nurturing.

We want to stress that the design of Liepāja 2027 allows a multifaceted cultural programme which embraces both our European Dream and also allows us to see our city through New Eyes – especially those people and communities who are indifferent to cultural events. We need to become more (un)restful! Putting **culture on everyone's radar**. We can't just talk about young people, seniors or people on low incomes in order to increase the audience for cultural events. Of course, there are fans of cultural events in every age, gender and income group. But many others do not see cultural activity as a first priority when choosing between sport, entertainment, recreation, self-education or mental health. Here's our plan.

### Exploring and expanding

We know the harsh reality that a relatively small proportion of the population is involved in cultural events. Our survey in cultural organisations confirms this – the average visitor is a woman (35-49 years old) with a higher education, working in the public sector and mostly attending events with a spouse. We could also call her Inga, Kristīne or Jeļena, the most popular names for girls in the 70s of the 20th century in the territory of Latvia. But this means we tend only to meet Inga or Jeļena and not many Jānis or Aleksandrs.

During the application process, together with representatives of cultural organisations, we researched best practises in a workshop with **communication guru Signe Lonerte** and also played an audience development game, putting ourselves in the shoes of different citizens of Liepāja and creating a plan to engage them, resulting in our five-point framework for audience development:

- **Diversifying the cultural offer.** The artistic programme is built so that everyone in the city notices the range of activities that interest them and can attract "passers-by". We also specifically support activities outside the usual venues.

- **Digital accessibility** – hybrid activities using different technologies, virtual and augmented realities and archives. Let's use the rapid development of digital and virtual technologies to improve communication and reach new audience groups. Our programme includes a variety of digital solutions, including streaming of concerts and events, reconstruction of historical events in Liepāja and the region in virtual games, and other activities in the digital environment.
- **Reduced economic and mobility barriers.** We will create special ECoC annual discount programmes and free events for socially excluded groups, and we will encourage other private and NGO sector cultural operators to follow this practice as well. The European Capital of Culture year must be proof that cultural infrastructure is physically and psychologically accessible to everyone. Through our project Everyone is Welcome! we will develop guidelines for ECoC event organisers, for providing an inclusive and accessible environment. There will also be a person in our team – the inclusion coordinator, who, in cooperation with the experienced NGOs Sustento, the Liepāja Society of the Blind and inclusivity expert Lība Bērziņa, will help the developers to choose the most appropriate universal design solutions and implement them in 2027 events.
- **Expanding the concept of culture in the public consciousness.** We will use sporting events (for example) and the spirit of competition to reach audiences who are passionate sports fans, distributing vouchers and creating a cross-over audience. Also developing mechanisms to synchronise calendars of cultural and sporting events so that they complement each other. Creating "culture fans".
- **Innovation in education.** Our 5th block of the audience development framework focuses on young people and education. We have worked really closely with Liepāja's Education Department which has universally embraced ECoC as an opportunity to really shake up the education system. And our young people deserve it. They have sacrificed their freedom and friendships during the pandemic. We owe it to them to invest in their future in new and different ways. For phase 2 we created a youth forum My Future City. This is a participatory event where young people give ideas about the future city, and think and evaluate what kind of city they would like to live in. In cooperation with the NGO Liepāja Region Foundation, the ideas of kindergarten pupils will be complemented and developed by primary and secondary school pupils, while university students will then create exciting presentations to city planners of the Development department. The young people who will participate and generate ideas will be young adults in 2027 – entrepreneurs, NGO activists, community leaders. So we are investing in our legacy now. Young entrepreneurs ECoC 2027 will include projects to promote the development of young people's leadership and entrepreneurial skills, building an inclusive society through various activities and participation in them. We would like to tell you about some of these projects:

- In addition to the **upWIND downWIND** project, children and young people will create their own European Sports Week. The closing event of the week will also feature discussions and meetings with professional athletes – Olympians, Paralympians, sports journalists – so we will also ask them – What does sport have to do with culture?
- Youth Leadership Camps – will be a testing ground for the development of young and creative leaders who will be able to support other young people in the city. In the project **D10 United** we will create an open call for future-minded NGOs focused on the needs of children and young people and we will be involved in exciting programs for young people in the **Circulation of Creative Forces**. The Liepāja Education Department, in cooperation with the Liepāja University, will implement the Talent Academy, a programme for young people in grades 9 to 12, who will implement a real project with a mentor, ramping up their creative and project management skills.
- In the framework of the **Everyone is Welcome!** project, Liepāja Education Department will organise working groups and discussions on inclusive education in society and educational institutions.

### Integrating cultural education

Increasing cultural education in mainstream schools is an essential precondition for building a healthy, open, inclusive and knowledge-based society. So let's pay close attention to it. The **Youth FORUM** is a visible part of the iceberg. Our intention is to create a broader set of activities underneath the visible part:

- A Pilot project will be based on the educational program **Wind Orchestra**. The orchestra will be implemented in one general education school as a voluntary program, but with the aim to spread the model in the future. The young people will have the opportunity to play in the upWIND downWIND.
- **Creativity Week** will promote and develop young people's ability to participate in civic and cultural life. It will involve all general education, vocational training and pre-school institutions, with the aim of strengthening the link between creativity and education, thus fostering new creative thinking.

We plan to end the ECoC year with an ambitious **Youth FORUM**. The content will be created by young people themselves. We are absolutely convinced that students from over Liepāja, South Kurzeme and Kuldīga will be able to give a strong impetus to the city's development. They are our future – and it is not just an empty slogan.

### Integration of STEAM

To encourage strong environmental awareness and motivate young people to participate in creating healthy living environments, we will stimulate young people's interest and develop their research skills in STEAM, nature and environmental fields. Let's show that educational content can also be exciting.

- Already in the artistic program project **An Island Adventure of Nature and Science** we described the exciting events that will take place on Horse Island and its Nature House, which has become a STEAM education centre. The Nature House is equipped with an interactive exposition and a laboratory of experimental sciences, where interactive lessons and research on the environment and eco-technologies takes place. Work is already under way in cooperation with the Jaermuseet Regional Museum and the Trondheim Science Center (Norway) to develop and modernise science shows suitable for preschool, primary and secondary school students as well as adults. Continuous, annual activities since 2023 for all different age groups.
- In 2027, for the **Baltic Sea Symphony** project which will premiere at The Other Sea Festival, children and young people will be able to create a symphony – the score of which will be based on the data and materials they have gathered on the health of the Baltic Sea.

### Innovative educational technologies

Looking to the future, we will strengthen our experience in the use of educational technologies. This is one of the biggest opportunities for our ECoC – to create the **Ukstiņš Street Education and Innovation Quarter**, which will bring together the inclusive education and culture sectors.

- In 2026, we will develop special lessons with technologies and software for the inclusion of children and young people with special needs.
- From 2027, the City of Professions will operate in Ukstiņš – a space where preschool and primary school students can "play" the role of different professions in exciting games, helping their progression into long term careers.
- By joining the global FabLab network, we will develop the skills of our young people in international cooperation and design thinking.

We feel that it is right to end our Outreach section setting out how an innovative partnership between Liepāja 2027 and our Education Department Team can point the way to a bright future for our young people and their parents and grandparents too.

# Management

## Finance

### Q17

## Total operating budget

Total income to cover operating expenditure (in euros)	23,430,000
From the public sector (in euros)	20,200,000
From the public sector (in%)	86%
From the private sector (in euros)	3,230,000
From the private sector (in%)	14%

Compared to the first application, our overall operating budget has increased by close to 3.5 m. We now were able to add the contribution for projects in the regions, as well as more extensive educational projects.

### Q18

## Income from the public sector

Income from the public sector to cover operating expenditure	In euros	%
City	7,500,000	37 %
Region	1,000,000	5 %
National Government	10,000,000	50 %
EU (with exception of the Melina Mercouri Prize)	1,700,000	8 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,200,000</b>	<b>100 %</b>

### Q19

## Financial commitments towards operating budget

On 17 March 2022, the Liepāja City Council approved the city's contribution to the European Capital of Culture 2027 operating budget of EUR 7,500,000 for the period 2023–2027 which is EUR 300,000 more than in the previous bid.

Although our partners are two separate municipalities (South Kurzeme and Kuldīga), the intention to provide financial support for the preparation of a municipal programme was symbolically confirmed on the same date – 24 February 2022. The two regions have decided to contribute EUR 500,000 each to the implementation of the programme.

To a joint request from the Latvian candidate cities, including Liepāja, the Ministry of Culture responded that it is planned to allocate the budget in 2024 within the framework of medium-term budgeting to ensure co-financing. The letter also states that the co-financing amount for the period from 2025 to 2027 will be up to 10 million euros, not exceeding 50% of the overall operating budget.

### Q20

## Financial support from Union programmes towards operating budget

According to our financial plan for the period 2023–2028, we have planned to target EUR 1,700,000 from EU funds, which is a realistic amount for the period and the actions planned. Our tactical steps to mobilise EU funding are:

- The Liepāja 2027 Administrative and Finance Team will include a team responsible for fundraising. This function will be filled in the second half of 2022, even before the foundation is formed.
- Taking into account the solid experience of Liepāja and regional municipalities in fundraising, the Department of Culture, the Department of Environment, Health and Community Engagement as well as the Development Department will be (and already are) involved in fundraising.
- During the application process, we have received confirmations from partners – in Latvia and abroad – about their intentions to raise funds, such as the lead partners Riga IFF for project Kino Sapnis, and European Choral Association for Europe Sings Liepāja.
- To build the capacity of cultural organisations and the creative sector, we will develop training course on how to raise funding. The financial burden in the field of culture, which rests on the shoulders of the municipality, needs to be shared through an ability to secure more European funding on the part of cultural partners.

EU Fund	ECoC project	Project focus
European Solidarity Corps	Circulation of Creative Forces / An Island Adventure of Nature and Science / Festival of Friendliness /	Promoting mobility for young people, developing a volunteering programme
Erasmus+	D10 United / Ukstiņš Education and Innovation Quarter	Strengthening cultural education
Creative Europe / i-Portunus		Exchange of artists and creative professionals
Creative Europe / European Networks	Face to Face with the Natural / Open Theatre Quarter / Everyone is welcome! /	Development of guidelines on ecodesign principles, exchange of experience, promotion of good practices
Creative Europe / Culture Strand	Urban Dreams Liepāja / Skill Exchange Market (Suiti culture space in Alsunga) / Europe Sings Liepāja / Rock the Rock / Open Theatre Quarter / Into the Future	Cooperation in the implementation of art projects to promote innovation and creativity
Creative Europe / European cooperation		
Creative Europe / Circulation of European Literary Works	The Phantom of the Library / Tell Me a Story, Liepāja	Support, promotion of small European language translation projects
Creative Europe / Pan-European Cultural Entities	Youth FORUM (Baltic Youth Symphony Orchestra)	Enhancing the professionalism of young performing arts collectives
Horizon Europe	Face to Face with the Natural / The Other Sea Festival / upWIND downWIND	Raising awareness of climate change, environmental awareness
	Agora of Values	Strengthening democracy and civil society
Horizon Europe / S+T+ARTS	D10 United	Creation of a Media Art Museum
CEF / The Europeana	The Phantom of the Library / The Return of Towers	Preservation of the library archives and the unique collection; research and digitisation of the ancient music collection of the Library of the Holy Trinity Cathedral
Digital Europe Programme	D10 United / Ukstiņš Education and Innovation Quarter / Skill Exchange Market	Digital skills development projects, lifelong learning
ESF+		Social inclusion, intergenerational transfer, green and digital economy
Interreg Strands A, IPA, C	Urban Dreams Liepāja / D10 United / Face to Face With the Natural / Karosta Paradox	Creation of digital experiences, innovation in creative industries (textiles)
ERDF	From Karosta to Radosta / Festival of Friendliness / No More Heavy metal	Building a smart, competitive, socially inclusive society, development of the European New Bauhaus theme

## Q21

# Timetable for income of operating budget

Source of income for operating expenditure	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	ECOC year 2027	2028
City	59,000	518,000	944,000	970,000	1,337,000	3,140,000	532,000
Region	0	5,000	25,000	44,000	171,000	735,000	20,000
National government	20,000	0	0	1,064,000	3,656,000	5,260,000	0
EU	0	21,000	22,000	134,000	152,000	1,300,000	71,000
Sponsors	0	64,000	124,000	142,000	233,000	2,667,000	0

## Q22

# Fundraising strategy for support from private sponsors

During the application process, we have received positive responses from the private sector to engage in the ECoC process, for example, the largest Latvian telecommunication company LMT, companies from Liepāja Special Economic Zone and others. In fact, we are very impressed by the openness, the willingness to participate, the opportunity to build a shared conversation, and also by the ideas and opportunities we never knew existed. This gives us confidence that if Liepāja is awarded the title, these first gestures of friendship will turn into serious and lasting collaborations and funding support, of course!

In the Task Force (Un)Rest, there will be a role for businesses because they are an important driver for societal change. They turn around financial resources, create jobs, pay taxes, build international networks, bring together enterprising, talented people, are ready

to take risks, to go to distant seas together with other brave people. There we all meet, in our common (un)rest. This will not be a case of "we" need something and "you" give something. The Liepāja 2027 team will engage and delegate tasks to different groups of society as if from a command bridge. Yes, we will also delegate the private sector to get involved where we see the greatest benefit and contribution for both sides.

Our strategy for engaging the private sector is based on mutual respect. Our main goal in working with the private sector is to make a difference in society together. The sponsorship policy will be closely linked to the marketing and communication strategy, ensuring that the partnership is not just a logo on a poster but also adds value to cultural events and citizens.

## Organisation and strategy

As we wrote in the first application, we will attract 1–3 main sponsors with a contribution of eur 200,000 or more each, and we will also give the opportunity to companies who wish to support as second tier sponsors (2–5 companies) with a contribution of eur 100,000–200,000 each, as well as smaller sponsors of specific projects with different levels of contribution. In addition, we will create partner programmes where we will invite businesses to provide in-kind support – either by materially supporting projects such as Europe Sings in Liepāja, Karosta Has Balls!, Face to Face with the Natural Or by supporting the creation of public education events by investing expert resources in projects such as D10 United, Ukstiņš Education and Innovation Quarter, or by contributing to the content of events, such as the leading telecommunications company LMT at Agora of Values.

We are grateful to the ECoC partners, namely cultural organisations and NGOs, foundations and associations, who have worked together to reach out to sponsors and other partners. Strong festival teams such as RIGA IFF, Summer Sound, Laba Daba and others plan to work with sponsors directly and independently.

## Cooperation with patrons

- Foundations. The Uniting History Foundation has already expressed its willingness to cooperate and can provide not only financial but also practical assistance in bringing the world's best artists to our cultural programme. Together with Latvian Rotary Clubs, we will organise fundraising campaigns, such as charity balls, painting auctions, where donations will be channelled into creative initiatives. We will pay close attention to private foundations that regularly launch fundraising competitions, including Microsoft.
- Diaspora. We will mobilise the Latvian diaspora abroad to support the programme and get involved in fundraising for specific cultural programmes.
- Donations. By donating a specific amount, it will be possible to become a patron of an event and receive privileges.
- Crowdfunding. Sometimes ideas arise that need to be put to the public, including on crowdfunding platforms.

## Shared responsibility

Corporate social responsibility is another cornerstone of our sponsorship strategy. Special cooperation will be established with companies operating in the Liepāja Special Economic Zone. Most of them are Scandinavian companies, which gives us the opportunity not only to attract additional support and funding for ECoC events but also to reach out to employees at the companies' headquarters in their home countries, as well as to thousands of employees in Liepāja.

## Capacity building

We will use Liepāja 2027 as a platform to continue the exchange of information and experience started during the application process. Providing educational seminars on different forms of cooperation between the public and private sectors. We see the need to give companies the opportunity to expand projects that allow them to showcase social, environmental and human rights themes in their daily activities and relationships. On the other hand, cultural organisations and the independent sector need the opportunity to learn how companies' decision-making and day-to-day marketing processes work. Learning together will help experienced companies, cultural organisations, producers and creatives to understand the processes and benefits of sponsorship.

## Q23

# Distribution of operating budget

Programme expenditure (in euros)	15,016,000
Programme expenditure (in %)	63%
Promotion and marketing (in euros)	3,420,000
Promotion and marketing (in %)	15%
Wages, overheads and administration (in euros)	3,640,000
Wages, overheads and administration (in %)	16%
Contingency and M&E (in euros)	1,354,000
Contingency and M&E (in %)	6%
<b>Total of the operating expenditure</b>	<b>23,430,000</b>

## Q24 Timetable for spending operating budget

Timetable for spending	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 %)	Contingency and M&E (in euros)	Contingency and M&E (in %)
2022	20,000	0.1	20,000	0.6	35,000	1.0	4,000	0.3
2023	154,000	1.0	100,000	2.9	310,000	8.5	44,000	3.2
2024	300,000	2.0	200,400	5.8	450,000	12.4	164,600	12.2
2025	764,700	5.3	649,500	19.0	763,000	21.0	176,800	13.1
2026	3,437,400	23.0	1,021,000	29.8	890,000	24.4	200,600	14.8
ECoC year 2027	10,248,900	68.0	1,159,000	34.0	1,090,000	29.9	604,100	44.6
2028	91,000	0.6	270,100	7.9	102,000	2.8	159,900	11.8

## Q25 Income towards capital expenditure

Income from the public sector to cover capital expenditure	In euros	%
City	5,971,500	14 %
Region	9,689,000	22 %
National Government	4,130,900	10 %
EU (with exception of the Melina Mercuri Prize)	23,266,000	54 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>43,057,400</b>	<b>100 %</b>

## Q26 Financial commitments towards capital expenditure

The plans for the projects included in Q29 and Q43 and have been agreed by Liepāja and regional councils. All these projects and their budgets are also included in future development strategies. The projects included are currently at different stages of implementation. Some projects are ready to be submitted for additional funding from the national budget or European Union funds. Although there is currently no information on the availability of additional EU funding for cultural infrastructure projects in the next period until 2027, City Council officers are exploring other financial resources, recognising the public demand and the importance of the cultural sector, especially in the context of the European Capital of Culture 2027.

## Q27 Financial support from Union programmes towards capital expenditure

The capital investments outlined in Q25 are to be financed through the established cohesion policy Structural Funds - ERDF, ESF+ and CF, as well as the new central budget programme of the EU - the Recovery Fund, the Social Inclusion Fund, and various national programmes. In addition to external

co-funding, municipal co-funding will also be sourced and contributed to capital investment. The project applications will be organised by the Development Departments of the Liepāja City, South Kurzeme Region and Kuldīga Region municipalities, which have a solid track record in attracting more than EUR 200 million in funding during the previous programming period.

Infrastructure projects will be developed in line with the long-term development policy goals of the Liepāja City and the two regional municipalities, as well as the objectives of the European Capital of Culture programme, corresponding to the objectives of the European Union programmes. These include a number of projects related to the European Green Deal objectives, such as the revitalisation of the former Liepāja Metalurgs steel plant site and the Horse Island; Smarter Europe for the development of the D10 centre; Europe Closer to Citizens to support the Liepāja City Library and the Ukstiņš Quarter.

## Q28 Timetable of income to cover capital expenditure

Source of income for operating expenditure	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	ECoC year 2027
City	108,000	1,266,000	1,266,000	1,239,000	1,174,500	918,000
Region	1,939,000	2,559,000	1,620,000	1,792,000	1,085,000	694,000
National government	401,000	1,487,000	1,295,000	440,000	308,000	199,900
EU	1,583,000	5,049,000	4,440,000	4,896,000	4,108,000	3,190,000

## Q29 Amounts spent for new cultural infrastructure for ECoC

The City of Liepāja intends to refurbish an old police building in the city centre and turn it into an IT and Creative Industries Centre which we would use for our project D10 United. The amount intended to create this new cultural infrastructure is EUR 3,800,000. The project has been agreed by Liepāja's City Council and its budget is included in the development strategy.

# Organisational structure

## Q30

# Governance and delivery structure

Although (un)rest is a creative process, it requires some rest in its organisational processes. If we are designated as the European Capital of Culture we are planning to establish a foundation for the implementation of Liepāja 2027. We consulted widely with lawyers, city and regional administrations, cultural professionals, taking into account the experience of other ECoCs, including ECoC Rīga 2014. And in accordance with Latvian legislation, a foundation would seem to offer the most effective form of organisation.

The organisational structure of a foundation provides:

- a programme implementation independent from other public, state, private organisational structures, transparent process for auditing financial activities, a flexible decision-making process for the implementation of the artistic programme, the best opportunities to attract funding from the state, local governments, EU funds, and the sponsorship from private sector.

The founder of the organisation will be Liepāja City Council. A Cooperation Agreement will be signed among Liepāja, South Kurzeme and Kuldīga regions, in which all three partners will establish the form of co-operation, involvement in the foundation, oversight of responsibilities and processes, as well as the role of partners in the Supervisory Board.

In case of a positive decision for Liepāja, the foundation would start operating on 1 January 2023. It has been agreed with the founders of the foundation Liepāja 2027 that the current bidding team will continue all the necessary processes of preparation, establishment and registration of the organisation until the foundation is operational. The organisation is planned to run until 2029. The legacy activities of the organisation will be taken over by the Liepāja City Culture Department and others according to field – education, public involvement, and others, where professionals will continue the work that has been started, as well as carry out the two ex-post evaluation studies that follow.

The Liepāja 2027 Foundation will build a two-stage form of governance:

- **Supervisory Board** – approves the organisation's strategy, action plan, annual budget, monitors the financial and content development objectives and results, makes recommendations for improving the organisation's performance and ensures that the foundation's activities are transparent and understandable to the public. The Supervisory Board will consist of nine members, including representatives of the Liepāja City Council, Kuldīga and South Kurzeme municipalities, representatives of the independent NGO Providus, representatives from the fields of culture and education as well as a representative of the Ministry of Culture. The persons to be included in the Supervisory Board will be selected by Liepāja's City Council in consultation with partners – South Kurzeme and Kuldīga regions.

- **Board of Directors** – the BoD comprises the General Director of Liepāja 2027 Foundation plus one other person from the organisation. The BoD has final decision-making power and global responsibility for the project. It oversees the organisation's management processes to achieve artistic, content and financial goals, selects team members, is responsible for budget planning, cooperation with partners, funding, and ensures the implementation of the entire program.

The key management positions of the Foundation will be selected through an open call for applications. Within this process, the City Council and City Government as the founder will also look at who is to be selected for the BoD (next to the General Director). Having two board members avoids highly subjective decisions. This governance structure with two or more board members has proved its worth in several cultural institutions in Liepāja, including Liepāja Theatre Ltd and the Concert Hall Great Amber Ltd. Part of the statutes for the BoD is the regulation process if there is a disagreement between the BoD members. In that case, the Supervisory Board arbitrates the process.

In accordance with the law, an economic and financial audit committee will be established to monitor the use of funds in accordance with the set objectives.

## Q31/Q34

# Leadership and management/ General and Artistic Directors

## Liepāja City Council



## Supervisory Board



## Board of Directors (General Director and NN)



## ◀ Advisory Board

## General Director



### Artistic Director

#### Artistic programme team

- Programme line**
- Artistic programme coordination
  - Regional project coordination
  - International project coordination

#### Programme line production

### Outreach Director

#### Outreach team

- Community involvement**
- Community involvement
  - Volunteering

#### Audience development

- Audience development
- Inclusion
- Accessibility

#### Capacity building

#### Monitoring and evaluation

#### Task Force (Un)Rest coordination

### Marketing and Public Relations Director

#### Communication and marketing team

#### Communication PR (local, national, international)

- Press
- Social media, website
- International relations
- Protocol

#### Marketing

- Merchandise
- Ticket sales
- Advertising

### Finance Director

#### Administrative and finance team

#### Finance

- Budget planning
- Accounting
- Finance strategic planning

#### Legal affairs

- Legal task
- Public procurement
- Human resources

#### Technical staff

- IT
- Technical tasks
- Logistics

#### Fundraising

- Public funds
- EU funds
- Private sector partnership

We recognise the scale, complexity and impact of becoming the European Capital of Culture and we are committed to taking our responsibilities really seriously and should have the chance to turn our ideas into reality. Projects like ECoC do not stop by in Liepāja often – if ever. So we have established an organisational structure that gives us the best possible chance of growing into the project and making a long-term success of it. That is our aim for the Liepāja 2027 Foundation. Within

the Foundation, the Board of Directors will be responsible for the creation of the strategy for achieving long-term and short-term goals in accordance with the artistic vision and concept, as well as final decisions related to the overall implementation of the project. However, the day-to-day operational management responsibilities will be entrusted to the General Director and the four directors with the help where necessary of a specially constituted Advisory Board. Roles are described below.

**General Director** – selected through international open competition, will start work in 2023

<p>Approved by Liepāja City Council (as Foundation founder) Reports to the Supervisory Board</p>	<p><b>Positions reporting to General Director:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artistic Director</li> <li>• Outreach Director</li> <li>• Marketing and Public Relations Director</li> <li>• Financial Director</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversees the implementation of a strategy for achieving long-term and short-term goals</li> <li>• Creates an annual budget, to present to the Supervisory Board</li> <li>• Manages a team, including 4 Directors who are immediate reportees</li> <li>• Oversees the cooperation process with the largest cooperation partners - at the national, municipal, international, private sector level</li> </ul>	<p><b>Personal qualities:</b></p> <p>Excellent leadership and management skills: the ability to strategically plan in the long and short term, coordinate work in a growing team, to publicly represent the organisation in several European languages, strong in Latvian. He/she must have a strong personality, international experience and knowledge of delivering major cultural or similar events.</p>

The General Director and team will also have the support of an Advisory Board. This consists of professionals and specialists to provide advice and guidance on issues related to the ECoC, especially maintaining the European

dimension, monitoring and evaluation, public involvement, accessibility, environmental protection, and the perspective of the region.

**Artistic Director** – selected in an international open competition, will start work in 2023

<p>Appointed by and reports to the General Director and the Board of Directors The Artistic Director has the final say in the artistic process</p>	<p><b>Leads:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artistic Team - Program line project management and production management</li> <li>• Regional Program Coordination</li> <li>• International Project Coordination</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible for the artistic vision of the (un)rest concept and the programme as specified in this bid book</li> <li>• Oversees the professional and independent implementation of the content and events of the artistic program</li> <li>• Supervises the work of the artistic team</li> </ul>	<p><b>Personal qualities:</b></p> <p>Strong personality with extensive international experience in culture and art, experience in the implementation of artistic projects of a significant scale. Strategic long-term thinking that supports the values that underpin the realization of our artistic vision.</p>

Since our (un)rest journey is all about reaching out and involving people through cultural and artistic means, one of the most important elements in the organisation next to the artistic team will be the Outreach Team and Director. A specialist will be recruited to this position as early as 2023, selected through a competitive process

and approved by the Board of Directors. Within this Outreach team, we establish the heart of our Task Force (Un)Rest. It will be from here that Task Force (Un)Rest will be built and coordinated – joining forces with existing organisations, NGOs and city departments to implement the strategies on audience development, inclusion and

accessibility of the ECoC. We have also positioned the coordination of the monitoring and evaluation here since Outreach is one of the areas of major impact for Liepāja 2027.

The organisation will be based on Agile Management methods. In a constantly changing situation, between rapidly changing climate conditions, evolving technology

and unexpected events like the current pandemic, we must be able to make decisions and act quickly. Consequently, the long-term work will be achieved in small sprints, implementing them as efficiently, accurately and according to the situation. Great emphasis will be placed on horizontal cooperation between individual teams.

## Q32 Ensuring the capacity of staff to plan, manage and deliver ECoC

We have developed a clear and realistic plan for engaging the personnel to staff the Liepāja 2027 organisation. Our team will grow over time and we will also look for effective models of secondment and collaboration involving cultural organizations, local authorities and the NGO sector, delegating certain tasks to creative industries and outsourced professionals, such as volunteer coordination, international project writing, and sponsoring.

One of the few benefits of the pandemic is that it has shown us the ability to use digital tools to make the work process more flexible and efficient. Working remotely and flexible working hours can give us flexibility in hiring

people from further afield, allowing some of the co-workers not to need to move to Liepāja immediately or permanently.

We also know that ECoC will be a game changing project. Even during the bidding phase we know it has aroused the interest of cultural managers across the country. So far the Liepāja 2027 team includes professionals from the cultural and creative sector. As holders of the title we are confident to be able to attract further people with national and international work experience to join us.

From our conversations with ECoCs that are going (or have gone) through the process we also learnt that hiring some inexperienced but engaged people leads to a closely connected group of people learning together. This builds long-term capacities that can remain in the area after the ECoC year.

The opportunity of Liepāja 2027 is to be able to attract professional resources for Liepāja, with a quiet hope of attracting people with international experience to come to live here or come back to Liepāja.

In terms of numbers our plan for the organisation's staffing looks like this:

	2022 Transition period		2023		2024		2025		2026		ECoC year 2027		2028	
	FT*	C**	FT	C	FT	C	FT	C	FT	C	FT	C	FT	C
No. of people	8		18		26		37		53		60		18	
No. of people	3	5	8	10	13	13	19	18	32	21	41	19	13	5
BoD	1	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	2	0
Artistic Team	1	2	1	4	3	6	5	13	13	15	15	14	3	2
Outreach Team	1	0	1	2	3	2	4	1	5	0	5	4	2	0
Marketing and PR Team	0	1	2	2	2	3	4	1	6	2	9	0	2	1
Administrative and Finance Team	0	2	2	2	3	2	4	3	6	4	10	1	4	2

FT\* – full time C\*\* – part time or contracted

## Q33 Cooperation with local authorities

### At present

Liepāja's decision to participate in the ECoC process was based on a clear understanding that this project is necessary for the development of the whole city and the region. This is why colleagues from nearly all Liepāja city departments participated in the development of both applications. From the Cultural Department, to Education, the City Development, Environment, Health and Public Involvement, City Administration, as well as the Tourism and Marketing departments. Political leadership, cultural organisations and organisations related to the city of Liepāja, including the administration of the Liepāja Special Economic Zone were also directly involved in building the applications.

### In the future

As the EcoC team will transition from a bidding mode into the operational Foundation the pathways we have been able to establish during the bidding phase will prove useful. The marketing and communication team will set up regular forums with the city marketing and tourism department, the regional coordinators from the artistic team will connect to our partners in the region, the Task Force (Un)Rest manager will coordinate the Task Force members joining from the city departments and institutions, the production managers will connect to the regulatory authorities, services and the police for events and permits.

The General Director and Board of Directors will on the other hand have the regular exchange with the representatives of the local authorities within the Supervisory Board and can address issues and establish processes that will help the team manage cooperation on the operative level.

### Task Force (Un)Rest legacy

For the implementation of Task Force (Un)Rest to be successful, we also need the involvement of a wide range of people from the municipality. Addressing topics like strengthening cultural organisations and the non-governmental sector, working with youth and marginalised groups, volunteers, ethnic minorities, activities in neighbourhoods and deprived areas, cooperation with international partners, and building the brand of the city as a cultural destination. Therefore, the Liepāja 2027 team and the participants of the Task Force (Un)Rest will have to cooperate closely during and after 2027. This is also pivotal to ensure the sustainability of the Task Force approach and to leave a legacy of cooperation pathways for activities beyond the ECoC year event.

## Q35/Q36 Risk assessment exercise and planned mitigating measures

Although we defined our strengths and weaknesses fairly thoroughly in the previous application, we have revisited our main risks and their impact as well as our ability to address them. Our revised risk matrix is shown below.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Risk prevention measures
<b>Political support and financial mobilisation</b>			
<b>Change of political power after the local government elections in 2025</b>	Medium	High	Regularly inform the political leadership on the status of ECoC progress Strengthen external financial sources by providing a strong co-financing rate for activities Establish close cooperation with cultural organisations, strengthen their capacity Secure unanimous approval of all parties in the City Council and regional councils on ECoC budgets
<b>Disagreements between official partners – Liepāja and counties</b>	Low	Medium	Regular communication on the ECoC progress with the political leadership of all involved partners (Liepāja and region)
<b>Difficulties in attracting national funding</b>	Low	High	Strengthen communication at all levels with the Latvian Ministry of Culture and other national funding bodies Involve the Ministry of Culture in the Supervisory Board Strengthen external financial sources by providing funding from various foundations, sponsors, etc
<b>Political pressure to change the artistic programme</b>	Medium	Medium	Include measures to ensure artistic freedom within the statutes of the organisation Involve independent NGO representatives and cultural professionals in the decision-making and Supervisory Board
<b>Weak attraction of external financial resources</b>	Medium	Medium	Filling the fundraising position with an experienced officer Good networking and cooperation with businesses and institutions Cooperation with specialists from city administration and private companies attracting financial resources
<b>Organisational management and the capacity to ensure project implementation</b>			
<b>As a result of the size of the project, priorities shift and delays occur</b>	Low	Medium	The work done is regularly analysed and the next steps are defined using the agile project management approach Create a strong ECoC office with professionals involved in the process from the beginning Regularly participate in experience exchange trips and seminars also at the management level Participation in ECoC family activities
<b>Insufficient cooperation with cultural professionals</b>	Low	Medium	Build a strong team with clearly defined job responsibilities, precise and clear internal communication structure. Regular informal communication with cultural professionals in Liepāja and regions.
<b>The inability of the region to provide a full and quality service</b>	Low-medium	Low	Provide capacity building training for regional organisations, companies, professionals
<b>Lack of quality of cultural organisations</b>	Low-medium	High	Build training capacity for existing producers Create a professional experience exchange program with international partners. Strengthen cooperation in the framework of international events, regularly experiencing professional challenges
<b>The required cultural infrastructure will not be completed in 2027</b>	Low	Low	Communicate regularly with the responsible implementers of infrastructure projects about the planned works and deadlines Have a plan B ready so that no project "depends" on one single infrastructure



Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Risk prevention measures
<b>Communication, marketing and public involvement</b>			
<b>Negative reputation</b>	Low	High	Clear and transparent communication with the public. Expectation management Identify aspects of negative reputation, create a plan for its improvement, use appropriate messages, channels, visual material
<b>Failure to fully reach local, national, and international audiences</b>	Low–medium	Medium	Tailor messages for each group of society Implement a monitoring system for communication evaluation Use at least two European languages in communication – Latvian and English
<b>Inactive and disengaged communities</b>	Medium	Medium	Find strong opinion leaders (Community Whisperers) among specific inactive groups to communicate about the ECoC programme Establish public participation projects in the ramp-up years
<b>Inactive representatives of associations who do not fully understand the essence of the NGO sector</b>	Low	Medium	Capacity building training for NGO members, explaining the principles of involvement and opportunities for cooperation
<b>Too few active young people</b>	Low	Medium	Involve the most active pupil and student parliaments in the planning, development and implementation of the ECoC programme Develop initiatives to involve less active groups of young people, such as the introduction of a new leadership programme
<b>Lack of contemporary art comprehension by more conservative citizens</b>	Medium	Low	Starting from 2023, start implementing the ECoC programme with high-quality “warm-up” projects
<b>Lack of accessibility (physical, mental, language, etc.)</b>	Low	High	Improving access to be included in the implementation plans of all projects A balanced range of activities available for free Provide remote access to content (website, materials, online, etc.)
<b>International dimension, cooperation with Europe</b>			
<b>Weak cooperation with international partners</b>	Low	High	Maintain live communication with partners in Europe and beyond Regularly welcome partners in Liepāja, go on experience exchange trips Join international networks and encourage cultural institutions and NGOs to join networks in their field - ECoC family, UBC (Union of Baltic cities), various European professional associations Review current cultural topics, look for similar solutions in Europe (capacity building, networking of volunteers, fundraising, introduction of ecodesign, etc.) Strengthen the professional knowledge and skills of those who work with international projects within the 2027 organisation and the cultural sector
<b>Further unforeseen circumstances</b>			
<b>Sudden global change in project implementation (pandemic, military intervention)</b>	High	High	Close cooperation with government on how to implement the necessary measures. Create a flexible management style of the organisation, to make quick decisions and changes
<b>National or international financial crisis</b>	Medium	High	Strengthen the leverage of external financial resources by minimising the number of projects with only one source of funding. Strengthen skills to acquire foreign financial sources, to attract sponsors, patrons Make decisions to reduce the program while ensuring that the (un)rest goals are met
<b>Extreme weather conditions</b>	Medium	High	Within the framework of each project, assess the risks of weather conditions, to anticipate potential solutions in time for the respective season Make most events available online for remote enjoyment

## Marketing

Q37

### The slogan

**(un)rest**  
**(ne)miers**

We invite everyone in Liepāja and the surrounding regions to enjoy both the serenity of peace, taking a breather from everyday worries by visiting concerts, performances, exhibitions of Liepāja's extensive artistic programme of 2027 and to express the dormant creative spirit of restlessness by co-creating projects and activities proposed through the outreach team.

## Q38/Q39

# Planned marketing and communication strategy and media partnerships

Our marketing is an integral part of our cultural and artistic programme – a strategic and targeted creative tool to sail the vast seas to distant shores. Communication will blow like a wind into our sails, now stronger, now softer, helping to shape the story of (un)rest, talking to a wide local and international audience, engaging people in joyful creativity.

With a welcoming communication message and the right channels, we want to turn public inertness into meaningful activity, talking to audiences on distant shores where no one has heard of Liepāja before. The topics we will talk about in our journey of (un)rest are not only about Liepāja and the region or Latvia alone. It is important for us to add value to similar endeavours around Europe. We believe that our example can become an inspiration for other Europeans and, possibly, our (un)rest journey will be adapted and continued in another city.

## (un)rest tactics

The story of (un)rest will be simple and understandable for all. It will be based on the five programme lines of (un)rest, the events and the role of people in them. The wide range of themes, the artistic programme activities, the dense calendar of events will be presented in a simple (but not in a cheap) and understandable way for a wide audience. We will use precise visual language, simple and clear expressions, contrasts and paradoxes that can also be perceived and understood in Poland, Sweden, France, Lithuania, and other European countries.

At the same time, it will also be about the European Capital of Culture project itself, what changes will take place in the city and why they are needed. It is one thing to know what city has won the title – a loud announcement, everyone is happy but what the activities mean afterwards, for what purpose, to whom and when – this is an important part of the overall storyline.

In a crowded information flow, with clear content and precise use of communication channels, we aim to create a two-way conversation based on human and personal relationships. Telling our story but also listening to answers, suggestions and criticism that will help us keep on course. The two-way conversation will also be supported by monitoring and supervision professionals so that through various surveys and studies we can regularly assess whether people feel involved, how the programme is being evaluated and whether opinions are changing on specific issues of importance to society.

To make our story understandable, our principle will be to follow from the local to the global and from the physical to the digital, communicating information in different languages as we elaborate further below. Clear and comprehensible without losing the user's perspective – a comprehensible beginning, climax, ending and conclusion to the story. There is nothing harder than piecing together a puzzle of information and language when you just want to know whether to go left or right.

The visual image of Liepāja 2027 is deliberately created on the platform of the visual identity of the city of Liepāja – the colours, the font, the nuances. We are doing this consciously, without creating a separate world of symbols, and we have also received support from the citizens that this is a broad set of activities that will be closely intertwined with the processes taking place in the city and the region. The marketing strategy for Liepāja and the regions will be implemented alongside Liepāja 2027; the channels of information delivery and the target audiences are closely linked for more sustainability and long-term impact.

## Conversation channels – from physical to digital

**People.** We have seen countless times that people's feedback and word of mouth are the best marketing tools, which is why our conversation will be centred around people – our Task Force (Un)Rest participants, Community Whisperers – leaders in local communities, and our (un)rest Ambassadors. We need to talk about them separately, so we leave this topic for the next question.

**Use of languages.** We cannot say it often enough. As long as we don't have cyber-glasses on our eyes translating every sign and text we see, we will have a special conversation with those who don't understand our national language. Respecting its unique value in the common European space as one of the two still living Baltic languages, we will create opportunities in each project to tell stories in one of the widely spoken European languages, most often English and German but we will also use neighbouring languages – Lithuanian, Estonian, Russian, Polish etc. We will also emphasise the value of languages in various library-related activities and, in terms of technology, we will use speech-to-text translation solutions which we develop with our partner – Tilde Ltd.

**Physical and digital.** As we will vary the content (interviews, videos, podcasts, content created by citizens themselves, material created by top visual arts professionals, articles, etc.), we will also use the full spectrum of marketing communication tools and media available. Their physical and digital platforms are closely interlinked in the 21st century, so we will include all uses in our arsenal. For example, outdoor advertising in urban environments in Liepāja, other cities and Rīga will take the form of both static banners and video screens that already broadcast the story – on brand walls, in public venues, at the airport and on public transport! And leaflets, flyers will be both physical and available in digital versions, on platforms, on social networks.

In communication, digital is the new natural. But because the possibilities and vastness of digital are also endless, we'll stick to the above – simple and clear. Also in the digital environment.

- Our basis – www.liepaja2027.lv – is a digital information platform, which is part of the Liepāja in the Clouds project. High-quality photos, videos, clear information, also presented in easy language, adapted for people with low vision and hearing impairment, and finally translated into the languages mentioned above.
- **Social networks** are an opportunity to create a two-way conversation. Our task will be to adapt each piece of content to the specifics of the social network, to invest resources in it so that the information we want to convey actually reaches our local residents in Liepāja and the region, residents in the rest of Latvia or people abroad. Our artistic events will also be a helping hand in shaping the content to suit the audience. For example, with project Agora of Values we will address professionals from different fields who are not directly related to culture, An Island Adventure of Nature and Science will be a platform for school youth, the Youth FORUM – will talk to young people about understandable topics in their way of expressing language.
- **The digital content of the projects.** Our artistic programme will include projects that will result in data- and technology-driven art and cultural content, which we will use as an opportunity to reach out to the widest possible public, especially young people, for whom digital content is the primary channel. For example, the Karosta Paradox AR and XR games, Skill Exchange Market workshops and tutorials, Urban Dreams Liepāja.

## Media

We will bring the media companies on this journey of (un)rest as full partners to help us tell stories, meet people and invite them to participate. Accordingly, local media will have the opportunity to add local context, while international media will have the opportunity to add an extended story about Latvia and the Baltics as a whole.

This relationship will not be just a standard media relationship, we will expand it with special media events, such as media breakfasts in the territory of the former factory Liepājas Metalurģis as part of the exhibition Locus Mundi, tours through the Liepāja fortification tunnels in the project From Karosta to Radosta, experiencing traditions in the Nordic Solstice. We will also organise virtual tours remotely and present the latest news in Liepāja and the regions in forums. Through niche media, we will reach a special audience – culture, travel, gaming, street art, new adventures, art, cinema, enjoying nature, etc.

We will develop particularly important cooperation with public media – Latvian Radio, Latvian Television, including the broadcasting of the biggest and most important events in the national media.

**Local media.** Liepāja and its neighbouring districts already have good and successful cooperation with all

the media of the city and the region (Kurzemes Vārds, Liepājas Vēstules, Grobiņas Vēstules, Kuldīgas Vēstules, liepajniekiem.lv, Kurzemnieks, TV Kurzeme, irliepaja.lv, Radio Skonto, Kurzemes Radio, Radio SWH), national and commercial media (Diena, Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze, LTV1, LR1, LR2, LR3, LR4, Delfi.lv, Tvet.lv, TV3, lsm.lv, magazines IR, Klubs, Santa, Kas Jauns), national news agency LETA and niche media (satori.lv, arterritory.com, fotokvartals.lv) – these links will only be strengthened and new ones will be established. We will conclude long-term cooperation agreements with the TOP10 media in Latvia (radio, TV, print and digital).

**International media.** Increased attention is naturally on communicating with international audiences. We will build on existing relationships and seek new partners to tell the story of (un)rest in a targeted way. Given the limited visibility of Liepāja and the region abroad, we are well aware of the need to act strategically:

- For the cooperation with the Baltic countries we will continue to work with excellent media partners that are already familiar with Liepāja and its region – Postimees from Estonia, Lietuvos Rytas from Lithuania, Delfi group, etc.
- We have started working with the National Electronic Media Council, which will be our bridge to the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), the European Journalists' Association and the International Federation of Journalists. These organisations are made up of the best and most professional media in Europe and will help us to tell the story of (un)rest to the whole of Europe in a much more focused way.
- We will use the opportunity to work with media from the countries represented by the artists in our artistic programme – especially Portugal as our direct partner country, Finland, France, etc. to reach out to Europeans to tell the topics we mentioned in the European dimension.
- In cooperation with the LIAA Tourism Department, we will organise special visits by journalists. We have already seen that what you see once with your own eyes is much more impressive and understandable than telling the story from a distance. It is also an opportunity to build more personal relationships in this professional environment.

**Liepāja = Latvia.** We are clearly aware that the city that is designated as the European Capital of Culture will represent internationally not only its own city and region but Latvia and even the Baltic States – next to the European Union as the holder of the brand. We are ready to use this opportunity to strengthen our relations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Latvian Investment Development Agency (LIAA), which is responsible for the country's image, the national airline AirBaltic, as well as tourism and international organisations such as the Kurzeme Tourism Association, the European Association of Tour Operators, the Scandinavian Tourism Association:

- We will build an international ambassador system of Baltic and European organisations, politicians, personalities, promoting Liepāja as a strong destination for cultural tourism and events.
- As mentioned in Q12, we will also develop tourism

products and use the various tourism platforms through exhibitions, professional workshops, fairs and conferences. For example, one of the already mentioned is the joint tourism route Kaunas-Liepāja-Tartu, which we can target at international markets, possibly continuing with Oulu and Bodø. A real cultural journey! As another example, which we have already thought about, we will create full-service "blind dates" from Rīga with the possibility to take a surprise trip to Liepāja without knowing the programme.

- We have a wide range of contacts and good cooperation with Latvian embassies in Europe and with twin cities (Nijeshamn and Helsingborg (Sweden), Elbląg and Gdynia (Poland), Bellevue (USA), Darmstadt (Germany), Guldborgsund (Denmark), Klaipėda and Palanga (Lithuania), and the Orst district in Bergen (Norway). We will present not only cultural but also gastronomic offers at the Latvian Embassies in major European cities and with our partners in various European cities, encouraging people to experience, feel and see for themselves.
- In cooperation with the largest Latvian diaspora organisations Free Latvian Association, European Latvian Association and others, we will reach out to those who know Latvia and Liepāja very well - our compatriots abroad. It might even be possible to build an international media network by working with our diaspora. We will definitely get them involved in projects like the Phantom of the Library, Liepāja Celebrates!, A Day in the Life, etc.

**Professional team.** And finally, professionalism in everything, where strong communication is also a prerequisite. We will work with professionals from leading design firms – H2E, designer Mīkēlis Baštīks, as well as media agencies with extensive previous international media experience.

## Q40 Citizens as communicators of Liepāja 2027

There are many Liepājans and Liepāja's expats around the world holding their breath for the outcome of this competition. We can only imagine what the designation would trigger for the people of Liepāja, South Kurzeme and Kuldīga. Our citizens, the wide range of artists, cultural organisations, our partners and even our relatives would start talking about Liepāja 2027 and would not stop telling everyone they know about this exciting chance for their city. This long-awaited international recognition, the confirmation of belonging to the European cultural space.

This would be the first moment – but after that there is a long way to go. That is when we mobilise Task Force

(Un)Rest. The Task Force is all about involving citizens at all levels. Building respectful relationships but especially lowering barriers and creating access for everyone. The whole (un)rest story is about turning the people of Liepāja and the regions into communicators – with each other and with the outside world. And as we know, where there is a person, there is a story – of experiences, of things seen, of successes and sometimes of failures. Projects like Tell me a Story, Liepāja or the Open Theatre Quarter are in fact as much artistic projects as they are communication platforms to attract the people of Liepāja to become communicators. Citizens' feedback will be our first indicator for the work of the Liepāja 2027 Foundation and the project partners involved.

Here we will highlight some of the planned groups we will engage.

**Local entrepreneurs.** The hospitality sector, restaurants, cafés, hotels, hundreds of apartments welcoming hundreds of thousands of guests every year. Hairdressers, sports centres, car repair garages, boutiques are all places we visit for our everyday needs. We will reach out to this receptive group by helping them to communicate with their customers and by inviting active cultural conversations. And we will involve large companies and organisations with hundreds of employees in the creation of cultural events. Festival of Friendliness and Skill Exchange Market are two good examples of what we mean.

**NGOs and Community Whisperers.** Organisations and leaders of their communities and interest groups, our Community Whisperers, will be the biggest communication mouthpieces for many community groups and countless WhatsApp chats. Reaching our most remote corners. Through projects like Festival of Friendliness, Face to Face with the Natural, D10 United, Home of Happiness and others we hope to create a snowball effect, encouraging new leaders and volunteers to join. Communication through open calls will encourage groups to submit ideas, promoting joint activities, involving others, and spreading the message of (un)rest.

**Liepāja 2027 Ambassadors.** We will also invite people to be official Liepāja 2027 public ambassadors – bright personalities, experts in their professional fields, public figures. Each artistic line will have strong, proven people in their field, who are trusted not only by their peers but by the public at large nationally and internationally, and who have represented Latvia on an international level. Ambassadors will not only be a matter of honour but also of expertise.

For example, Ingūna Elere, professor at the Art Academy of Latvia, leading designer at the design studio H2E, one of the strongest opinion leaders in the field of design; Arnis Rītups, editor of the magazine Rīgas laiks, philosopher, associate professor; Juris Zviedrāns, construction archaeologist, owner of the Tāšu Manor; and Juris Bartkevičs, actor, have already agreed to become ambassadors. These are outstanding Latvian talents and contemporary European intellectuals who are worth listening to for everyone. The ambassadors will also play their part in the overall evaluation of the project, which we discussed in questions 3 and 4.

**All residents of Latvia.** Every Latvian would like to be a citizen of Liepāja at least once in his or her lifetime, so let's give people the opportunity to become one during the European Capital of Culture events. In the projects Liepāja Celebrates!, A Day in the Life we will invite people to look at our environment with new eyes. In the project Phantom of the Library we will invite everyone to engage in reading literature. We will invite the people of Latvia to visit Liepāja not only physically but also digitally, to add to the messages about Liepāja in the project Liepāja in the Clouds. We know that every Latvian has a relative, friend or acquaintance from Liepāja, so we will add to the common (un)rest with a story.

We will also participate in cultural festivals and events at national level, seeking points of contact with our colleagues there in order to promote and represent Liepāja 2027 in the country and in Europe.

**A souvenir for Europe.** Liepāja and Kurzeme residents in general are very patriotic. They like to associate themselves with important city events and, given that 87% of Liepāja residents approve of the city's image, they also like to use the city's symbols in their everyday life – in their clothes. Let's create a special line of Liepāja 2027 souvenirs with a humorous atmosphere and witty slogans. For example, world stars such as NBA player Kristaps Porziņģis and tennis player Anastasija Sevastova sometimes wear a Liepāja cap at sports matches watched by millions of fans. Why not make it a Liepāja 2027 cap or hoodie with a cheeky remark.

## Q41 Creating visibility of ECoC as an action of the European Union

About 30 years ago, we were separated from the west by a heavy Iron Curtain of the Soviet Union. Literally.

We secretly listened to foreign music. We watched foreign films in the dark with our neighbours – we were afraid that the people next to us would not talk to us just for reading in English. We did not even dare to dream of a trip to Paris to see the Eiffel Tower in person or a trip to Berlin to pass through the Brandenburg Gate. Thank God this kind of (un)rest is now a thing of the past. But regardless of ideological and political circumstances, we have always been free in spirit and thought. So it has been much easier for us to adapt and absorb European values in a fairly quick way and to take them completely as a natural part of our identity.

With Latvia's accession to the European Union in 2004, the introduction of the euro, and the free opportunity to

travel, educate, work and create, we are full members of the European team. Thanks to Europe, we, as a city, in these less than 20 years have gained greater social and economic, military and economic security. Today, we have a lot in common with Europe on a daily basis: we are an open, modern city based on democratic values, and so is our culture. Participation in ECoC will allow us to make it much more visible and direct that we are a full part of Europe.

We will invite representatives of EU institutions and ECoC, former and future ECoC cities to participate in our extensive (in)peace programme – as guests, co-authors and advisors. We will also go ourselves as Liepāja 2027 team – as European ambassadors – to share our experiences in other European countries. People, their knowledge, attitudes and experiences will be at the forefront to pass on to each other across cultures and countries. Also promoting the impact of ECoC on the development of cities and societies.

We will work with the European Union House in Rīga (the main institution promoting EU issues in Latvia), the European Parliament Office and the European Commission Representation to promote a common understanding of EU values and the ECoC programme. This will have special emphasis also in our Agora of Values. As a result of those activities, we will hand over a recommendation to the Latvian government on the occasion of the Latvian Presidency in the European Council in the second half of 2028.

We will use the media and other regional, national and international dissemination networks to spread the word about our programme. This will include celebrating Europe Day together on 9 May. Involving NGOs and people active in the community, we will discuss the role of Liepāja and the region in the EU, the opportunities exploited and those not yet exploited. As part of the Europe Day celebrations, we will also organise a European Taste Market in Market Pētertirgus as part of the Home of the Happiness project.

On European Language Day on 26 September 2027, we will pay special attention to European languages, their diversity and learning in the context of the ECoC programme. Together with the Liepāja University European Language and Culture Studies Department, language training and translation companies, we invite people to learn different European languages. Knowledge of languages is an added value for any professional, providing huge opportunities in the labour market and personal growth. This activity will be a great opportunity to have a discussion with other European citizens about foreign language skills and their benefits. We will also involve technology companies that are closely involved in the development of machine translation.

The visibility of the European Capital of Culture as an EU initiative will be ensured by including the EU logo in all communication materials: programmes, presentations, billboards, posters, buses, airport, city festival decoration, etc., both in Liepāja and in the regions of South Kurzeme and Kuldīga. And, of course, flags! When entering Liepāja, Latvian and Liepāja flags fly at the most important landmarks. European flags will also be displayed in the city during the European Capital of Culture in 2027.

# Capacity to deliver

## Q42

### Political support and commitment

Political support for the application process remains clear and unanimous, even after the municipal elections in the summer of 2021 (shortly before we met for the preselection meeting) and the administrative-territorial reforms implemented in the region around Liepāja.

Liepāja's participation in the competition for the European Capital of Culture in 2027 has been included in all the most important short-term and long-term documents for the development and planning of the city since 2015. The task of the city of Liepāja, together with the municipalities of South Kurzeme and Kuldīga, to implement ECoC projects is also strengthened in the long-term development strategy until 2035. We are well prepared and politically well supported!

#### Liepāja

In March 2022, Liepāja City Council unanimously supported the prepared application (selection phase) for the European Capital of Culture – both its content and the necessary financial amount for the implementation of projects. The City of Liepāja confirms its political support by several factors:

- The working group for the preselection and selection phase is organised within the framework of the Culture Department, receiving the necessary funding for the application, and facilitating the involvement of the cultural sector as well as participation in shaping long-term development strategies. The application team was never alone in this task. Regular meetings with the established political ECoC working group before and after the elections, active dialogue with the cultural sector, have provided an opportunity to plan ECoC activities as boldly as possible.
- The City Council, approving long-term development strategies, has agreed on the need to further increase the city's annual budget for culture, which is currently up to 10% of the city's overall budget.

Seven years ago, in 2015, with great political support, an unbelievable project for Liepāja at that time was implemented – the Concert Hall Great Amber. Currently, with the same clear understanding of the impact on the development of the city, the application for ECoC 2027 has been developed. And just like the incredible Great Amber, the political field is determined to be ready for implementation over the next few years.

#### South Kurzeme and Kuldīga regions

Despite the complex processes of regional reform, South Kurzeme, which unites eight districts, never questioned its ability to expand the common European cultural space in the ECoC project together with Liepāja. The newly formed single administrative territory is taking on a new character, much wider borders and a stronger human resource base. On the basis of this, the contribution towards the ECoC of South Kurzeme was unanimously approved by the council members of South Kurzeme Region in their vote on 24 February 2022.

On the same day, council members of Kuldīga Region supported the projects prepared for implementation in the joint ECoC application.

#### Open doors

Strong political support also makes it much easier for us to open doors in various ministries, national and international organisations, universities, and cooperation partners. This gives confidence not only to the Liepāja 2027 team but also allows representatives of various city and county municipality departments to broaden their vision in their field, taking into account ECoC processes and activities.

But in short, the answer to this question is this: Whenever the ECoC working group meets with the mayors, there is only one question from them – "What can we do to help you?" :)

## Q43

### Infrastructure project plans

In Q29 we set out the planned funding of IT and Creative Industries Centre D10, the one major new infrastructure project. However, we also plan some upgrades and improvements to existing cultural spaces which will significantly improve the look and feel of Liepāja's and the region's cultural system.

These are set out in the table below, including our aspiration for a new library – though even if we don't build a new library, the Phantom of the Library will still haunt the old one! We do anticipate that the majority of these upgrades and improvements will be delivered, although where there could be an impact on the programme, we also have alternative venues and options available in case of delays.

Infrastructure project	Related ECoC project	Expected completion year	Budget (euro)
<b>Liepāja city</b>			
Liepāja City Library	The Phantom of the Library (happens also if infrastructure is not ready) / Tell me a Story, Liepāja / Festival of Friendliness	2027	6,000,000
IT and Creative Industries Centre D10	D10 United / UPDATE / Karosta Paradox	2026	3,800,000
Ukstiņš Education Centre	Ukstiņš Education and Innovation Quarter / Skill Exchange Market / Youth FORUM	2027	10,000,000
Liepāja Theatre Small Hall	Open Theatre Quarter / Everyone is Welcome!	2023	1,020,000
Liepājas Metalurgs (Basic infrastructure – streets, communications)	Locus Mundi / No More Heavy Metal / Skill Exchange Market / Liepāja Celebrates / Face to Face with the Natural	2027	20,000,000
Liepāja Secondary School of Music, Art and Design (Extension)	The Shape of the Dream / Urban Dreams Liepāja / Youth FORUM / Europe Sings in Liepāja / Rock the Rock / UPDATE / upWIND downWIND	2024	1,675,000
Horse Island Nature Territory (Improvement of the territory and education centre Nature House)	An Island Adventure of Nature and Science / Face to Face with the Natural / Shine Silently / upWIND downWIND	2027	1,300,000
<b>Region</b>			
Nīcas Klēte Culture Venue (Refurbishment)	Nordic Solstice / Home of Happiness / Skill Exchange Market / Festival of Friendliness	2027	1,200,000
Nature trails (Set up)	Shine Silently / Face to Face with the Natural / upWIND downWIND	2026	2,494,200
Grobiņa Archaeological Ensemble Visitor Centre (Refurbishment)	Nordic Solstice, / The Other Sea Festival / Festival of Friendliness / Skill Exchange Market	2027	300,000
Aizpute Livonian Castle and its fortresses (Restoration and conservation)	Urban Dreams Liepāja / The Shape of the Dream / Skill Exchange Market	2026?	550,000
Open-air stages in Priekule and Kuldīga (Refurbishment)	Europe Sings in Liepāja / Nordic Solstice	2024	2,162,000
Kuldīga Culture Centre (Complete refurbishment and functional upgrade)	Open Theatre Quarter / Skill Exchange Market / Face to Face with the Natural / Urban Dreams Liepāja / Karosta Has Balls! / Everyone is Welcome! / Liepāja Celebrates!	2025	8,300,000
Alsunga Castle restoration, creation of Alsunga craftsmen's house establishing a Suitsi cultural space for the transmission of traditional heritage	Skill Exchange Market / Urban Dreams Liepāja / Nordic Solstice / Festival of Friendliness	2027	1,656,200
Refurbishment and restoration of the cultural heritage (buildings, bridges, streets) of the Old Town of Kuldīga (UNESCO WHS)	Urban Dreams Liepāja / Festival of Friendliness / Open Theatre Quarter / Everyone is Welcome! / Agora of Values	2027	2,600,000

# Liepāja. Status: (un)rest

In 2025 we will celebrate the city's  
**400<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

## Population

Liepāja **68,945**

South Kurzeme Region **36,500**

Kuldīga Region **23,200**

In total more than **120,000** residents

## Culture

Concert Hall

### Great Amber

in Liepāja

27 open air event arenas  
51 cultural centres

19 museums

7 libraries

18 theatres – 2 professional, 16 amateur

70 amateur arts teams in Liepāja and 230 in the regions

93 culture NGOs

18 architects and design offices

29 churches

18 castles and manors

## Sports

6 outdoor stadiums  
1 Olympic centre  
3 sports halls  
1 tennis hall  
1 ice hall  
2 athletics arena  
4 swimming pools

## Education

9 higher education institutions  
and branches  
27 kindergarten  
27 general education schools  
6 children's sports schools

## Tourism

29 hotels  
41 guest houses  
37 holiday houses  
12 campsites  
450 apartments + 50  
4870 beds  
30 restaurants  
116 cafes  
9 pubs and bars  
19 canteens and bistros

Liepāja to:

Kuldīga **88 km**

Rīga **220 km**

Palanga (LT) **72 km**

Kaunas (LT) **306 km**

Vilnius (LT) **398 km**

Tartu (EE) **460 km**

Tallinn (EE) **524 km**

Berlin (DE) **1,277 km**

Chemnitz (DE) **1,393 km**

Bodø (NO) **1,982 km**

Marseille (FR) **2,730 km**

Aveiro (PT) **3,862 km**

## Team:

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Inga Bērziņa – Mayor of Kuldīga Region

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**Liēpāja** <sup>•</sup>

