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# Dreaming of a Green Cultural Capital for All

Eleven years ago, our residents gave me the honour, trust, and opportunity to be their mayor. From the outset, I recognised that my job involved cultivating our city's soul and authenticity—as revealed through architecture, culture, and nature.

Whilst necessarily informed by everyday wants and realities, my public mission also needs to be inspired by forward-looking dreams and visions. My most recent election slogan was "Trenčín, closer to modern European cities", and we have just completed the "TRENČÍNsiTY" major international urban design scheme. This initiative pooled the insights and knowledge of 21 international architectural teams to define the future of our central urban zone, and elaborated a master plan for the city centre's sustainable expansion. This maps out Trenčín's green and positive future, and fulfils our vision of the city's progressive development.

As a committed European citizen, I appreciate the huge opportunity that being European Capital of Culture will bring to fellow citizens across our Euroregion, including Czechia's Zlín Region.

As mayor, I encourage all citizens to actively seek positive engagement, sensitivity, and understanding in establishing a balance between two generations that seek mutual understanding. European Capital of Culture is an outstanding opportunity to create a new Trenčín soul, a new youth-led urban narrative that will shape their city's future and encourage leavers to return.

European Capital of Culture is about European and local stories and narratives: connecting, communicating, showing solidarity, living, being happy, cooperating, and, yes, for me, of miracles.

I can already see and feel that the Trenčín 2026 team's projects have offered a tantalising glimpse of what the future could hold by cultivating curiosity towards (re)discovering the people and places around us—supporting each other and aspiring to live in universal harmony, happiness, and mutual respect. It is this celebration of humanity that draws me towards this project. Ever since I saw its invigorating zestful impact in Košice (ECoC, 2013), I was committed to striving towards making Trenčín a European Capital of Culture.

The European Capital of Culture is Trenčín's shared dream and vision—hence I am very grateful for this opportunity to have initiated and contributed to this story. I thank the Trenčín 2026 team for their incredible work and dedication, and to all those who have had confidence in and supported our activities in Trenčín and across Europe.

**Richard Rybníček,**  
Mayor of Trenčín





**#Europe Matters**

**#City Matters**



**#People Matter**



**#Community Matters**



**#Nature Matters**



**#Culture Matters**





# Introduction

Has the concept of the programme described for the ECOC year changed between the pre-selection and the selection stage? If yes, please describe the new concept and explain the reasons for the change.

## 01

The concept of **Cultivating Curiosity** has remained true to the original vision. It has become embedded as a shared philosophy across Trenčín and our European partners.

The concept has been meticulously elaborated, developed, and shared with hundreds of stakeholders throughout the city, region and Europe. This bid shows the dedication and comprehensive vision to fulfill the potential of Trenčín 2026. Over these months we ourselves have experienced growth, cultivated our own curiosity, navigated new journeys of discovery, and developed relationships through rewarding dialogues and collaborations. Cultivating an inquisitive mindset introduced new approaches and positive perspectives into the Trenčín 2026 transformational process. We feel very grateful for the privilege and responsibility of embracing the challenge of bidding to be European Capital of Culture.

**Cultivating Curiosity is our universal catalyst for cultural change. Through culture we aim to generate genuine care and responsibility, interest and empathy for the world around us.**

**Curiosity is an essential tool for Europe**, stimulating the first steps to mutual understanding and promoting creative solidarity. Europe has many cities just like Trenčín, searching for sustainable well-being. Insightful collective conversations have cast a light on themes of knowledge deficit, denial, and individualism over solidarity that are experienced through everyday life, including the widened opinion divide during the pandemic. Cultivating Curiosity is our tool to address the urgent need to promote critical yet constructive thinking—a new approach to confronting our fears, dealing with problems, and promoting mutual connections with empathy and collaboratively.

Our concept has been discussed and adopted by **partners and artists from 50 European and global countries**—and they're excited to continue growing the collaboration. Communication with hundreds of new international partners has been a key experience and gateway into becoming part of a dynamic cultural European network. We worked towards achieving a geographical balance of programme partnerships, as reflected in a diverse range of artistic input from every European country and beyond.

We view ECoC as an opportunity to transform fleeting encounters into durable bonds, toward the co-creation of an authentic new cultural identity for the green city and region of Trenčín. The unique urban development project TRENČÍN si TY had supported the principle of **ecology before economy** since 2011 and developed the city's urbanism. Trenčín's identity has been historically shaped by alternative music, the textile and fashion industry, a beautiful hilltop castle, and a military heritage. Together we will recontextualize, explore, understand and improve through the medium and tools of contemporary culture.

Through common goals, we have developed more solid and profound relationships with the wider **European region** and initiated cross-border synergy with the Czech city of Zlín. The Self-governing Region of Trenčín fully supports our bid with great enthusiasm for what Cultivating Curiosity represents. While establishing our regional partnerships, we have connected all seventeen regional municipalities and nearby Piešťany town through themes such as modernist architecture, the textile and shoe industry, and thermal springs.



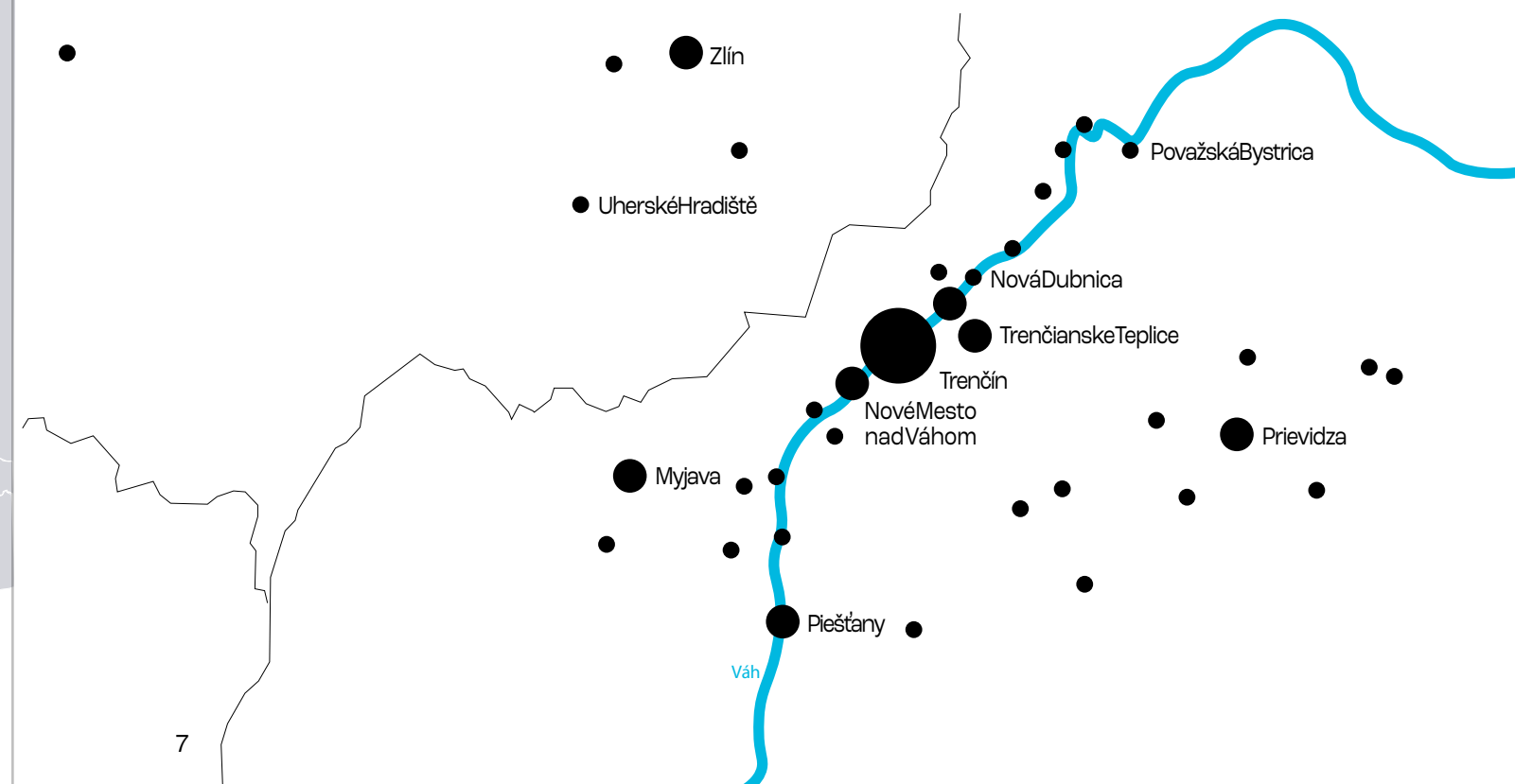
We have been further developing cultural collaborations with military communities in the city via our Cultural Ambassadors programme that stimulated negotiations with the Ministry of Defense to bring quality and diverse cultural offerings to the biggest cultural building in the city, the House of Army (ODA).

During the candidacy period, we have been challenging the status quo and collectively bringing a breath of fresh air, lofty ambitions, and the courage to dream about what our city and Europe could become. Trenčín has already demonstrated its drive towards stimulating cultural change, with eight successful pilots from the Trenčín 2026 programme organised and supported by our citizens. These include the **city's biggest ever participative artistic project** Saturday on Sunday (p. 72), and the Garage youth-oriented capacity building project (p. 46).

We envision Trenčín contributing to Europe with a new universal lifestyle approach with built-in capacity for global cooperation. We are advancing a locally-relevant, globally-coherent, and enticingly-feasible cultural proposal. The title of European Capital of Culture would be a catalyst for Trenčín to become a key cultural hub that brings together sustainable solutions, creative industries, inclusive communities, prototype designs, and innovative minds in both urban and rural settings.

Cultivating Curiosity is a truly shared vision that will move us towards achieving one common goal: to recover the social fabric challenged by the political past, the pandemic present, and the climate future. We simply aspire to inspire our collective better tomorrows by asking questions and seeking solutions today:

## Cultivating Curiosity by caring to know and daring to do.





# Long-term strategy

## 02

Cultural strategy and ECoC contribution—Describe any changes to the cultural strategy since the preselection stage, and the role of the ECoC pre-selection in these changes, if relevant. Indicate specifically which priorities of this strategy the European Capital of Culture action intends to contribute to, and how.

### Trenčín Urban Cultural Strategy priorities

Development of cultural and creative potential

Strengthening the green dimension in the cultural and creative industries

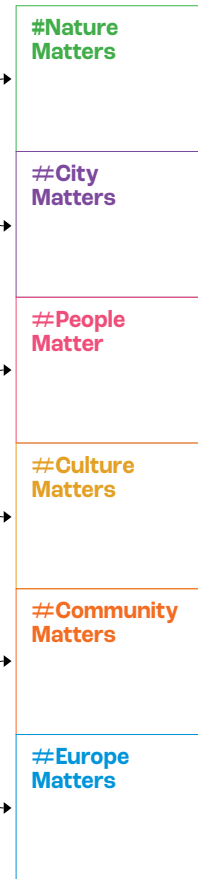
Development of cultural and creative potential

- Ensuring access to cultural and community life for all residents
- Capacity building and audience development

### Trenčín 2026 Strategic Objectives + Programme Strands



### Trenčín 2026 Goals



### ECoC Transformation

Attractive, sustainable city with a diverse cultural offer and strong European identity

Dynamic creative region where people feel European and collaborate across borders and cultures

Brave, engaged citizens contributing to European values through ever-developing communities

Livable City—Unique TRENČÍN si TY 2021–2030 with an outlook to 2040 (Cultural Strategy) was unanimously approved on 10 March 2021 by the city council. ECoC will enable the much stronger impact of Trenčín's cultural strategy and the TRENČÍN si TY urban transformation by social transformation through culture. Three common strategic objectives ensure that ECoC fully contributes to the Cultural Strategy priorities with six identified goals:

- #NatureMatters & #CityMatters
- #PeopleMatter & #CultureMatters
- #CommunityMatters & #EuropeMatters

To highlight our goal commitments, these tags will be used in both online and offline communications (p. 91).

Trenčín's Cultural Strategy is firmly embedded in the ECoC plans. As such, the strategy has remained constant since the preselection stage and has been further reinforced by our cultural programme, outreach, monitoring, and evaluation frameworks to ensure a robust and realistic long-term legacy for the city and region.

The ECoC is now considered as the most powerful tool to meet the city's strategic objectives. These include contributing to Europe's cultural diversity and fostering international collaborations, and are fully supported by the public, private, and third sector organisations across the city and region.

Trenčín needs the European Capital of Culture title to give citizens the power and confidence to deliver the cultural strategy.

## Plan For A New Cultural Ecosystem

### #NatureMatters

Raise the scope and diversity of the region's sustainable cultural & creative activities

Europe's commitment to a green future inspired Trenčín to put nature first in long-term development strategies. Trenčín 2026 considered nature and the environment as a key component in the first bid round, and during the second phase its importance grew and will contribute to the Cultural Strategy priority. This is with view to strengthening the green dimension of culture and creative industries through projects and legacies:

→ **Green transport options** to cultural venues. We consulted the new Plan For Sustainable Mobility to be implemented by 2026 in alignment with Trenčín 2026 goals. It will ensure that the city and region will be able to provide ecological transport to all venues and public spaces. (p. 96)

→ **Green Cultural Production Guidelines:** cultural organisations and institutions have made a shared commitment to ensure that all cultural production and programming is environmentally-friendly by implementing this easy-to-use production manual for all Trenčín 2026 events including key principles, such as zero-waste at events and tracking CO2 impacts. The manual will be co-created with Creative Institute Trenčín during 2022.

→ **Trenčín Green and Creative Region Network:** we continued the opportunity to deepen our links with regional municipalities and rural areas so that the whole programme has regional links and a strong focus on revitalising nature. We have connected all 18 regional municipalities and one satellite city in one conversation that will further result in a new network in 2022.

### #CityMatters

Rebuilding the city's socio-spatial relationships

The Cultural Strategy sets the objective to renew cultural spaces and strengthen residents' positive relationship with the city through a quality cultural offer. Trenčín is Slovakia's first city to have a deeply participatory and sustainable urban planning vision—TRENČÍN si TY—in process since 2011. On 7 April 2021, the city council approved the land plan in accordance with this vision. Trenčín 2026 will contribute with projects and legacies, paying special attention to addressing the New European Bauhaus action (p. 97):

→ **Urban (re)creations** to transform currently unused outdoor public spaces into venues for our artistic programme.

→ **Cultural hotspots:** Trenčín Regional Government agreed to rebuild Trenčín Youth Library, which will become an important, modern cultural and community space in 2026 alongside other cultural centres and heritage sites.

Trenčín 2026 and the Mayor of Trenčín have been engaged in year-long negotiations with the Ministry of Defense over involving the army and veterans in the Trenčín 2026 programme. These discussions have also extended to using the military-owned ODA

theatre and congress building. These talks were very motivating for all concerned, uniting both parties' aim for ODA to become a contemporary art centre. Operational details are yet to be rubber stamped, but the City of Trenčín and Ministry of Defense have officially declared their joint intention to use ODA for professionally-managed cultural programmes .

→ **Connected city:** TRENČÍN si TY plans to move the physical barrier of a busy road that divides the city centre from the riverbank in 2030, and Trenčín 2026 will help to rediscover the leisure opportunities of accessible embankments, preparing surroundings for the **Fiesta Bridge** that will become a key ECoC urban transformation legacy.

### #PeopleMatter

Support citizen-created culture

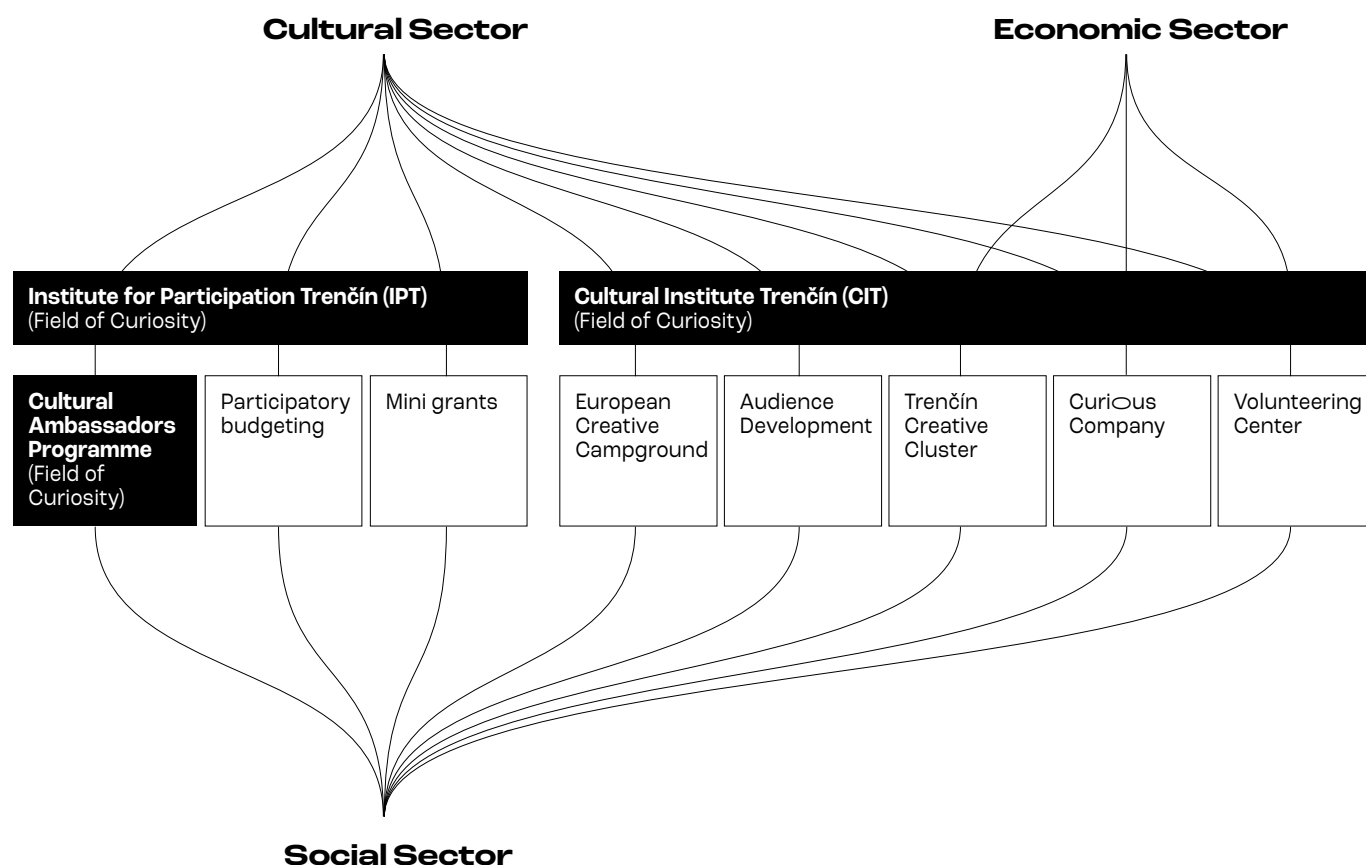
The Cultural Strategy's objectives to make cultural and community life accessible to all residents and visitors offline and online, and to identify potential audiences for cultural institutions are addressed in Trenčín 2026 projects and legacies:

→ **The Institute for Participation Trenčín (IPT):** will promote and increase active participation across all facets of city life, with a special focus on culture. It will provide data and feedback for urban and regional development planning. It has been officially approved by the municipal administration, and will be set up by the City of Trenčín in January 2022. IPT will run cultural participation programmes directly linked to participative programmes of Trenčín 2026 (p. 73)

→ **Cultivating Accessibility Plan:** Trenčín 2026 strategy is to realise intensive audience development process of all cultural institutions and organisations through a structured programme securing the physical, mental and linguistic accessibility of culture in the city and region (p. 74).

→ **Hybrid Production Lab:** the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic made us appreciate the need to develop digital competencies and capitalise on hybrid communication platforms to reach wider audiences across Europe. We are setting up a digital events production platform that facilitates artistic collaborations in and for the design of new digital and hybrid formats. In collaboration with digital platform Edisonline and FILM EUROPE, Trenčín 2026 has solid infrastructure for digital audiovisual content (p. 97).

## Long-term connections between cultural, economic and social sectors via Fields of Curiosity



## #CultureMatters

Appreciated and professionally managed culture and blooming creative industries

Trenčín's Cultural Strategy outlines the goal to ensure the capacity building of cultural workers, cultural cooperation between the private, public, and third sectors, and to support job creation in the creative and cultural sector. Trenčín 2026 contributes through projects and legacies:

- **Creative Institute Trenčín (CIT):** cultural professionals, including creative industry specialists, social services personnel, local businesses, and representatives from schools, NGOs, and citizens came together in a number of working sessions to establish the underlying principles for CIT. This will be the governing body that implements the Trenčín 2026 project (p. 87).
- **European Creative Campground:** many cultural projects and programmes have been structured with capacity building workshops, trainings, and focus groups. Linked through specifically designed capacity building programmes for cultural professionals, cultural ambassadors, youth, and general public, as well as the volunteer training programme with a special focus on developing the language skills of cultural workers to ensure that we leave an outstanding legacy in the talented and willing hands of Trenčín's citizens by year-end (p. 22).

- **Trenčín Creative Cluster:** the City of Trenčín, the A.Dubček University of Trenčín, High school of Applied Art in Trenčín, and creative businesses in the Trenčín Region who want to participate in developing Cultural and Creative Industries's (CCI) in the Trenčín Region have formed an informal stakeholders group with the aim to launch Trenčín Creative Cluster in 2022.

During the pre-selection stage, we learned that the proper mapping of the cultural sector and its cross-sectoral potential in Trenčín Region had yet to be done. With the aim to better understand how Trenčín 2026 could create a sustainable system that supports long-term and cross-sector collaborations, we held 15 strategic meetings involving over 200 organisations and institutions. Trenčín's creative studios, filmmakers, music producers, sound and light companies, fashion and product designers, as well as DIY communities and creative makers, together with the Slovak Fashion Council, proposed partial strategies for Trenčín 2026 to bring such contributors to the forefront of the local economy and turn the outdated city of fashion into a contemporary **Laboratory of Sustainable Fashion** (p. 42)

Our partner city Zlín is a strong creative industry player in film and design. Meetings between key Trenčín and Zlín stakeholders led to four immediate cooperation agreements signed in September 2021:

- **SK-CZ Regional Collaboration:** cross-border collaboration agreement between the **Trenčín Regional Government and Zlín Regional Government** was signed in 2021. The role of this comprehensive cross-border partnership spans beyond the Trenčín 2026 project, building on mutual synergies and interest in developing a shared regional strategy at the beginning of 2022, and thereby creating a long-term sustainable environment for cultural and creative industries across the Trenčín and Zlín regions. Further agreements to collaborate on Trenčín 2026 goals were signed with **universities, Creative Cluster Zlín and Zlín Technology and Innovation Centre** and on the level of cross-border **tourism cooperation**.
- **Curious Company Programme:** we will connect businesses in co-creation and financial support of Trenčín 2026 programmes through tailor-designed sponsorship strategy (p. 81).

## #CommunityMatters

Foster European community building and collaboration

Trenčín's Cultural Strategy aims to support cultural and community activities and projects, creating intergenerational dialogue in culture, and encouraging volunteering. Trenčín 2026 goals contribute with projects and legacies:

- **Cultural Ambassadors:** will recruit and train one hundred cultural ambassadors by 2026 across the Trenčín Region to support various community groups to implement their own cultural activities—the programme is built on the principle of citizens' inclusion and empowerment (p. 74).
- **Participatory budgeting of community cultural projects:** IPT will manage participatory budgeting in primary schools focused on cultural projects aligned with Trenčín 2026 goals, driven forward by children, and education for participatory planning. City-wide participatory budgeting for cultural projects will be created where all citizens' participation will be promoted and encouraged (p. 73).
- **Community Guideline:** step-by-step instructions for active citizens on how to organise their own community and cultural activities. The guideline will include examples of community outreach, how to create posters, and events' technical and environmental requirements (p. 71).
- **Volunteering Programme:** in collaboration with Trenčín volunteering centre, we successfully launched a volunteering programme during the summer of 2021 to be developed into an international community of volunteers by 2026 (p. 73).

## #EuropeMatters

Foster critical dialogue on democracy and connect art with science across European regions

Trenčín 2026 goals directly link to the objectives of Cultural Strategy to create cooperation with regional, national and international partners, and create and adapt cultural content, programmes and services for foreign tourists. While all programmes and projects include international partners and many relate to Europe, we have created a #EuropeMatters goal specifically to highlight the European dimension in our programme. Trenčín 2026's approach to European matters is at the core of every aspect of the project with the aim to promote and reinforce human and cultural rights, address immigration issues, foster solidarity, and support green habits. We invite citizens, visitors, and digitally engaged audiences to form:

- **Skills for Europe:** our programme is co-designed with our European partners to have long lasting positive effects so we can build skills for people across Europe (p. 62).
- **Networked Europe:** from 2023 to 2027, Trenčín will become stage for creative dialogue and good practice dissemination through nine major international conferences and forums that will address themes of sustainable urbanism and design innovation, repurposing European brutalist heritage, human rights and democracy (p. 70).
- **TrenčínAir:** launching the first Artist in Residence programme that will host 130 European artists in Trenčín aims to support the building of genuine art based networks connecting all corners of Europe (p. 67).
- **Cultural Research Living Lab:** will be established to involve everyone in research to monitor the impact and transformational value of the Trenčín 2026 project and disseminate results throughout Europe (p. 17).
- **Art-Science initiatives:** trust in science and critical dialogue are crucial values that we will approach with continuity and creativity across the programme (**Art & Science & Curiosity Festival** and art-science tandem residencies). By synthesizing European imagination where art thinking goes hand-in-hand with design thinking, our aim is to innovate our living (p. 55).



Long term impact—Have your intentions in terms of long-term impact of the European Capital of Culture action on the city changed since pre-selection? If yes, please describe the changes or further impact foreseen.

# 03

Our intentions remain the same in terms of long-term impact but the emphasis has become stronger. Trenčín will grow into a **vibrant city and creative region**, informed by pressing needs and motivated by long-term achievable and quantifiable impacts.

Trenčín will cultivate changes that benefit lives through successful sustainability, meaningful mobility, and open opportunities. It will be a city where citizens feel welcome and involved and where the **sense of community** is nurtured before blossoming into active participation where every voice is equally heard.

Trenčín's **unique urban nature transition** is taking root yet is primed to flourish for the benefit of current and future generations. A city and region where social needs are met, culture is inclusive, green spaces invite relaxation, jobs are fulfilling, and creative educational pathways lead to a brighter future.

Trenčín 2026 will produce and promote an authentic, **economically sustainable European cultural hub** that embraces organic social and cultural change.

### Global: Cultural and image impacts

- Trenčín will be an attractive multi-generational European city where people want to live.
- Citizens will actively forward their needs by engaging

with the city and EU as approachable partners.

- Citizens, organisations and institutions will embrace and drive forward European values and aims.
- The city and region's cultural professionals and artists will call the European cultural scene their own.
- Curiosity will cultivate citizens towards being more connected and open-minded.
- Higher international profile of the city and region's schools and university will attract talent.

### Individual: Social impacts

- Cultural professionals and artists will have better working conditions (employment/income security, professional development) and enhanced international networking opportunities.
- Citizens know, value and promote Trenčín's European cultural heritage.
- Citizens will feel more European, multi-cultural, and tolerant, understand and share European values, challenges and vision.
- Citizens will feel mutual care and curiosity, united by pride in the city and region's nature and heritage.
- Cultural and creative sectors and communities become inclusive for all.

### City: Urban, economic and policy impacts

- Trenčín will be an attractive city with vibrant cultural life.
- A robust cultural and creative sector will attract investment and talent.
- Disused public spaces will be repurposed for culture.
- Citizens will embrace mobility and sustainable living.
- The cultural programme will be universally accessible—barrier-free and inclusive.



## Indicators of Impact

### Operational Objective: Stimulate extensive cultural programmes of high artistic quality

| Outcomes/Results  | Indicators   | How   |
|---|--|---|
| ● Trenčín 2026 will deliver a cultural programme of artistic excellence while generating social and economic value for the city                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Total number of events</li> <li>● Number of events in every category of events</li> <li>● Economic and social impact of Trenčín 2026</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programme data provided by CIT</li> <li>● Qualitative analysis of the programme</li> <li>● Return on Investment and Social Return on Investment</li> <li>● Focus groups</li> </ul>                                 |
| ● Trenčín 2026 programme will be delivered in compliance with the budget  | ● Total Budget of Trenčín2026 cultural programmes  | ● Budget data provided by CIT   |
| ● Multicultural projects will take centre stage in the Trenčín 2026 programme, with at least 50% of the programme based on multicultural projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Number and quality of multicultural project</li> <li>● Number of local grassroots initiatives, including European partners or intercultural themes</li> <li>● Increased support for multicultural projects e.g. by cultural minorities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programme data provided by CIT</li> <li>● Qualitative analysis of the programme</li> <li>● Number of new and sustainable multicultural projects</li> <li>● International cross-disciplinary mass events</li> </ul> |

### Specific Objective: Transform Trenčín's unused urban areas into sustainable, green and creative hotspots.

#### Operational Objective: Deliver a green and sustainable Trenčín2026 programme and cultural strategy

| Outcomes  | Indicators  | How   |
|---|---|---|
| ● All Trenčín 2026 events will be implemented in an ecologically sustainable manner               | ● Number of new and sustainable green cultural activities   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Analysis of the City of Trenčín cultural strategy document</li> <li>● Challenge-led hackathons</li> </ul>  |
| ● All cultural infrastructures will be developed through principles of the circular economy       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Value and social value of investment in cultural infrastructure and facilities</li> <li>● Application of principles of the circular economy</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Documents analysis of the City of Trenčín cultural strategy documents</li> <li>● Analysis of city budgets – expenditure on culture</li> <li>● Return on Investment</li> <li>● Social Return on Investment</li> </ul> |
| ● All 18 regional cities will have developed a green cultural strategy for their cultural offices | ● Strategy for long-term cultural development of the city, initial and post-Trenčín2026, including an Action Plan   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Analysis of the City of Trenčín cultural strategy documents</li> <li>● Published documents of CIT, municipalities and/or other relevant body</li> <li>● Challenge-led hackathons</li> </ul>                          |
| ● Trenčín 2026 marketing will be green  | ● Number and % of green marketing campaigns   | ● Published documents of CIT, municipalities and/or other relevant body   |
| ● Offset CO2 production of cultural activities in the region by 2030                              | ● Level of CO2 produced by cultural activities  | ● CO2 sensor; analytics and projections (incl. mobility schemes and online/digital carbon footprint analytics)  |

#### Operational Objective: Improve Trenčín's cultural infrastructure and boost green urban regeneration

| Outcomes  | Indicators   | How   |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Socially aware urban regeneration of the Old Railway Bridge, Creative CentreHviezda, Trenčín Castle</li> <li>● Rediscovered and revived modernist and brutalist architecture</li> <li>● Repurposing ODA as a cultural venue</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● New use of unused spaces, new public space development</li> <li>● Value and social value of investment in cultural infrastructure and facilities</li> <li>● Development of the city's cultural strategy and implementation plans</li> <li>● Number of visits to heritage sites (number of people and length of visits)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ethnography</li> <li>● Arts-based research</li> <li>● Return on Investment</li> <li>● Social Return on Investment</li> <li>● Residents' survey</li> <li>● Analysis of the City of Trenčín cultural strategy documents</li> <li>● Visitors' survey</li> </ul> |
| ● Revitalisation of eight local cultural community centres, and reconstruction of 10 urban (re) creations (p.97)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase in the availability of affordable space for cultural production (studios, etc.)</li> <li>● Quality and quantity of post-Trenčín2026 and long-term strategic documents and policies prepared</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ethnography</li> <li>● Arts-based research</li> <li>● Culture and Creative Sector's survey</li> <li>● Statistical data provided by the City of Trenčín</li> </ul>  |
| ● Increase Trenčín cultural budget (from multiple sources) by 2030 to 3% of the city budget   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increased financial contributions obtained from public, private and third sector partners.</li> <li>● Volume and % of culture grants for cities and the region</li> </ul>   | ● Analysis of city budgets – expenditure on culture (City of Trenčín)   |

\*Due to the absence of baseline data it is not possible to quantify change. This is something we propose to do in the years pre-event (p. 18).



| <p><b>Specific Objective: Broaden opportunities to co-create and participate in Trenčín's cultural life and Trenčín2026 events, boosting curiosity and nourishing everyone's creative potential.</b></p>   |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <p><b>Operational Objective: create new opportunities for a wide range of citizens and stakeholders to co-create and participate in Trenčín's cultural programme.</b></p>  |   |   |
| Outcomes/Results   | Indicators  | How   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More* residents participate in Trenčín's cultural life and in the Trenčín2026 events</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attendance at Trenčín2026 events and evolution compared to the city's regular cultural audience</li> <li>Percentage of residents attending or participating in events, including youth, schools, minorities, and disadvantaged.</li> <li>Increased participation of local community groups and schools in cultural programmes</li> <li>Geographical spread of audiences</li> <li>Increased diversity (age, cultural background) of the audience</li> <li>Increased citizens' participation and engagement in multicultural projects</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Box office and custom relationship management data (visitor numbers and frequency of visits)</li> <li>Residents' focus groups</li> <li>Residents' survey</li> <li>Social media engagement and website visits analysis</li> <li>Audience postcodes analysis</li> <li>Arts-based research</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More* citizens will adopt culture as an important value, including audiences that traditionally do not engage with cultural organisations</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and quality of programmes involving non-engaged</li> <li>Increased awareness of cultural offer</li> <li>Increased motivation for participation in culture</li> <li>Number and quality of the schemes encouraging wider engagement (e.g. ref. ticket policies, transport, promotion, price reduction schemes)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme data provided by Trenčín2026</li> <li>Ethnography of programmes involving non-engaged audiences</li> <li>Residents' focus groups</li> <li>Residents' survey</li> <li>Social media engagement analysis</li> <li>Arts-based research</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More* cultural community projects get implemented</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of events and initiatives encouraging active engagement and giving opportunities for different levels of participation</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme data provided by CIT</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More* citizens shift from consumers of culture to co-creators of culture</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and % of residents co-creating or participating actively at events</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme data provided by CIT</li> <li>Residents' survey</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More* citizens are taking part in participatory planning of cultural activities</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased depth of participation in cultural production</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ethnography of co-created activities</li> <li>Residents' focus groups</li> <li>Residents' survey</li> <li>Arts-based research</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More* urban strategies and policies are co-designed through participatory activities</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-development of the city's cultural strategy, initial and post-Trenčín2026, including an Action Plan</li> <li>Number of decisions the City of Trenčín took in consultation with the cultural and civic sector, and the increased budget for cultural activities</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis of the City of Trenčín cultural strategy documents</li> <li>Analysis of city budgets –expenditure on culture (City of Trenčín); policy trends analysis</li> <li>Data from Institute of Participation</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>500 or more local and international volunteers</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and profile of active volunteers and level (depth) of their commitment</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers' survey and secondary data analysis (incl. soc. media netnography)</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More* cultural programme will directly or indirectly address mental and physical health topics</li> <li>More* citizens/artists will be happier due to increased cultural participation and cultural production opportunities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased citizens' subjective perception of wellbeing</li> <li>Increased artists' subjective perception of wellbeing and professional optimism</li> <li>Number of events and initiatives addressing mental and physical health topics</li> <li>Improved awareness of mental and physical health</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents' focus groups</li> <li>Residents' Survey</li> <li>Culture and Creative sector's survey</li> <li>Culture and Creative sector's focus group</li> <li>Programme data provided by CIT</li> <li>Challenge-led hackathons</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Operational Objective: Develop the skills, capacity and governance of the cultural and creative sector</b></p>   |   |   |
| Outcomes   | Indicators  | How   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More cultural professionals take part in capacity building programmes</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise cultural management standards</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Culture and Creative sector survey</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diversify the sociodemographic profile of the CCI</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased gender balance and cultural diversity of the cultural workforce</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Culture and Creative sector survey</li> <li>Culture and Creative sector focus group</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New capacity building programmes training 350 or more cultural managers and a new TrenAiR artist in residence programmes</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantity, quality and sustainability of the schemes and programmes supporting professional development of cultural managers and artists</li> <li>Number and profile of people and organisations participating in capacity building programmes</li> <li>Number of cultural professionals trained and using audience engagement methods in everyday work</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Culture and Creative sector survey</li> <li>Culture and Creative sector focus group</li> <li>Evaluation of capacity building programmes</li> </ul>   |

| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CCI funding schemes launched by the city and regional authorities</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Created conditions and programmes for the development of NGOs, cultural and creative industries (to support diversification, quantity, growth, extended reach or internationalization)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Culture and Creative sector survey</li> <li>Analysis of the City of Trenčín cultural strategy documents</li> <li>Analysis of city budgets –expenditure on culture</li> </ul>   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1,500 or more new culture and creative jobs in city, and 300 or more in region in the CCI</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in GDP and employment in cities' cultural and creative industries</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statistical data provided by public bodies at local, provincial or regional level on any increase in GDP, in employment figures</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More * regional companies co-create Trenčín 2026 cultural programme</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value of investment in cultural programmes by regional NGO sector and CCI</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statistical data provided by municipalities, national statistical offices, sector bodies, etc.</li> <li>Reports and secondary data from relevant representative bodies (e.g. representations of NGO and CCI)</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More* regional companies are engaged in improved quality of communication between cultural sector, City of Trenčín and citizens and visitors</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Civic sector reference bodies working with the city cultural department – number, number of meetings, number of organisations participating</li> <li>Sustained multi-sector partnership for cultural governance</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Culture and Creative sector survey</li> <li>Reports and secondary data from relevant representative bodies (e.g. representations of NGO and CCI), outreach and PR data</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase* in new startups, studios and entrepreneurial projects on the crossover of art, tech and science</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross-sectoral collaborations including cultural sector</li> <li>Number and profile of projects realised with other sectors</li> <li>Number of documents supporting cross-sectoral collaboration</li> <li>Intangible European heritage (arts and crafts) increased skills</li> <li>Increased number of cultural initiatives linking heritage and innovation</li> <li>Tangible cultural heritage infrastructure investment, heritage re-purposed or re-interpreted</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Culture and Creative sector survey</li> <li>Reports and secondary data from relevant representative bodies (e.g. representations of NGO and CCI)</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Specific Objectives: Enhance the range, diversity, and European dimension of the cultural offering in Trenčín, including through transnational cooperation, while raising the city's international profile.</b></p>   |   |   |
| <p><b>Operational Objective: Connect Trenčín with all of Europe through transnational cooperation that fosters a strong European dimension within the Trenčín2026 programme and the city's cultural life</b></p>  |   |   |
| Outcomes/Results  | Indicators  | How   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All EU countries are involved in the Trenčín 2026 programme</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Geographical area covered in the artistic programme</li> <li>Number of activities and profile of participants (guests, artists, etc.) highlighting EU coverage, based on European themes or explicitly promoting transnational cooperation</li> <li>Diversity of European themes (in the programme, in the media)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme data provided by CIT</li> <li>Number of new and sustainable international partnerships, activities and personal or institutional engagement</li> <li>Qualitative analysis of new cross-border collaborations</li> <li>Audience postcodes analysis</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase* of Trenčín citizens over the age of 10 who recognise their Europeaness as a positive quality</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased citizens' awareness and appreciation of the diversity of European cultures.</li> <li>Increased citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural space, citizens' perceptions of being European</li> <li>Increased knowledge about European cultures</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents' focus groups</li> <li>Residents' survey</li> <li>Hands-on workshops</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase* of cultural and creative professionals in Trenčín city and region engaged in international co-productions, networks and collaborations supported by new mobility funding schemes (incl. hybrid mobility formats and deep online collaborations)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of new cross-border collaborations, co-productions and exchanges involving local and international operators; incl. cross-sector collaborations (with businesses, academia, etc.)</li> <li>Number of artists and cultural operators involved in international cooperation</li> <li>Number of local artists involved in international projects abroad</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme data provided by CIT</li> <li>Number of new and sustainable international partnerships</li> <li>Qualitative analysis of new cross-border collaborations</li> <li>Arts-based research</li> </ul>  |

\*Due to the absence of baseline data it is not possible to quantify change. This is something we propose to do in the years pre-event (p. 18).



| Operational Objective: Promote Trenčín and 2022-2026 cultural programme, attracting national and international visitors and raising residents' awareness.  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Outcomes/Results   | Indicators   | How   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trenčín will attract more national and international visitors, offering more accommodation capacities (of both private and corporate provision), and tourism sector will increasingly provide bi-lingual information</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in tourist visits (day visit and overnight stays, both at domestic and international level, incl. micro-renting, space sharing, etc.)</li> <li>Increase in English-language tourist communication and materials, incl. other languages (German, Hungarian)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surveys of tourism sector and local/regional/national</li> <li>Statistical data provided by tourist boards and relevant public authority (municipal tourist office).</li> <li>Box office and custom relationship management data (visitor numbers and frequency of visits)</li> <li>Visitors' survey</li> <li>Tourism communication and materials review (through survey and own material analysis)</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trenčín and Trenčín 2026 will be good news across all European media, reaching a diverse audience profile</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volume and % of positive media coverage of Trenčín</li> <li>Volume and % of Trenčín coverage about Trenčín2026 and/or its cultural offer</li> <li>Number and profile of people reached via media coverage, segmented by target groups</li> <li>Geographical scope of media coverage</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative analysis of media coverage</li> <li>Google Analytics</li> <li>Netnography of online engagement with Trenčín2026-related websites (comments, share, profile of people)</li> <li>Feedback of regional partners</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trenčín citizens, Trenčín/Slovakian cultural and creative sector representatives will be aware of Trenčín2026 programme and its contribution to the city's reputation</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness of Trenčín2026 among residents</li> <li>Awareness of Trenčín2026 as a city accolade/contributor to city's reputation among residents</li> <li>Awareness of Trenčín2026 among cultural sector representatives abroad (e.g. embassies, national cultural organisations)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents' survey</li> <li>Residents' focus groups</li> <li>Culture and Creative sector's survey</li> <li>Culture and Creative sector's focus group</li> <li>Gamification</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reposition Trenčín nationally and internationally as a city and region of wellbeing, culture and curiosity</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes in city positioning/representation/inclusion for the first time in international city brand rankings (Cultural and Creative Cities)</li> <li>Number of national and international partnerships on wellbeing cultural and creative activities</li> <li>National/international recognition of Trenčín as being culturally vibrant, creative and wellbeing oriented city (improved image)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secondary data analysis</li> <li>Visitors' survey</li> <li>Surveys of national and international opinion formers in the tourism and cultural sectors (put the city on the European Map)</li> <li>City ranking monitors (e.g., Cultural and Creative City Monitor)</li> <li>Hands-on workshops</li> </ul>   |

\*Due to the absence of baseline data it is not possible to quantify change. This is something we propose to do in the years pre-event (p. 18).

M&E—Describe your plans for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the title on your city and for disseminating the results of the evaluation. In particular, the following questions could be considered:  
**A** Who will carry out the evaluation?  
**B** What objectives and milestones will be included in your evaluation plan, between the designation and the year of the title?  
**C** What baseline studies or surveys do you intend to use?  
**D** What sort of information will you track and monitor?  
**E** How will you define "success"?  
**F** Over what time frame and how regularly will the evaluation be carried out?  
**G** How will the results be disseminated?

# 04

Our M&E strategy was prepared in collaboration with Rafaela Neiva Ganga—a Senior Research Fellow at Liverpool John Moore University. It aims to assess the development of preparatory and implementation activities of Trenčín 2026, and involves universities, students and citizen volunteers in obtaining the necessary data.

## Trenčín 2026's monitoring and evaluation strategy involves:

- Citizen-driven research that brings together an Open Research & Innovation Group formed by academics, policy makers, citizens, third sector, and culture and creative industries.
- Independent research and critical validation to ensure ethical and international peer-review processes, and impartiality throughout all key stages.
- Process-focussed methodology to capture inputs (e.g. cultural programme), processes (e.g. governance mechanisms), and outcomes (e.g. cultural participation).
- Open-source datasets and findings to facilitate the further analysis of Trenčín 2026 ECoC legacies.
- Post-pandemic priorities such as the role of culture in urban development, climate change, wellbeing, and sustainability.

## Culture Living Lab Trenčín

An independent research team of seven senior researchers will be hosted by the A. Dubček University of Trenčín and lead the monitoring and evaluation. They will form the basis of Culture Living Lab Trenčín funded by the city and region. Hired via an international open call launched by the aforementioned university, they will complement each other's expertise in:

- cultural participation and wellbeing,
- visitors' economy,
- urban regeneration,
- cultural and creative industries,
- media and communication,
- cultural management,
- international networking
- capacity building,
- co-design, arts-based and digital practices.

This centre aims to become the first in Slovakia to be an accredited member of the European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL), specialising in culture and creativity.

They will liaise with the Monitoring Manager in the Trenčín 2026 team, and in phases work shoulder-to-shoulder with other ECoC teams to gather and validate datasets. Culture Living Lab Trenčín will collaborate with the students of universities closest to Trenčín on data collection with strong integration between research and teaching.

**Partners:** Spolka, Globsec (INT), Slovak Institute for Cultural Policy, Slovak Statistics Institute, Institute For Participation in Trenčín, Technical University in Košice, Open Research & Innovation Group.

To ensure the centre's legacy, the city and region will continue submitting funding bids for mid-sized or network projects on an international scale (such as Creative Europe and Horizon Europe) that support research projects, with the aim to eventually stimulate newly-formed research groups to continue their cultural research work.

Trenčín 2026's indicators of impact as presented in the above table draw upon the recommendations designated in the Commission's guidelines for cities' evaluation (European Commission, 2018). Trenčín 2026 monitoring and evaluation will use current existing national, regional, and partner organisations sources—from which raw data can be extracted, analysed, and used to construct new datasets. Trenčín 2026 monitoring and evaluation will create new data sources (e.g. Visitors' Survey, Residents' Survey, Volunteers' Survey, Artists' Survey, Culture and Creative Sector's Survey) to enhance and update existing datasets. Both types of data (real-world and primary data) will be combined in pre-during-post event datasets to measure change against impact indicators.

## Example of Existing Data Sources:

- National and Regional Statics—aggregation of information from different national and local institutions across various sectors (e.g. cultural participation/consumption, GDP, employment, youth, environment, and education and other proxy data—quality of life, demography, income). Data collected by the National Centre for Culture and Further Education, CVTI (Ministry of Education); FinStat and individual methodological institutes (e.g. National Library), the National and Local Statistics Offices, professional bodies, arts and heritage foundations; Trenčín region and city.
- Tourism—local and regional level statistical information (e.g. number of nights spent in the city/region; expenditure) collected by the Slovak Statistics Office.
- Census data from 2021 and 2031.

Quantitative data will be used to characterise general contexts (e.g. socio-demographic composition of ECoC audiences) and to measure cultural impacts against the indicators of impact. Qualitative data will expand the multiplicity's understanding of the value of culture created by Trenčín 2026.

## Examples of Quantitative data:

- Visitors' Survey
- Residents' Survey
- Volunteers' Survey
- Artists' Survey
- Culture and Creative Sector' Survey
- Sentiment analysis (e.g. social media trends and discussions)
- Media analysis
- Social network analysis

## Examples of Qualitative data:

- In-depth interviews with key stakeholders
- Focus group with key stakeholders
- Ethnography of Trenčín 2026 flagship events
- Netnography of online events
- Policy and governance (e.g. ECoC management, effectiveness, etc.)
- Media content analysis (incl. soc. media and websites)
- Mass-Observation by the research team and citizens-researchers

Our 'Living Lab' approach uses a methodology where continual reflection and assessment are built into the working process. We will co-create methodologies, build datasets, and set up transnational research grounds while engaging citizens in an environment of networking and knowledge co-production and sharing.

The M&E strategy will be performed between January 2022 and December 2027, and continued until 2037 as part of the city's cultural strategy within the ECoC goals. It will be divided into three phases: i) Nomination (ex ante evaluation); Celebration (in itinere evaluation); and Aftermath (ex-post evaluation). Annual milestones describing the qualitative indicators of success, as well as individual data sets as linked to programme objectives (in the table above), show a stringently architected and easily implementable matrix, given the structures and mechanisms described above:

## M&E Milestones

|                                    | 2022 On your mark  | Aim  |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Nomination<br>(ex ante evaluation) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trenčín Cultural Research Centre</li> <li>Open Research &amp; Innovation Group</li> <li>Taking stock of existing regional and national cultural policy datasets</li> <li>Ethics approval/data sharing agreement with regional and organisations (e.g. National Centre for Culture and Further Education; Trenčín city and region, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Culture, Slovak Statistics Office)</li> <li>Anticipate Ex ante evaluation challenges (infrastructure, timeline, resources, personnel).</li> <li>Internal quality control, risk assessment and contingency plans</li> <li>Systematic literature review</li> <li>Funding Strategy</li> <li>Monitoring report</li> </ul> | <p>To create the baseline databases against which ECoC Trenčín 2026 change will be measured and interpreted;</p> <p>To provide evidence for Trenčín 2026 decision-making (integrate evaluation results into cultural strategy implementation).</p> |
|                                    | <b>2023 Get set</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ex ante evaluation co-design</li> <li>Harvest real-world data from partner organisations</li> <li>Co-design data collection methods (to complement real-world data)</li> <li>Create aggregated data sets (real-world data and first hand data)</li> <li>Ex ante dissemination</li> <li>Monitoring report</li> </ul>   |  |
|                                    | <b>2024 Ready</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data collection and analysis</li> <li>Baseline data sets</li> <li>Ex ante dissemination</li> <li>Monitoring report</li> </ul>   |  |
|                                    | <b>2025 Steady</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data collection and analysis</li> <li>Baseline data sets</li> <li>in itinere evaluation co-design</li> <li>Ex ante Dissemination</li> <li>Monitoring report</li> </ul>   |  |
|                                    | <b>2026 Go!</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data collection and analysis</li> <li>Year event data sets</li> <li>ESA mid-term Conference</li> <li>Ex post evaluation co-design</li> <li>Anticipate the Ex post evaluation challenges (infrastructure, timeline, resources, personnel, skills set).</li> <li>Evaluation short-term impacts</li> <li>in itinere Dissemination</li> </ul>   |  |
| Aftermath<br>(ex post evaluation)  | <b>2027 Dig Deep</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data collection and analysis</li> <li>Post-event data sets</li> <li>Final Trenčín 2026 conference</li> <li>Evaluation mid-term impacts</li> <li>Final Trenčín 2026 M&amp;E Report</li> <li>ex post Dissemination</li> </ul>  | To develop and implement a framework for open and free access to data, and reports that will support the evaluation of mid and long-term impacts analysis.   |
|                                    | <b>2037 The long run</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data collection and analysis</li> <li>Evaluation long-term impacts</li> <li>ex post Dissemination</li> </ul>   | To draft policy recommendations on achieving the long-term vision goals of the City of Trenčín.  |



### Dissemination

The CIT and the Culture Living Lab Trenčín will collaborate on a comprehensive and manifold dissemination plan that will incorporate interactive research showcases, books, vlogs, and podcasts; as well as online dissemination, academic thesis, journals articles, and conferences. It will be linked to the M&E strategy monitoring plan to yield data that can also serve for ad hoc corrections and interventions. Policy workshops, networking, mentoring and training, and exploration of experiences will inform policy and practice.

**Social media & website** of Trenčín 2026 and Culture Living Lab Trenčín will be used to regularly disseminate factsheets, preliminary and final results of the monitoring and evaluation through infographics, interactive research showcases, vlogs, podcasts, etc.

### Reports & Books

From 2023 until 2028 annual reports will be published summarising monitoring developments with main impact findings. Reports publication will match the Commission's panel monitoring meetings to allow more efficient support from the Commission. Book collections will be organised by Culture Living Lab Trenčín researchers and associated with the national press.

### Journal articles & academic conferences

Academic papers will address the issues and outcomes of the monitoring and evaluation to be published in leading cultural policy journals, such as the International Journal of Cultural Policy and Cultural Trends, Sociológia (SK). Culture Living Lab Trenčín will present conference papers (e.g. International Conference on Cultural Policy Research 2022), organise international conferences (e.g. University Network of European Capitals of Culture), and host relevant research network conferences (e.g. the European Sociological Association (ESA) joint conference in 2026 of Research Networks 02 (Sociology of Arts) and 07 (Sociology of Culture).

### PhDs & Master thesis

Via student participation, various thesis and dissertations from multiple degrees across Slovakian universities will be incorporated into the monitoring and evaluation, and made available on multiple channels. Researchers writing on Trenčín 2026 will be supported to contribute to the monitoring and evaluation academic dissemination strategy.

### Final conference & Policy recommendations

A final international conference hosted by the A. Dubček University of Trenčín and Trenčín 2026 will be held in March 2028 by the Culture Living Lab Trenčín. A final policy recommendations document will be produced following the conference to facilitate effective knowledge exchange between monitoring and evaluation researchers and policymakers. Policy workshops will be organised by CIT and the Culture Living Lab Trenčín with cultural policy staff attracted from the Ministry of Culture, Arts Council Slovakia, Slovak Audiovisual Fund, Minority Culture Fund, Platform for Cultural and Creative Industries, Anténa Network, and Creative Industry Forum.

### International networks

The Culture Living Lab Trenčín will jointly share the monitoring and evaluation process and outcomes, co-create an engaging dialogue between citizens, policymaking, artists and academics, building capacity and facilitating cooperation across national and international organisations (i.e. UNESCO Creative Cities; European Capitals of Culture and Cross-border Urban Cohesion; ICOM; ICOMOS; Europa Nostra; etc.)





# Cultural And Artistic Content

Describe in detail the artistic vision and the strategy for the cultural programme of the year outlined at the pre-selection stage, explaining any changes brought in since pre-selection.

## 05

### Vision

**Cultivating Curiosity** is our approach to cultural regeneration. We need to cultivate genuine care, interest, empathy, and inspiration, and create space for creative collaborations and new opportunities. Our vision remains strong and relevant, and has further evolved since the pre-selection stage. We see curiosity as the main precondition to learn and create a creative and flexible environment in the city, which can react and address new challenges and contribute to solving existing ones. In our efforts we must do both—react to the abrupt changes that the pandemic caused in the world of culture and address the state of public space, participation, and available opportunities for marginalized communities.

The artistic programme is ignited by a spark of curiosity, by a strong will to search for true authenticity and contemporary identity of our town with innovative artistic means, with a deep understanding of its roots, heritage, potential, and future needs. The vision is to bring the city to its **contemporary cultural expression** full of **collaboration and co-creation**, that stimulates genuine interest to learn and develop together. Both the city and the region will be vibrating with creative energy, interconnecting art, design, communities, science, entrepreneurship, and technology, stimulating our minds to open wider and explore deeper.

Art helps us to understand the world, and we will use contemporary artistic language to interpret the reality around us. Art can entertain, but also educate, sensitize, challenge, communicate and cultivate each and everyone and society as a whole. Curiosity as a renewable, powerful resource is the main building block of creativity, the starting point of engagement, and the first cell of interest that grows into action and collaboration. It is an antidote to apathy, it ignites knowledge and precedes change, and will allow us to explore things that really matter, like culture, democracy, environment, and quality of life. Our programme will contribute to creating a **European, vibrant, sustainable city** with diverse, exciting cultural offerings and **accessible creative opportunities** for all citizens and visitors.

### Strategy

The cultural and artistic programme and strategy is based on the identified needs of Trenčín and Europe. They were developed with over 100 professional artists, curators, and cultural managers from Trenčín (Slovakia) and the rest of Europe who will remain key partner experts and co-producers in the programme's future development. Both the partners written in the project descriptions and those cited below as additional partners have confirmed their interest in future collaboration and project implementation. The programme carefully balances genres and formats, community projects, educational opportunities, and experimental expressions. All projects will be implemented according to **Green Cultural Production Guidelines** created by the Creative Institute Trenčín (CIT) and Trenčín Regional Government. The importance of virtual platforms, hybrid online, and offline cultural expressions will be addressed by setting

up a **Hybrid Production Lab** (p. 97) at Creative Centre Hviezda to enable production flexibility in the event of pandemic or other issues that could arise during programme implementation.

Creative and cultural activities for ECoC and preparatory years will be planned in three ways, all under the Artistic Director's supervision:

- Curation and co-production through the Creative Institute Trenčín which will employ curators and renowned international experts starting from 2022.
- ECoC goals-oriented international open calls and grants run by the Creative Institute Trenčín and city of Trenčín starting from 2023.
- Participatory planning run by the Institute for Participation and Cultural Ambassadors starting from 2022.

The bidding artistic team together with the Programme Board (p. 58) have defined three key programme strands, each directly connected to overall project goals:

### CommonGround = Nature & City Matter

Through artistic practises and captivating artworks, projects will build **awareness about environmental issues**, educate about climate change, and introduce green technologies into our visions for the future. The artistic programme aims to provide an opportunity to understand and appreciate **historical heritage via tools of contemporary culture** so we can confidently move forward, recognizing ourselves as part of Europe's history, present and future. Projects dealing with visual pollution,



urban planning and architectural solutions will engage diverse stakeholders from businesses, heritage organisations, NGOs, and cultural actors. The aim is to rebuild the relationship between citizens and public space through long-term local, European, and international collaborations using all cultural means to change the paradigm toward responsible and active co-creation of the city's wellbeing.

### PlayGround = People & Culture Matter

Trenčín 2026 will treat the entire city and region as an **interactive stage for site-specific experiments** by fostering opportunities for new talent, as well as promoting the work of world-class artists, while hosting up to 200 artists in residencies through the TrenAir programme (p. 67).

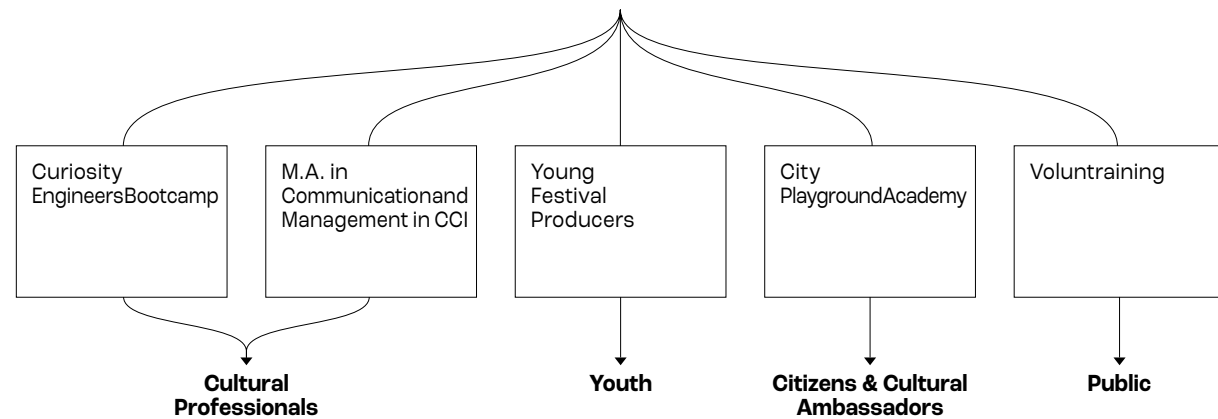
The programme will encourage the local scene to engage in international and intersectoral collaborations, with the result of a buzzing, everactive, inclusive and flexible cultural environment where everybody's creative potential is supported and nourished. A wide range of new genres will be present in the region, thereby raising the scope and diversity of cultural experiences. The programme aims to attract and create new opportunities for creative professionals from all fields, **revive and support the region's creative and cultural industries**, and build professional capacities for the future via collaborations with all levels of educational facilities and a wide range of international partners.

### NewGrounds = Communities & Europe Matter

By fostering opportunities and project platforms that enable collaborations between citizens, visitors, and local and international partners, together we will create a site-specific programme with a strong Pan-European perspective. The programme looks at **art and culture as an essential tool of care for our wellbeing, allowing people to become more sensitive and empathetic**. By developing an innovative international programme that fosters trans-local and transdisciplinary collaboration, art, technology and science will connect and rebuild our sense of curiosity and imagination. European values, democracy and critical thinking are brought to the forefront via interdisciplinary cultural experiences, engaging citizens in active dialogue about the **co-creation of the Europe we all want to live in**.



## European CampGround Capacity Building



### European Creative Campground = Capacity Building Trenčín 2026

The bidding process has been a learning curve for our team and Trenčín's cultural communities. Understanding how to create communication and collaboration dynamics took time, learning, courage, and creativity. Yet as a result, Trenčín has never had a better activated and interlinked cultural community, a fact which became an important point of departure for the capacity building programmes. Cultural organisations and institutions as well as communities in Trenčín and the region are ready to take a big step forward in cultural management and green and hybrid production, international partnership building, audience development, communication and monitoring capacities.

#### Methods and logic used at enhancing:

transversal skills; peer-to-peer learning; learning by doing; learning in context (different venues); digital literacy

**Examples:** seminars, case studies, workshops, project development hackathons, research and mapping activities, data analysis and communication, marketing and PR practice, cross-disciplinary sessions, project simulations with real stakeholders, local and international networking, Trenčín 2026 programming calendar, internships and placements, study visits

#### Participation mechanisms will encompass numerous techniques:

sign-up; extra-curricular; Trenčín University credits; direct outreach to rural and urban communities around the region through partner organisations; co-creation; open call

**Lead:** Creative Institute Trenčín (CIT) & Institute for Participation (IPT)  
**Partners:** CIKE, Pohoda Festival, Grape Festival, Priestor, Brak, City of Trenčín, High school of Applied Art in Trenčín, Trenčín Volunteer Center, CultureLabs, University of Nova Gorica (SI), UTB Zlín (CZ), University of Porto (PT), John Moores University in Liverpool (GB) **Venue:** University of Trenčín

### Curiosity Engineers Bootcamp

**Timeline:** 2022–2026 and legacy

**Impact:** trained 200 cultural professionals

CIT will co-design and co-produce the programme with the above-mentioned partners who will co-create the curriculum and secure mentors from their networks. Curiosity Engineers Bootcamp will be a legacy of Trenčín 2026 offering continuous, informal capacity building for local organisations, and from 2025 creating a synergy with a Master degree Erasmus Mundus programme. In order to successfully implement Trenčín 2026, the training will unfold over three steps:

- Partnership programming and audience development.
- Cultural project management and marketing communication.
- Cultural leadership and policy.

This four-month programme cycle aims to provide participants with cultural management skills that they can pass on to their peers in coming years through the same innovative methods. This networked training will help those on site engaged in staging events, exhibitions, performances, artist residencies, and all other (not only) Trenčín 2026 projects.

### Young Festival Producers

**Timeline:** 2023–2026 and legacy

**Impact:** 165 young festival producers

A ten month training project attracting youth of 16-29 years old in the Trenčín Region to collaborate with the most popular Slovak multidisciplinary festivals. Each year three groups of ten teenagers will go through a mentorship process, where they divide responsibilities, and plan and produce a small scale festival. Locally facilitated by a Priestor festival team and mentored together with the biggest Slovak festivals Pohoda, Grape and Brak, participants will receive professional training. Young Festival Producers is directly linked to the **Garage** (p. 46) project, which will provide a real life playground for participants.

As a long-term effect, they will be empowered to manage their own events and tutor peers. Skills learnt include: time management, creating site plans, risk assessments, production, artist booking, and marketing. The programme is created to counteract the migration of young talents to the capital city and abroad, motivate young generations to launch their own projects, and provide skills to support their future training and employment.

### City Playground Academy

**Timeline:** 2022–2026 and legacy

**Impact:** 100 cultural ambassadors

City Playground Academy will secure co-creation and collaboration skills for Trenčín's regional community leaders (100 Cultural Ambassadors), equipping them with the resources to deliver community art events. The Institute for Participation—in partnership with Placemaking Europe and Punkt—will put on a year-round programme of workshops, talks, and networking activities focused on community events and community cultural projects management directly linked to the programme. The training will be linked to the preparation and realisation of the **Every Part Counts**, **Tuning the City**, **Progress Boost**, and **New Circus On The Block** projects, as well as **Fiesta Bridge** artistic events. During **Public Escapades**, participants will navigate a learning process focused on the collaborative creation of public space.

### Voluntraining

**Timeline:** 2022–2026 and legacy

**Impact:** 500 international volunteers

All volunteers will attend capacity building facilitated by the Trenčín Volunteer Center to help them fulfill their roles successfully, confidently, and independently as key integral parts of the programme. Each volunteer will attend training, which includes:

- Learning about ECoC and the Cultivating Curiosity project
- Gaining competencies such as communication, organisation/planning skills, leadership, time management, teamwork, emergency training, digital technologies, marketing, etc.
- Explaining roles of a volunteer, responsibilities, how to best accomplish tasks

The Cultivating Curiosity Volunteering Programme will keep developing and engaging new and diverse volunteers also beyond 2026. The programme will also focus on developing skills of cultural organisations and institutions to perform better volunteer inclusion and management.

### Masters Programme in Communication and Management in Culture and Creative Industries

**Timeline:** 2025 and legacy

**Impact:** 20 students per year

This ERASMUS Mundus study programme has been designed as a new, interdisciplinary course of studies based on academic findings and achievements. **A. Dubček University of Trenčín initiated and signed a memorandum of cooperation between T. Baťa University in Zlín and University of Porto, University in Nova Gorica and John Moores University in Liverpool.** As an English-language, job-concurrent distance learning module, it is addressed to cultural and creative professionals all over the world. The programme of studies includes opportunities, current trends, and risks in the field of culture and creative industries: demographic change, digitalization, and globalization. Communication, culture, and arts as well

as entrepreneurship added to the course will help to develop a critical understanding and diverse skill sets. Students learn to create, market, and manage success in the creative and cultural industries through theoretical and practical experiences with fellow students and in collaboration with diverse network partners. The programme prepares students to start their businesses or run NGOs in culture and creative industries, or to work for companies or institutions that look for innovative approaches to management. Studying diverse business models, strategies, and practices will help them to develop their own identities as creative managers or culture producers and promoters.

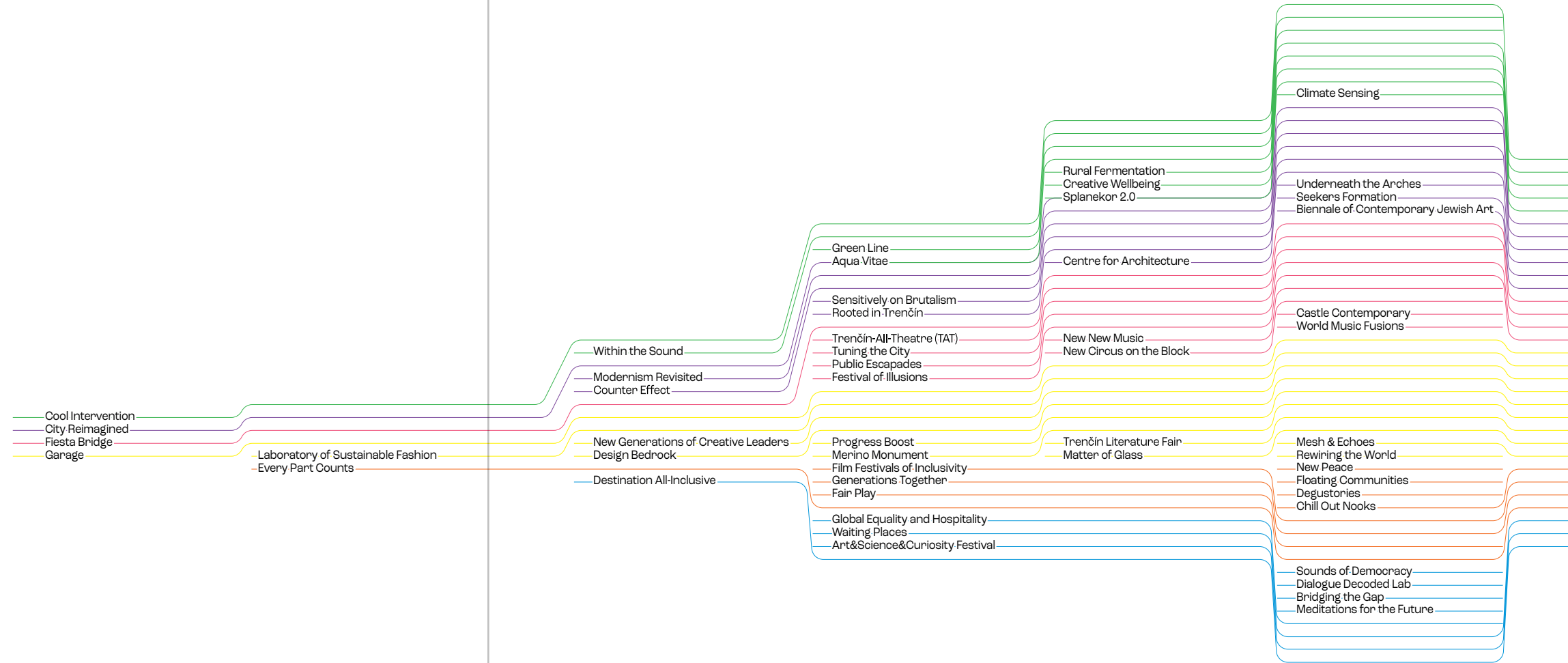


Give a general overview of the structure of your cultural programme, including the range and diversity of the activities/main events that will mark the year.

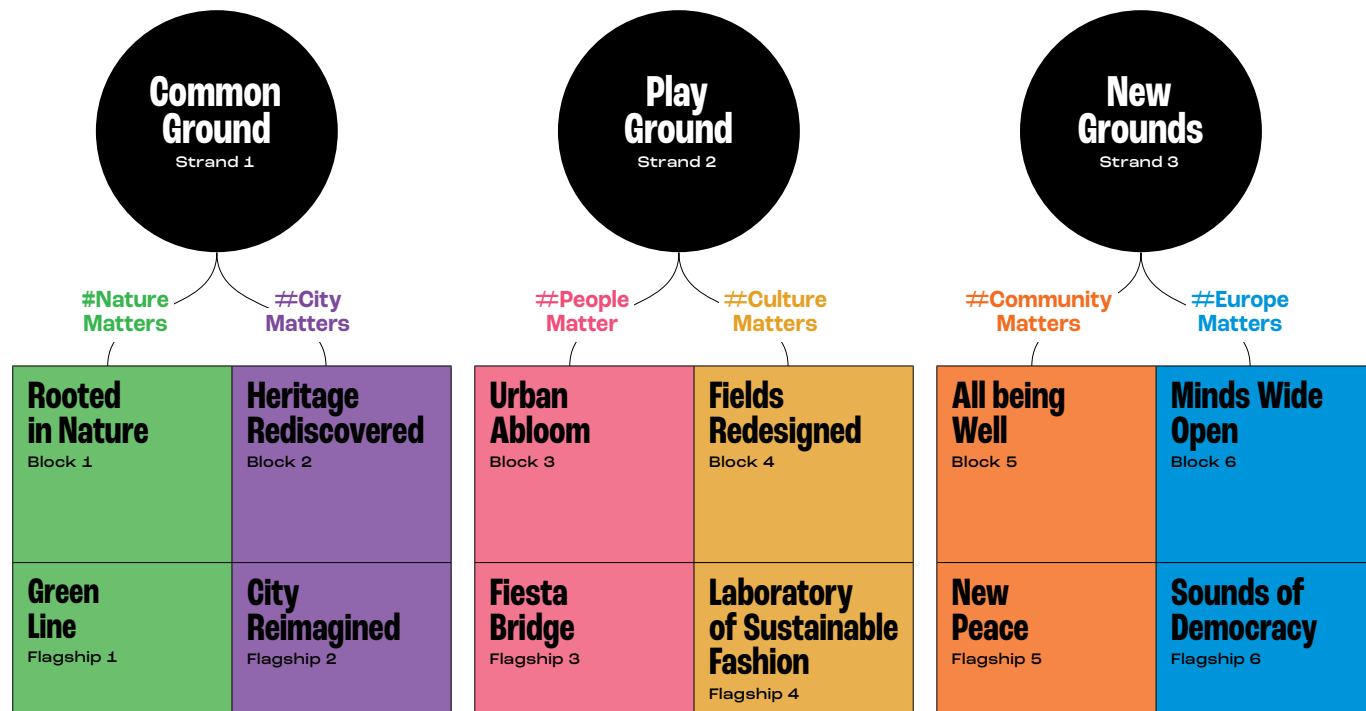
# 06

The Cultivating Curiosity cultural programme comprises more than **50 projects** in three main strands—**CommonGround** dealing with natural and historical heritage, **PlayGround** focusing on diversification of cultural offer and creating the opportunities for creative industries, and **NewGrounds** that connects communities, looks into the future, and brings societal topics into the forefront. Each programme strand divides into two blocks. Each block (6 in total) and its Flagship project (6 in total) is directly connected with a particular project goal, but contributes to other goals as well.

Over **40%** of the projects engage the region, and over **60%** include capacity building elements.



## Cultivating Curiosity Programme



## Opening Ceremony

The Cultivating Curiosity Opening Ceremony will be a weekend-long winter festival focused around six main venues—Green Bridge, the Castle, Synagogue, Creative Centre Hviezda, ODA, and the main square. It will also guide visitors through the city on a journey to discover various venues filled with art and creativity- skatepark, riverbanks, pubs, religious buildings, memorials, and brownfields. The festival will be a simulation of the ECoC year with the whole city involved, celebrating the alternative cultural scene mixed with high-end artists from different subcultures. The event ignites curiosity, creates surprising relationships, and brings people from seats to stages. Trenčín 2026 aims to stimulate new artistic expressions by combining famous local orchestra **Textilanka** and Polish hip hop stars **Rebel Babel**, and an open call for young composers to prepare a new piece performed in Trenčín by **Kronos Quartet** who reinvent the string quartet format in a mesmerizing way.

To host the most relevant and promising artists from the continent, we confirmed cooperation with **Yourope—the European Festival Association** which represents 112 festivals and associated members from 26 European countries. **Pohoda Festival** will lead the opening ceremony concept with Trenčín 2026, and invite all talented and dedicated **candidates for ECoC 2026 from Slovakia and Finland** to present their local independent culture. Preparations for the Opening Ceremony will start in 2024 and will include a strong capacity building element, with Pohoda Festival guiding

all participants to create their own cultural programmes in their venues and public space. The event will take place in January and introduce **Curiosity Infusions** where we will offer various international hot beverages: Slovak mulled wine, Italian bombardino, British grog, Spanish hot chocolate con churros, Dutch anijsmelk, Icelandic kúmenkaffi, Irish hot toddy, Argentinian maté, and Moroccan mint tea.

The Opening Ceremony will highlight the EU's presence and importance—presenting its values and key goals in terms of sustainability, openness, participation and freedom of expression. We are inviting all candidate cities and partners **Taksirat (MK), Atlas Weekend (UA), Goodlive (DE), Open'er festival (PL), Rock for People (CZ)** and **ARTmania (RO)** to build strong national and international relationships. These aim to share artistic, production and capacity building skills, and celebrate everyone's hard work, dedication, and European connections. The programme will be adapted to the online form of **Curiosity LiveStream** on a website with an interactive map of the city with streams from selected venues and public spaces. We will connect the local cultural scene of Trenčín and Europe, cultural organisations, and bidding teams of all cities. We will also invite members of the European Commission, Parliament, leaders of European partner institutions, and all curious Europeans to celebrate the most participative, inclusive, and sustainable event of 2026.

**Budget:** EUR 500,000

# Common Ground

## Strand 1

Common Ground is understood in a physical sense as our natural resources and architectural cultural heritage, and in a mental sense as our history, values, attitudes, traumas, legends, and lifestyles. Projects in this strand seek to rediscover and understand our natural and historical heritage, fostering dialogue about contemporary solutions for long-lasting issues, deepening respect towards others, and valuing our natural environment.

The strand is divided into two thematic blocks: **Rooted in Nature** and **Heritage Rediscovered**.

# Rooted in Nature

## Block 1

**Rooted in Nature** seeks dialogue about sustainability, our relationship with nature and the pressing challenges that climate change brings. Projects within the block recontextualize natural spaces into venues, stimulate new appreciation for nature, and use artistic means to address environmental issues within the region and Europe.

## Green Line

**Flagship**  
2024–2026 \*Region \*Capacity Building

Acclaimed artist and curator **Oto Hudec**'s Green Line project will comprise 10 artworks in Trenčín's public spaces and natural surroundings in response to contemporary climate crisis issues. Artists will work with local craftsmen, activists, NGOs and municipalities on creating artworks which will form a Green Line running through the region and engage citizens and visitors into conversations about climate change.

The project will also extend to the wider region's Horná Nitra—an area of coal mining, one of the most polluting industries in Slovakia. The mine is scheduled for closure in 2024 and selected artists will respond to this development with site-specific work, engaging former mine employees' impressions and inputs.

Green Line accumulates European environmental arts excellence in form of collective **Comunite Fresca (CZ)** that will work with traditional and rare fresco painting crafts, famous muralist **Rigo 23 (PT/US)** who will deliver a large-scale ceramic tiles installation, and **Martin Piaček (SK)** who will leverage new contemporary meanings into traditional stone carving. The project will include **The Harrison Studio (US)**, the pioneers of environmental art who work

with scientists, urbanists and other professionals. The collaboration will include renowned climatologist Jozef Pecho (Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute), as well as Slovak and international botanists.

The Green Summit (p. 59) with local stakeholders identified critical issues such as protecting river Váh conservation areas (precious bird colonies), combating city center air pollution, addressing city overheating through adaptation strategies (greenery and water features), and reusing brownfield sites. Invited artists from Europe and abroad will create artworks during **2024–2025** reflecting local issues identified in meetings with environmental organisations and activists from a global perspective—combining innovative/experimental techniques with local traditional/rural contexts, using durable sustainable natural materials with a low carbon footprint. Green Line project will close with cycling activist group **Cyklokuchyňa** leading a guided bike tour with artists, scientists, and partners. This will promote the City's significant investment in bicycle routes that will connect the works of art. The Green Line project and digital guide will highlight the core importance of environmental protection, promoting higher sensitivity and responsibility towards climate change through art to all Europeans.

**Budget:** EUR 300,000 **Lead:** Nestrácajme čas (Oto Hudec), CEA  
**Additional Partners:** SK: Crafting plastics, Priatelia zeme, Nadácia Overnovka, Cyklokuchyňa, OZ Človek za klímu INT: MAP—Make Art with Purpose (USA), Translocal Institute for Contemporary Art (GB), Bode 2024 (NO) **Additional artists:** Oliver Ressler (AT), Tamás Kaszás (HU), Cecylia Malik (PL), Assemble Studio (GB), Katarina Klusova (SK)



## Aqua Vitae

2024–2026—Legacy \*Region \*Capacity Building

**Aqua Vitae** curated by contemporary art curator **Lýdia Pribišová** was inspired by the longest river flowing through Trenčín, Váh. The large-scale visual art project elaborates on water as a resource for life. Citizens and visitors will participate in an innovative adventure that explores the importance of water and rejuvenate regional symbols of water by recalling the demolished functionalist city baths designed by famous architect Bohuslav Fuchs, visiting 26 mineral water springs in the Trenčín area, a wetlands area, and spa springs in Trenčianske Teplice.

The project will include creative laboratories, interdisciplinary artworks, participatory workshops, and discussions. Ten invited international artists will share their experiences of climate change, environmental topics, and renewable energy. The Váh embankment, Gallery of M.A. Bazovský, and regional spaces will hold a series of installations, events, happenings, and individual and group exhibitions.

**"For Trencin 2026, I propose exploring the acoustics and silence of water through a participative event and immersive installation"**

Katarzyna Krakowiak (PL)

**Axel Braun (DE)** will deliver **CASCADIA**, a multi-stage artistic research project exploring the river Váh's ecosystems and biodiversity, tracing its history, and together with local communities canvassing ideas about the river's future. A mixed-media installation will include further examples of rivers and cultural landscapes from around the world.

**Lucia Romualdi (IT)** will measure water levels in harbors far and wide, and create site-specific light installations representing moving water and mineral water springs, accompanied by contemporary classical music.

**Pia Lindman (FI)** will prepare subsensorial sessions at three site-specific locations: a regional water reservoir in Trenčianske Teplice spa, a hydro power plant, and a castle's water reservoir. These resources will be uniquely available for this experience, which aims to tune each participant into a sub-sensorial mutuality with water in and around the city, rivers and oceans, as well as our own human bodies of water.

**"We will reconstruct the outstanding Pumping Water (1970) by legendary conceptual artist Stano Filko. The 300-meter pipeline installation embodies the ancient alchemical idea that water is to the whole Earth as blood is to the human body."**

Lucia Gregorová Stach  
Curator, Slovak National Gallery

Interdisciplinary visual artist **Kitti Gosztola (HU)** will focus on the socio-political context of Trenčianske Teplice spa town, where in the 18th century all social classes—from lords to beggars—could use the spa for free.

Interactive multimedia collective **Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas** from Lithuania will explore the river as a laboratory of public good that defines our sense of individual/collective belonging in their **The River Runs** project.

**Budget:** EUR 200,000 **Lead:** Nová Vlna, Auburys **Additional Partners:** SK: Slovak National Gallery, CEA, Flashart, KAIR, Euractiv, Slovak Water Management Company INT: Savonlinna (FI), Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw (PL), Studio Trisorio, Naples (IT), Urbonas Studio (EU), Institutes, Salzkammergut 2024 (AT), Faro 2027 (PT), Novi Sad 2023 (RS), Veszprém 2023 (HU), Esch-sur-Alzette (LU), University of Louisiana—Lafayette (US), Oxford University (GB), EcoAlbania (AL) **Additional artists:** Apart Collective (SK), Zuzana Blochová & David Fesl (CZ), D. Hài Phú Daedalus (US), Zuzana Husárová (SK), Vladimir Nikolić (RS),

## Rural Fermentations

2025–2026—Legacy \*Region

Rural Fermentations involves local communities across the region in reinventing food ecosystems, developed by the stellar duo of curators **Maja and Reuben Fowkes**—co-founders of the **Translocal Institute for Contemporary Art**.

The project will draw on artist collectives with experience working with rural communities. These include **Pollinaria**, which operates at the intersection of art, science and agriculture in Abruzzo; **Inland**, a Spanish group that explores art, agriculture and countryside; the **Woods** curatorial collective in Czechia; the **Morning Boat** that interprets agricultural and fishing practices on Jersey through art; **Radius**, the first Dutch art institution entirely focused on climate, nature and ecology; and London-based **Company Drinks** community enterprise that reconnects people and the countryside through fruit picking and making drinks.

These groups will bring their knowledge of fermenting rural change across Europe to Trenčín's countryside, engaging with local agrarian traditions and economies, and creating opportunities for communities to reactivate

and reimagine rural life through hop-picking, medicinal brews, agroecology, co-creating rural manuals, and rewinding relations with the land. The results of the project will be showcased both in Trenčín and around rural cultural centres, bringing innovative artistic content into the wider region.

**Budget:** EUR 150,000 **Lead:** Translocal Institute for Contemporary Art (GB), Trenčín Region **Additional Partners:** INT: Tranzit.ro/ The Station (RO), Knockvologan Studios (GB), Green Art Lab Alliance (EU) **Additional artists:** Kathrin Böhm (DE), Fernando Garcia Dory (ES), Kitti Gosztola (HU), Sigrid Holmwood (SE), Suzanne Husky (FR), Diana Lelonek (PL), Fiona MacDonald (GB), Barbara Macel (DE), Alicja Rogalska (PL), Bouba Touré (FR)

## Creative Wellbeing

2025–2026—Legacy \*Region \*Capacity Building

Working closely with the regional spa towns **Trenčianske Teplice, Nimnica, and Piešťany** and with rich European heritage of spa towns such as our partners **Bad Ischl (AT)** and **Loop Head (IE)**, we want to transform traditional wellness towns into creative havens of wellbeing.

**The Trenčín region** has numerous water spring and spa facilities, yet these rarely collaborate with the contemporary artistic scene. The goal is to widen the target group of visitors and revive spa culture among the younger generation, leading to healthier, self-aware individuals and communities, and the exploration of internationally-recognised mindful practices and nature-bonding experiences. Commissioned artists in collaborations with health practitioners will prepare activities such as nature walks with meditative sonic sculptures, immersive morning raves with calming tunes of innovatively used traditional instruments, or

entertaining events such as synchronized polar bear swim parties, and midnight open-air acupuncture.

Trenčín region will connect and activate other European spa hubs to work together towards sustainable solutions, inclusive partnerships, and holistic thinking around health and culture. Regular activities will be organised with local and international artists, businesses, and NGOs via participatory curatorial workshops in close collaboration with spa municipalities that support new contemporary content across their towns that attracts new visitors. This initiative goes beyond pools and massage tables, by aiming to view towns and the surrounding nature as a wholesome wellbeing facility and rediscovering the magic of nature's healing powers. **Sunset & Sunrise clubs** will be launched, a special live and social media initiative aimed at discovering the best places in and around the Trenčín region to watch these free and accessible natural spectacles, and gather a community around sunset wine tastings and sunrise yoga sessions.

**Budget:** EUR 60,000 **Lead:** Trenčianske Teplice, Trenčín Region **Additional Partners:** SK: Bojnice INT: Jurmala (LV), Braga 2027 (PT)

## Splanekor 2.0

2025–2026—Legacy

Splanekor 2.0 will revive the hilarious, absurd, and wildly-watery Trenčín tradition of DIY boat racing! The reinvention of the popular event—dating back to the 1981 initiative by the Club of Atypical Activities—will see self-made vessels competing on the river Váh. Organised with the support of **Priestor** (successful local festival), NGO **Divo** (outdoor activities), and the famous **Bosch Parade (NL)** (boating event inspired by Hieronymus Bosch).

Splanekor 2.0 is a welcome bit of silliness and fun—with everybody invited to participate! We're aiming to revive Splanekor's previous iconic status and popularity, when thousands of visitors and dozens of teams annually gathered along the Trenčín riverside—reinvigorating the event with a fresh approach involving numerous local communities and social groups: neighbourhoods, families, students, and local fishermen, that will be paired with artists, building original boats to race with focus on sustainable, zero-waste construction.

Come dusk and Splanekor 2.0 will transform into a spectacular floating cinema under the stars. By partnering with **Kinema.sk** and renowned film buff **Peter Konečný**, the most hilarious and bizarre movie experience of high artistic quality will be curated.

The best boats will be featured at an interactive boat park on island park—perfect for picnics, hangouts and drop-ins, art camps for all ages, or as a venue for participatory ice-skating performances in the winter. Communities and artists will be invited to interact with the boats further and turn them into boat gardens, comfortable lounges, unique swings, or even places to wine and dine—with locals and tourists enjoying this unique riverside setting. The project will be promoted internationally in collaboration with **Oulu 2026**, which will send a team to join the watery festivities in Trenčín. ECoC 2026 will mark the 45th anniversary of the inaugural Splanekor, and we plan to mark this milestone with an entertaining event that wannabe sailors and enthusiastic onlookers will love!

**Budget:** EUR 100,000 **Lead:** Priestor, DIVO **Additional Partners:** INT: Squirrel (PL), Salzkammergut 2024 (AT), Faro 2027 (PT) **Additional artists:** Cecylia Malik (PL)





## Within the Sound

2023–2026 \*Region

The artistic experience led by artistic collective **OOO**, focused on deep listening and rediscovering hidden natural treasures will reconnect audiences with ecosystems via sonic interventions. The project will address issues such as biodiversity loss and deforestation, and will collaborate closely with respected local ornithologist and ecologist **Radovan Jambor**. The project will also draw attention to the sounds around people and the city, and the growing problem of sound pollution.

The programme will include field recordings from nature with **Till Bovermann (DE)** (relationship of contradictory elements such as urban/nature, digital/physical and algorithm/behavior in music) and **Gordon Monahan (CA)** (minimalist and avant garde music composer working with computer-controlled sound environments). **Estonian Academy of Arts (EE)** will create acoustic objects in public space and leaders of the project **OOO** collective will design long term sound installations transferring nature to the city.

Through art-guided tours across Trenčín visitors will rediscover local landscapes and stories of non-human networks, from city trees and forests, insects, wildlife and region's forgotten places: Haluzice and Kostolec gorge, Opatová and Skalka caves, Soblahov view-tower, and other outstanding sights. The project will also use acoustically-attractive nooks and locations in the city and surroundings, such as the tunnel and water reservoirs under the castle and in Sihot', Trenčianske Teplice train depot, Old Herold liquor factory silos, Panorex cinema in Nová Dubnica, Ilava brewery, Dubnica nad Váhom factory cooling towers, Brezina forest dynamite factory foundations, Handlová tunnel, and Trenčín airport.

**Budget:** EUR 65,000 **Lead:** OOO **Additional Partners:** SK: JAMA, MAPPA, Slovak National Gallery, INT: Institute of Sonology (NL), Bode 2024 (NO) **Additional artists:** Anne La Berge (US/NL), Fero Király (SK)

## Cool Interventions

2021–2026—Legacy \*Region \*Capacity Building

Cool Interventions strives to reverse the local overheating of urban space with innovative design, art and architectural solutions. Working together with Trenčín region municipalities and environmental organizations, we will identify the most vulnerable areas in need of cooling solutions.

City center climates can be up to 10 degrees warmer than rural areas with greenery. We will use a cutting-edge architectural and artistic approach, creating a plan to implement water fountains, fog cooling systems and botanic installations and structures of modular elements with embedded functionality to reduce the effects of overheating. The cooling installations will be designed by selected artists and architects in keeping with **New European Bauhaus**—environmental sustainability, beauty, and inclusivity. We will build on successful pilot collaboration between Trenčín and **Subdigital studio** in autumn 2021 (p. 60). In this pilot, architects and designers created modular urban elements and supported the project with public workshops and talks across the region about urban sustainability. Subdigital studio will create a system of modular easy-to-connect blocks for artistic interventions. Climate adaptation landscape studio **Bureau b+b (NL)** and urban/rural architectural practice **Openfabric (NL)** will

enhance the modular blocks with various materials and structures, water elements, and vegetation to create functional modules. Final interventions will be installed in five selected city spaces. The modular blocks will be assembled by the public in collaborative workshops to create five large scale and five small scale public interventions. We aim to use the architecture and artistic intervention in public space, participation with individuals, and innovative materials and technologies to build inclusive communities, cultivate public space, and maintain environmental stability.

**Budget:** EUR 200,000 **Lead:** Subdigital, Department of Architecture and Urban Planning of Trenčín **Additional Partners:** INT: c/o now (DE), Seventeen playgrounds (NL)

## Climate Sensing

2026

Climate Sensing aims to deepen our understanding of climate change and is targeted towards engaging children and families. Ten Slovak and five international artists will be invited to create immersive happenings, sound walks, and multi-dimensional shows that plunge audiences into imagined realities and speculative scenarios of our future planet and life in collaboration with Director of HI-SEAS, international **Moonbase Alliance**, **Michaela Musilová**, excellent Slovak astrobiologist. The whole project will be curated in partnership with international digital arts festivals: **Fiber (NL)**, **Kikk (BE)**, **Ars Electronica (AT)**—**Studiopia**, and **Connecting the Dots (MX)**.

Theatre collective **Purple Ladies (PL/SE/FR)**, which pioneers immersive climate learning, will design special tours for kids and partner Trenčín region primary schools in implementing the climate learning programme in

curricula. A “Re-futuring” residency will be organised in consortium with the creative teams of **Cool Interventions** project and **Green Line** project and each year one of these groups will collaborate with artists from Studiopia and create new versions of their artworks in the **Climate Sensing Exhibition**. New artwork versions will be consulted and created in consultation with children, who actively participate in the process, artwork development, and then act as exhibition guides for the public.

In tandem, a **Climate Sense hybrid forum** will be organised with **Trenčín University** and gather more than 200 international and local artists, practitioners, thinkers, and young students and in-particular child activists. The aim is to envision and discuss future technological developments, human condition, and ecological landscapes.

**Budget:** 200,000 **Lead:** consortium of festivals—Fiber (NL), Kikk (BE), Ars Electronica (AT), Connecting the Dots (MX), Sensorium Festival (SK) **Additional Partners** SK: A.Dubček University of Trenčín, CEA, OZ Človek za klímu INT: Oulu 2026 (FI)





# Heritage Rediscovered

## Block 2

In this block, past and present are put into dynamic dialogue and search for the city's contemporary identity by exploring stories and issues from our past, rediscovering our architectural and historical heritage, and rebuilding our relationship with public spaces and the city itself.

# City Reimagined

**Flagship**  
**2021–2026—legacy \*Region \*Capacity Building**

City Reimagined is a multidisciplinary initiative that connects artists and designers with public space stakeholders to reclaim and recontextualise our public space. This project is an open platform for creative activities that will cultivate relationships with public space, fight visual pollution, and reconnect revitalization with artistic experiments.

Running from **2021** to **2026**, City Reimagined targets long-term legacy and durable solutions in the form of public policies and urban interventions. Involving renowned award-winning public art studio **Superflex (DK)**, it will contribute with contemporary artworks that aim to move society towards interspecies living. Artistic collective **Steinbrener/Dempf & Huber (AT)** will explore public space issues via their unique combination of photography, sculpture and graphic design, while **OX (FR)** and **Benedetto Bufalino (FR)** will react to public life and visual culture with satiric artworks in playful dialogue with the surrounding contexts. More outstanding public interventions will be delivered by the multi-disciplinary Turner Prize awarded collective **Assemble Studio (GB)** and Estonian Young Architects Prize winners **LLRLLRR (EE)**.

The project started in **2021** with a three-day international conference led by **Hlava 5** in cooperation with **Kaunas Biennial (LT)** and Trenčín 2026, focused on artworks in public space, their stories and process

of revitalization. In **2022**, with the help of the **Institute for Participation**, the project will focus on extensive mapping, interactive maps, public debates, and international conferences that will include diverse participants (residents, professionals, schools and students, creative community and entrepreneurs) that will unite in co-creating the public space environment.

In **2023** Czech visual identity expert **Veronika Rút Fullerová** will lead a **Public Display** competition, where multiple small teams of local entrepreneurs, architects and designers in residence will tackle the issue of advertising and introduce contemporary, sensitive solutions. In **2024**, an artistic international open call for five more interventions will be announced, in order to bring European talent on board to add to the artworks of aforementioned artists to revive citizens' relationship to public space on a large scale. **2025–2026** will be the main realisation period for confirmed and open call contributions. The last opening will happen during an international conference attended by partners from all over Europe and beyond, invited experts will elaborate on public space from perspectives such as historical, architectural, urban, political, sociological, gender, and environmental. The conference will be streamed online for international audiences.

Negative visual impacts represent just the tip of the iceberg of a far more complex topic, which affects architecture, law, psychology, aesthetics, the local economy, and all citizens. City Reimagined is a chance for Trenčín to become a model and benchmark for other cities—both in Slovakia and across Europe—that are confronted with major visual pollution and brutal, inconsistent urban solutions.

**Budget:** EUR 500,000 **Lead:** CIT, Department of Architecture and urban planning Trenčín, Hlava 5 **Additional Partners** SK: Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava—The Faculty of Architecture and Design, Trnava—public space curator Adrián Kobetič, Reč mesta INT: IPR (CZ), Annecy (FR), Tarnow (PL), Kragujevac (RS), Pestuj prostor (CZ), Adfree Cities—Add block Bristol (GB), Retailoko (CZ), Fundacja Palma (PL), DELETE! (AT), Timisoara 2023 (RO), Olomouc (CZ)

## Modernism Revisited

**2023–2026—legacy \*Region \*Capacity Building**

**Modernism Revisited** aims to incorporate architecture in multi-genre cultural events and to rehabilitate and reconcile it with the general public. It will reflect on environmental sustainability, innovation, inclusivity, and design as proposed by the **New European Bauhaus** initiative and be composed of architectural interventions, discussions and participatory workshops with international architects, urban planners, cultural organisers and local subcultures which will explore architectural and environmental heritage, and its contemporary development.

Led by local collective **Hlava 5** and renowned architect and activist **Martin Zaiček**, the aim is to showcase 20th century European architectural heritage, its contemporary relevance and current architectural movements. Modernist architecture is a unifying topic for Trenčín and the region with the most important heritage sites as Partizánske, a town developed by Baťa shoe-making factories (architect Vladimír Karfík), spa town Trenčianske Teplice with iconic functionalist buildings by Jaromír Krejcar and Artúr Szalatnai or utopian project of social housing Children's Town in Zlatovce (architects Brtko and Režucha).

The project will be based on a series of five international open calls for architectural interventions, planned and announced in **2023**. The calls will be run in collaboration with international partners: **Tallinn Biennale of Architecture, Maison de l'Allemagne de Brest** and **Alvar Aalto Foundation**.

Modernism Revisited will also initiate the new **Visegrad architecture residency** program, starting in **2023**, which will be run with partners from **Depo 2015 Pilsen, Contemporary Architecture Centre Budapest** and **Villa Decius Association Krakow**, hosting 32 residents. The open calls addressed to architects, artists and urbanists will be divided into categories such as: Contemporary interpretations of 20th century architecture, **Experimental solutions for cultural heritage**, Re-constructing sustainability, New function for functionalism connected to the recreation of architectural landmark of Doctor Sázel Villa (by renowned Czech architect F.L. Gahura) as an abstract exterior pavilion, a Recreation of recreational, that will be connected to one of the region's major architectural gems that faces demolition, Machnáč, designed by outstanding Prague architect Jaromír Krejcar.

The universities of Dresden and Brest will collaborate with a professional forum on Trenčín region urbanism and European architectural heritage. The new **Local Modern Architecture Guide C20**: will be a legacy and a unique tourist guide, aimed at the general public and visitors, about 20th century architecture and urbanism.

**Budget:** EUR 250,000 **Lead:** The Slovak Chamber of Architects, Department of Architecture and Urban Planning Trenčín, Jaromir Krejcar Society

## GMAB Centre for Architecture

**2025–2026—legacy**

The **Miloš Alexander Bazovský Gallery (GMAB)** will dedicate a floor to create the Centre for Architecture Trenčín (CAT) which will focus on the transformation of unused spaces to showcase architecture. The project is already at the open architectural competition stage and will be followed by a reconstruction in 2025. CAT will enable invited curators to create temporary pop-up projects and events, research projects, utopian visions, and new media. It will become an important communication platform between the public and the architecture/art scene. CAT will also contribute to the European architectural centres network, and provide on-going curatorial opportunities for international curators with a view to developing long-term collaborations. Open calls for curators will be held every six months starting in 2025, and exhibitions of selected curators will be organised in 2026. Project partners include international partners, such as the **Centrum Architektury in Warsaw (PL)** and **Estonian Centre for Architecture**.

**Budget (for program):** EUR 100,000 **Lead:** Gallery of M.A. Bazovský

## Sensitively on Brutalism

**2024–2026—legacy**

This project explores late modern and brutalist architectural heritage in Trenčín region and Europe through street culture, urban life, and contemporary art. Architecture from the 1950s onwards dramatically changed the identity of many European cities, often disrupting the original urban fabric of historic centres. Trenčín has its own late modern building, ODA, army cultural house, that aims to become an interdisciplinary cultural landmark, thriving with diverse artistic expressions, community life, world conferences, and exciting interventions by renowned and local artists.

The connections between brutalist architecture and urban culture will be addressed between **2024** and **2026** by outstanding international artists: **Vladimír 518**, the legendary Czech rapper, graffiti artist and architecture enthusiast, **Olja Triaška Stefanović**—a photographer with Serbian roots and an impeccable talent for photographic storytelling; filmmaker, graffiti artist and multimedia artist **Jan Zajiček** who created the KMENY (Tribes) documentary series about Czechoslovak city subcultures; Italian street-artist **Biancoshock (IT)** who will provide fresh and humorous urban interventions in contrast with the massive and brooding ODA building; and the US-based Slovak contemporary architecture photographer **Viera Levitt**. In collaboration with the **Slovak Design Center** and **Kolektiv Cité Radiouse (FR)**, the first Krehký Betón exhibition in Slovakia will reflect brutalist architecture across all design and artistic fields.

Brutalist architecture will also be addressed by a series of documentary screenings Barbicania (2016) by **Bêka & Lemoine**, and Robin Hood Gardens (2018) by **Beyer & Dorschner**. The project includes an international forum organised in partnership with universities, research clusters and students, inviting representatives from Berlin, Frankfurt, Skopje and Rotterdam, discussing modernist concepts within traditional cities in a contemporary and innovative manner.

**Budget:** EUR 200,000 **Lead:** Subdigital, Hlava 5 **Additional Partners**



for **MODERNISM REVISITED, CAT and SENSITIVELY ON BRUTALISM**  
SK: Čierne Diery, DataLab, Abandoned (re)creation, Trenčianske Teplice, Department of Urbanism at Faculty of Architecture STU, Faculty of Architecture and Design STU, Archiméra, Register of Modern Architecture, Archtung, Spolka, Archi\_túry, Department of architecture at the Institute of History of the SAS INT: Kaunas 2022 (LT), Museum of Architecture Wrocław (PL), CAMP Praha (CZ), IPR Praha (CZ), UMPRUM A3 studio architecture (CZ), DOCOMOMO (PT), Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Frankfurt (DE), University of Applied Arts Frankfurt (DE), Architekturzentrum Wien (AT), KEK architekti (HU), Maison de l'Allemagne de Brest (FR), TU Dresden (DE), Université de Bretagne Occidentale (FR), Triennale Brugge (BE), Tallinn Biennale (EE), Skopje 2028 (MK)

## Counter Effect

**2023—2026—legacy**

Historically an army city, Trenčín continues to host the military personnel and infrastructure which have their impact on everyday life of citizens. This project, for the very first time, will focus on the army's influence on cultural movements—specifically the punk underground scene in the early 1980s that shaped the city's musical and festival culture and led to founding (1997) of the multicultural **Pohoda Festival**.

**The Institute for Sociology of Slovak Academy of Science** will partner with European universities during **2022** and together will carry out research starting in **2023**: How did army discipline provoke cultural rebellion? The findings will be published and then take the form of audiovisual artworks created in collaboration with filmmaker and documentarist **Igor Smitka** (director of photography for Nowness and the London Royal Opera House) and a young Trenčín-based emerging filmmaker **Simon Seriš**.

The project will engage subculture movements, army families, universities, artists such as an established Slovak sculptor **Radovan Čerevka** and the Pohoda Festival. Audiovisual and new media artworks, concerts, and publications will be presented in 2026 at the city centre's ODA army cultural building.

**Budget:** EUR 150,000 **Lead:** A.Dubček University of Trenčín **Additional Partners** SK: STRATPOL, Pohoda festival, Institute for Sociology of SAS, FilmEurope Media Company INT: Kaunas 2022, Bulgarian Sociological Association (BG)

## Underneath the Arches

**2026 \*Region \*Capacity Building**

Underneath the Arches project is about an innovative dialogue between local archeology, existing cultural heritage, and international contemporary art.

The project's curators are **Chiara Pirozzi** and **Alessandra Troncone**, who in collaboration with **Associazione VerginiSanità** will connect our region to Naples. The project was originally created at an archeological site of an Augustan-age aqueduct in Naples.

This project plays an instrumental role in challenging the narrative about historical and archeological sites, and engaging new audiences by introducing digital/ experimental media and international collaboration. Project outcomes will engage with the surrounding area and local communities, creating temporary experimental archeology labs led by artists in residence.

The project comprises three site-specific temporary interventions in historic locations in and around Trenčín. Based on residencies, two artists will be directly invited by the curators: **Hera Büyüктаşçıyan (TU)** and **Eugenio Tibaldi (IT)**. Hera will conceive a new work in Haluzice (at the Romanesque Church) and Eugenio

Tibaldi will reflect on other sites (such as the Celtic site in Trenčín). The third artist will be selected through an international open call, which will refer to the Roman Empire's heritage in Slovakia. Reconstructed Draškovič manor house (Museum of Čachtice) will serve as a space for presentations, exhibitions and informal meetings of artists and guests.

**Budget:** EUR 75,000 **Lead:** Umberto Di Marino, Naples (IT), Museum of Trenčín **Additional Partners** SK: Istituto Italiano di Cultura Bratislava INT: Accademia di Belle Arti, Naples (IT), Associazione VerginiSanità (IT), Green Art Gallery Dubai (AE), Fondazione Morra (IT), Aubury's (GB)

## Seekers Formation

**2026—legacy \*Region \*Capacity Building**

The Seekers Formation is a literature and film project which aims to activate intergenerational relations, complete cultural recollection, and spark the imagination of students, teachers, librarians, and individuals that seek influential figures, long-lost stories, and tales from the region.

Urban legends, iconic figures, regional stereotypes, and history-changing moments will be rediscovered and delivered by young talented individuals in literature, journalism, screen-writing, animation, film and storytelling. The project will include an international open call for writers and translators in residence to diversify the regional literature community.

With the guidance of artist **Hugo Herrera Tobón (CO/ES/NL/LT)** local communities will articulate the city's contemporary and future identity by creating a subjective city atlas, drawing on the city's history and presence. The project will be implemented in collaboration with local artistic group **Hlava 5** and regional libraries, that will encourage a special branch of this project, elaborating on the legacy of Trenčianske Teplice-born **Karel Čapek** (1890-1938), as a ground-breaking pioneer of the sci-fi writing genre who coined the term 'robot' in the futuristic R.U.R.: Rossum's Universal Robots, encouraging young creators to engage in sci-fi speculative scenarios about the city's identity of the future.

An independent interdisciplinary committee consisting of relevant and influential leaders of **Festival Azyl (SK)** and **Short Story Festival Wrocław (PL)** will select the best works and recommend them for international competitions and our partner **Edisonline** will distribute the movies via online film library. This project will culminate in a new publication about contemporary Trenčín, available also to the city's visitors and tourists.

**Budget:** EUR 70,000 **Lead:** Public library of Michal Rešetka in Trenčín **Additional Partners:** SK: Academy of Art Banská Bystrica, Festival Azyl, Filmarina, Letný filmový festival 4 živly, Film Europe INT: Subjective Editions (CO/ES/NL/LT), Short Story Festival Wrocław (PL)

## Rooted in Trenčín

**2024—2026**

Leading visual artists from the Trenčín region that influenced the European visual arts scene at the turn of the 19th/20th centuries will be the focus of this two-year exhibition that will also present the work of the city's young artists that currently live abroad. The series will be organised in cooperation with the city's cultural institution—**Gallery M. A. Bazovský**, and will feature:

**Rudolf Uher** (1913-1987) curated by **Katarína Bajcurová**, presenting the evolution of sculptural elementarism, inspired by the conception of Earth, human influence on our planet. **Stano Filko** (1937-2015) curated by **Lucia Gregorová Stach**, is a key Slovak avant-garde artist, dealing with cosmology and metaphysics. **Igor Kalný** (1957-1987), curated by **Daniela Čarná**, presenting one of the most recognised artists at the unofficial Slovak art scene of the late 1970s, dealing with playful reflection on freedom of speech.

**Denisa Lehocká**, curated by **Lýdia Pribišová**, is an internationally established artist well known for large-scale textile installations. Her new site-specific exhibition will be prepared in collaboration with **Apart Bratislava** and **Display Prague**. **Katarína Poliačiková**, curated by **Luísa Especial**, is a Trenčín-born and New York-based visual artist working with video and image storytelling through discovered memories, photographs and private documents. **Gabriela Zigová**, curated by international **collective Resina**, a young new media artist from Trenčín based in London, will focus on cultural contexts and political events through performance, site-specific, and interactive installations.

The exhibition will be organised in cooperation with more than 30 European museums and private collections to provide a comprehensive overview of these important Trenčín-rooted European artists and presented in other ECoCs including **Tartu (EE)**.

**Budget:** EUR 120,000 **Lead:** Gallery of M.A. Bazovský, Nová Vlna **Additional Partners** SK: Slovak institutes in Europe, Toto je galéria, Slovak National Gallery, AICA, Apart Bratislava INT: Tartu Art Museum (EE), AIR 351 (PT) **Additional artists:** Ladislav Mednyánszky, curated by Katarína Beňová a Orsolya Hessky (Hungarian National Gallery), Milan Paštéka curated by Zuzana Bartošová, Lucia Horňáková Černayová, Natália Okolicsányiová, Juraj Toman

## Biennale of Contemporary Jewish Art

**2026—legacy**

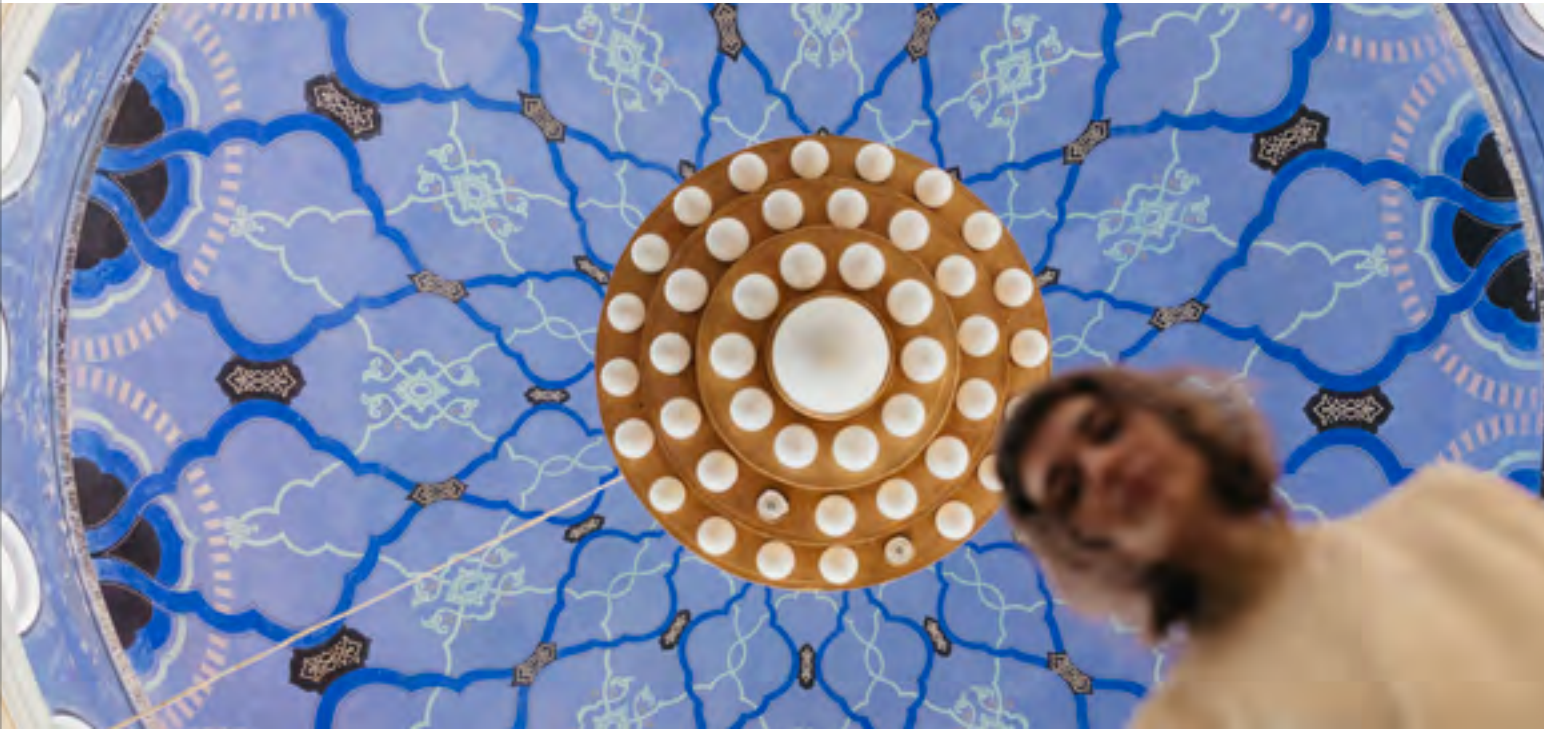
The project explores the personal stories of Jewish artists confronted with the tragedy of the Holocaust and examines how they influenced contemporary arts, public spaces, and cultural heritage in Trenčín and

Europe. The project aims to celebrate Jewish heritage, Yiddish language and culture, and promote contemporary Jewish arts. It will be organised at the renovated Trenčín Synagogue with the participation of the local Jewish community.

The Biennale of Contemporary Jewish Art will host 12 leading Jewish artists, also with a Yiddish background. Curated by **Tamara Moyzes** (a Slovak-Israeli video artist and human rights activist) and **Shlomi Yaffe** (a contemporary artist from Israel), it will highlight the personal story of **Rabi Benjamin Fischer** from Trenčín who had to migrate during the Holocaust and spent his life moving around six European countries. All the selected artists will come from countries where Rabi Fischer spent his life—Hungary, Austria, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom. Synagogue will be full of art from exceptional conceptual painter **Yevgenyi Fiks (US)**, transdisciplinary artist and pedagogue **Eduard Freudmann (AT)**, **Michelle Levy (US/PL)** investigating the space between reality and fiction with imagery and storytelling, **Judit Fischer (HU)** using ordinary objects to seek different overlooked meaning, **Rafał Jakubowicz (PL)** expressing the traumatic experiences of the 20th century in contemporary language. The Biennale of Contemporary Jewish Arts will be regularly held at the synagogue from 2026. Building the concept for this project has already contributed to the synagogue's engagement with the Cultural Routes of Jewish Heritage of the Council of Europe.

In addition, the **Slovak National Museum** and Professor **Henrieta Moravčíková** have agreed to reflect on Jewish architects and engineers that have influenced Slovak and European cities. Among presented architects are **Fridrich Weinwurm**, **Alexander Skutecký**, **Desider Quastler**, and **Imrich Geyduscher**. They all studied at European universities, built administrative, residential and cultural buildings, and brought Slovak architecture into the new century with a new identity. The project rediscovers the leading Jewish architects that had been active in Slovak cities and the Trenčín Region, and follows their paths across the world.

**Budget:** EUR 150,000 **Lead:** Židovská náboženská obec Trenčín (SK), Gallery of M.A. Bazovský (SK) **Additional Partners** INT: The European Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Jewish Culture and Heritage (EU), Tarnow (PL), Artivist Lab (CZ)





# Play Ground

## Strand 2

This programme strand treats the city as a dynamic playground full of culture, collaboration and fun. Projects invite us to play between the fields, generate new energy and create new opportunities for creative industries, entertainment, education and business in both blocks—**Urban Abloom** and **Fields Redesigned**.

This strand will bring a new flow of energy, joy and movement into our city and into the creative economy.

# Urban Abloom

## Block 3

UrbanAbloomblockwilldevelopajoyfulanddiverseculturalofferforallaudiences. It'saboutlivinginthepresentmomentandgettingexcitedandcuriousaboutnewculturalexperiences!Theblockfocusesonengagingthepublicindiverseout-of-the-boxactivitiesaroundthetownandregion,fillingpublicspacewithsite-specific events,performances,andinstallations.Artistsincollaborationwithcommunities willgenerateenergythatwilltransformthecity'sspiritintoanactiveandauthentic creativity hub.

## Fiesta Bridge

**Flagship**  
2021–2026—legacy \*Capacity Building

An old railway bridge constitutes an extension of the city centre, offering amazing views of the castle and historical centre, and is set to become a new cultural spot for all citizens and visitors. Full of life, vibrancy and contemporary flow, this authentic new city symbol and a must-see venue will remain a legacy of Trenčín 2026.

The Fiesta Bridge will turn into an multigenre artistic platform comprising the body of the bridge, a floating stage and its riverside surroundings. These three platforms will be available to cultural professionals to stage their cultural projects reacting to six thematic waves of international open calls for projects. From **2022** until **2024** the bridge will be under extensive reconstruction. In **2025** it will be ready for pilot events that will set the tone for **2026**.

We will enjoy spectacular light and sound installations that will take advantage of the geometrical construction, community events with atmospheric concerts on the floating stage, acrobatic and dance performances on multiple levels of the bridge or design fairs on the riversides. We started to deliver on this ambitious dream in **2021** with local artistic collective **TRAKT** with an interactive sound installation accompanied by contemporary dance performance.

The first wave, **Bridges of Europe**, will be curated by **Olja Triaška Štefanovič** (a Serbian artist and curator living in Slovakia) in collaboration with **Novi Sad 2022**, taking inspiration from the unique structures and stories from European bridges. For this wave, Trenčín will host 5 international artists. Renowned photographer **Donald Weber (CA)** and experimental musician **Miyu Hosoi (JP)** have already been confirmed. Invited artists will explore bridges as symbols of connection between communities, nations and cultural disciplines, and as crucial infrastructure targets destroyed during wars (as happened in Trenčín and Novi Sad). Special relations will be developed with the **Danube Dialogues Festival** from Novi Sad with a colourful tradition in organizing green artistic events. For 2026, the permanent floating stage on the river will be accompanied by a temporary moving installation called **Europeanship**, inspired by a ferry boat, created in collaboration with Belgium conceptual architectural collective **Traumnovelle**. The boat will host community cultural events, markets, debates and festivities, acting like a square on the water.

The remaining five waves themes will be defined together with the newly appointed artistic director during the preparatory phase and will reflect the most critical issues for Trenčín and Europe.

**Budget:** EUR 650,000 **Lead:** CIT, IPT **Additional Partners** SK: TRAKT, Priestor, Trenčín na Korze, Nová Cvernovka, Hala, Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava INT: Mota Museum of Transitory Art (SI), Gallery Bel Art (RS)

## Trenčín-All-Theatre (TAT)

2024–2026—legacy \*Capacity Building

TAT is an opportunity to redefine how we enjoy performing arts and reclaim the city as a diverse site-specific stage for the inclusion of everyone. TAT is twelve site specific dance and theatre performances developed with the international **Contemporary Dance Association** under the curatorship of **Petra Fornayová**, leader of contemporary choreography, dance and theatre in Slovakia. Petra will collaborate with international stars such as **Florentina Holzinger (AT)**, contemporary and ballet dancer awarded the **Prix Jardin d'Europe** and internationally renowned choreographers, such as **Alexandra Waierstall (DE/CY)**, co-founder of the interdisciplinary dance festival **NO-BODY** in **Nicosia Cyprus**, interdisciplinary Israeli choreographer **Renana Raz**, and leading Slovak professionals as **Jozef Fruček (SK/GR)**, choreographer and dancer based in Greece, former member of Wim Vandekeybus's *Ultima Vez*, now artistic director of **RootLessRoot Company (GR)** and bring the most exciting theatre and movement experiences to Trenčín.

Four pilot performances in Trenčín will take place during **2024–2025** dealing with a variety of topics including body positivity and inclusion of people with disabilities, starring award-winning dancer and choreographer **Markéta Stránská**. An accompanying programme for the pilots will focus on the sensitization and enlightenment of audiences through moderated discussions, workshops, activities for seniors, people with disabilities, students and communities.

In **2026** a series of interdisciplinary performances will be organised focusing on dance and post-dramatic theatre designed in an ecological manner, combined with digital arts and technology, with the help of our partner **amberPlatform (TU)**. TAT will collaborate with existing theatre and dance communities in the city and bring new participants, including soldiers' families, representatives of minorities and senior citizens.

The project will close with the **Manifest of Future Theatres** summit discussing new forms of institutionalization of performing arts and its role in the changing world. The summit will be led by **Dáša Čiripová**, a renowned theatre dramaturgist and theorist and among the invited speakers and partners **L-DH DANCEHOUSE LEFKOSIA (CY)**, **IETM (INT)** and **Italian Performance Platform (IT)**. The international conference will focus on the future function of urban theatre, which should be directed towards a platform for diverse attitudes and critical dialogue in society. The summit will be streamed and documented online as talks and podcasts to engage a wider international audience.

**Budget:** EUR 300,000 **Lead:** Contemporary Dance Association (Petra Fornayová) **Additional Partners** INT: Olive Bieringa a Otto Ramstadt (NO, NZ, AU) **Additional artists:** Pulsar–Ján Malik (CZ), Mirjam Soegner (DE/AT), Silvia Svitekova (SK), Martin Hodoň (SK), Zdenka Svitekova (SK/NO), Júlia Rázusová (SK), Petra Fornayová (SK), Peter Mazalán (SK), Soňa Kúdelová (SK), Jana Tereková (FR/SK), Jana Smokoňová (SK), Jozef Vlk / Stanislava Vlčeková / Debris company (SK), Marko Popovic (SRB/SK), CoooonDance (DE)

## Tuning the City

2024–2026 \*Capacity Building

**Ladislav Kupkovič** and **Milan Adamčiak** were phenomenal Slovak composers and authors of musical experimental happenings. To honour their legacy, a huge

experimental musical play for the city of Trenčín will be prepared by locals and artists. The happening may include coordinated honking of cars, military paratroopers playing trumpets, a sudden meeting of parrot breeders interrupted by parents with prams, groups of seniors drumming on kitchen pots on balconies, a 100 metre zone of vowels recitation in the main square, a zone of whispered silence in Sládkovičova Street, and a kids' high-pitched choir!

The project will be led by experimental musician **Fero Király** and involve Slovak professional musicians **Tibor Feledi**, **Ivan Šiller** and **Erika Coyle Krkošková**. With this project, the city will turn into a large stage for the biggest mass musical happening ever in Trenčín. It aims to involve as many citizens as possible in an organised musical spectacle for several hours. Several years of preparation, combined with the education of local musicians as well as amateurs, will result in a great musical performance where everyone can participate, find their place, and be part of a great exciting work of art.

**Budget:** EUR 300 000 **Lead:** OOO, Elementary Art School K.Pádivý **Additional Partners** SK: JAMA, VENI Academy, InMusic, ISCM, Superar INT: Kragujevac (RS), Veszprém 2023 (HU)

## Castle Contemporary

2026

The medieval castle, our city landmark, will become the most progressive cultural institution in the city through collaboration with renowned artists, bringing in visitors and returning citizens. The castle will host a new programme that is interactive, innovative, and informative. Dedicated to reinterpretation of material heritage this project will attribute new cultural functions using modern technology. Taking examples of good practise from **Ljubljana Castle (SI)**, **Moritzburg Art Museum (AT)** and **Ujazdowski Castle (PL)**, that show how to connect monumental, historical buildings with innovative contemporary content we also aim to start a new cultural **route of Contemporary Castles**. Exciting co-productions taking place in the Castle are already envisioned and confirmed including Turkish digital artist and curator **Ekmel Ertan**, artistic director of Istanbul-based **amberPlatform/BIS** that connects art and technology, who says about his project vision:

**"My plan is to invite artists such as Buğra Tunç (TR) to create new artworks from centuries old architecture, Özlem Alkış (TR) to create living sculptures from bodies of performance participants, and Pınar Yoldaş (TR) to create artificial life like forms reflecting the vision of future. I want to give Trenčín Castle's famous and over-familiar historic tale a fresh twist."**

In this international co-production, artists will explore contemporary interpretations of the story of Turkish soldier Omar who saved his girl Fatima from vicious Lord Zápoľský by digging a Well of Love down through the castle rock. A hybrid, interactive exhibition will deconstruct and personalise the Well of Love experience through three thematic paths including artworks ranging from sculptures to immersive experiences, and video mappings to performances, embracing new contexts in exploration of intangible heritage such as politics and gender inequality.

Renowned Czech artist **Kateřina Šedá** will develop a series of interventions, starting with the castle tour, changed into atypical experimental performances (also for kids)—not period-piece theatre in historic costumes but



rather a search for contemporary dialogue. With **Kateřina**, a series of unique, site-specific authentic souvenirs will be created via international competition in which souvenirs can become anything from a design masterpiece, to a musical record, or even a meeting with a fictional or real figure. With Trenčín Castle hosting contemporary art exhibitions, we will also develop a site-specific exhibition with leading Czech artist **Krištof Kintera** that analyses how globalised society functions through the fragmentation, hyperbolization, and translocation of objects into other visual contexts. The exhibition will be full of funny and absurd surprises which are very effective in promoting kids' playful interaction with contemporary art.

With partners from Ljubljana and Warsaw, we will prepare a **Curators in Residency** call for the castle, bringing a fresh breath of expertise into the stale medieval rooms, and creating an international programme to attract European visitors long-term.

**Budget:** EUR 350,000 **Lead:** CIT, The Museum of Trenčín **Additional artists:** Osman Koç (TR), Yoğunluk (TR), Ali Miharbi (TR)

## New New Music

2025–2026 \*Capacity Building

Musical artists **Fero Király** and **Eva Vozárová** will conduct a series of concerts in unusual venues across Trenčín focused on experimental, improvised and contemporary world classical music to adduce certain artists and works for the very first time in Slovakia. The music programme will be further complemented by dance and sound installations. Classical music is popular in Trenčín thanks to its chamber orchestra, which will collaborate on this project together with international interpreters.

The project will start in **2025** with two events and continue in **2026** with four extraordinary presentations that will include the latest experimental events on the Slovak scene and abroad. These will highlight Slovak artists **Martin Adámek (SK)**, **Eva Šušková (SK)**, **Peter Machajdík (SK)** and more to both local and international audiences, and introduce Slovaks to

performers **Dmitry Morozov (RU)** electroacoustic composer **Maja Osojnik (SI)** and composer and performer **Lina Lapelyte (LT)** and **Thor Magnusson (IS/GB)** working in research of music and technology.

New New Music will combine traditional music compositions with experimental twists—diy synth systems and sonic toys with organ music, modular and artificial sounds with recordings of nature that participants will explore, the physical properties of sound—origin, resonance, and tuned pitches, and the transmission of sound through physical media. The audiences will meet contemporary expressions of art in established cultural spaces such as Klub Lúč, Coffee Sheep, and the ODA, as well as at atypical outdoor and urban spaces transformed into alternative concert halls.

**Budget:** EUR 150,000 **Lead:** OOO, Classical music friends club **Additional Partners** SK: Next Festival, Proto Sites, JAMA, VENI, InMusic, ISCM, Faculty of Arts of the Technical University of Košice INT: Smallforms.org (AT) **Additional artists:** cVtol.oc / Orchestr Berg (CZ), Eva Pričková (SK), Liza Gennart (SK), Lenka Novosedlíková (SK), Urban Hudák (SK), Yorgis Sakellariou (GR/LT)

## New Circus on the Block

2025–2026

A series of four high-quality outdoor events, including street theatre, contemporary and social circus, and humorous site-specific performances, with an emphasis on marginalised groups' inclusion and involvement. The **Association Neo Art**, the organiser of the **Cirkul'art festival** having over 10 years of experience and partnerships with the **Circostrada European Network**, will lead the project. The legendary local performer **Vlado Kulíšek** will participate in the series with performances based on the work of Vojtech Zamarovský, an author of non-fiction based in mythology and antiquity topics. Now Brno-based, but Trenčín-born young outstanding performer **Pavol Seriš** will enrich the project by a refreshing mixture of stand-up comedy, physical theatre, absurd humour and pantomime. Successful pilot was organised in autumn 2021 where Pavol performed his hilarious play at seven train stations around the region.



Artists will visit residential areas where locals can join the preparation process and even the performance! Events will be held also in remote, atypical yet accessible locations. Renowned artists **Sorin Circus (FI)** from Tampere will work with youth and children in suburbs, and organise accessible educational workshops about the art of movement. Phenomenal street theatre performers from circus school **ESACTO'LIDO (FR)** and **Galway Community Circus (IE)** will co-create shows with marginalized communities and create a social environment free from discrimination and full of solidarity and empathy.

**Budget:** EUR 270,000 **Lead:** Neo Art, Vlado Kulišek **Additional Partners** SK: Divadlo bez domova, City Theatre Trenčín **Additional artists:** Ilona Jäntti (FI), Système Paprika (FR)

## Public Escapades

**2024–2026—legacy\*Region \*Capacity Building**

This adventurous project, conducted with female-led architecture **studio Woven**, introduces various-scale architectural urban interventions-pavilions and installations to create so needed playful spots in public space for families, outdoor events and passers by. To reveal the region's hidden stories these wooden structures will connect into an intriguing path possible to follow from one pavilion to another! This playful journey contains three larger individual pavilions that will be new interdisciplinary venues, five mid-size structures, and 10 interventions as artistic gestures to creatively highlight and improve public space and historical interest that is neglected, damaged, or forgotten.

These new city furnishings will become places of interaction for spending time in nature, intimate gatherings and events with sound art and music, new exhibition points, and alternative community venues. Each piece's design and function will draw on city context,

exploring what our city is really made of! The architects in collaboration with **Cultural Ambassadors**, seniors, youth and people with disabilities will revive the ancient, the recent, and even urban legends as a path. During workshops individual public gestures will be produced—such as birdhouses, fence pickets, and urban elements—which meet the principles of universal design. The facilities will offer playful and inclusive elements, inviting visitors to climb or crawl to explore diverse materials and hidden details on a journey of discovery. The Public Escapades path will serve as a unique entertainment and educational tool, and innovative exploration of public space. International open calls will be organised to fill pavilions with vibrant content, and also directly invite multidisciplinary inspiring artists such as the contemporary and urban dancers **People doing moves (INT)** who incorporate fine art, mediation, theatre, performance, film and music into their playful movement practice. The Public Escapades path will also be enriched by collaboration with Swedish digital artist **Hakan Libdo**, who will add interactive sound and light installations along the path to create a full multisensory experience with people sensitive to stimuli in mind. The streets, transition spots, and pavilions will come alive, and interactive elements in installations will encourage citizens to perceive the city as their companion with its own unique voice, which sings and answers to passers-by. Public Escapades will be part of a publication by the Creative Institute Trenčín, elaborating on examples of good practises in the participative co-creation of contemporary urban public space.

**Budget:** EUR 220,000 **Lead:** Woven, Fabrika umenia Partizánske **Additional Partners** SK: Spolka, Platforma Architektky, Tvory mesta, Metropolitan Institute Bratislava INT: SmallSCALEproject (BIH), Urban Room Folkestone (GB), Oulu 2026 (FI), ZKU Berlin (DE), MM cité (CZ), Braga 2027 (PT) **Additional artists:** Tobias Foged Permin (DK), Matej Gavula (SK)

## World Music Fusions

**2026 \*Region**

In a new format of multicultural world music and dance performances, this project will explore folk artistic expressions by putting them into a contemporary context and celebrating the rich and inspiring diversity of Europe and the world. The project is developed with the **Slovak World Music platform WOMUSK**. The Trenčín region is famous for its folk culture heritage. Slovakia was under the rule of other nations, lies on an ancient amber route, coexisted with Jewish and Roma culture for centuries and met with Turkish, Tatar, Hungarian, Austrian, Russian, Israel and Balkan cultural influences. These historical layers have contributed to and enriched Slovak traditional culture, resulting in a truly multicultural—although rather unacknowledged—cultural scene.

15 intimate events at clubs and venues around the city aim to bring folk music into a new context and engage wider audiences. The **Cultural Ambassadors** will have a key role in facilitating the inclusion of various groups and ethnic communities in the co-creation of authentic experiences aimed at creating synergies across communities. The project will include performances by famous interpreters including Roma ethno jazz violin virtuoso **Barbora Botošová**, choreographer and dancer **Eva Chupáčová**, who specialises in contemporary interpretations of Roma dances, flamenco and oriental dances, Slovak artists **Sisa Feher**, **Katarína Máliková**, and **Jureš Liška** who are brilliant at creating contemporary music using regional folklore influences and contemporary electronic and experimental music of **Mojšeband (SK)** and **Korai Örom (HU)** that use traditional Slovak instruments such as the fujara, drumbľa and trombita (UNESCO registered instruments from the Trenčín region). Our partner **Konvergencie (SK)** will introduce the precious and less known music of minorities, combining music of Roma people, Jewish, Rusyns and contemporary experimental and electronic music genres. Folk music will be reinterpreted into contemporary spiritual and aesthetic expressions attracting young curious audiences and older generations.

**Budget:** EUR 120,000 **Lead:** WOMUSK 2018 (OZ Amity), Konvergencie **Additional Partners** SK: Tanečný dom, Žudro—Jana Bellšová INT: Erasmo Treglia (IT), Balazs Weyer (HU), Albert Hosp (AT), Matera 2019 (IT), Bojan Djordjevic:Todo Mundo Festival (RS), Martyna Markowska (PL), Silvia Winkler: Winkler-Arts, Fonó Budai Zeneház (HU), Peter Van Rompaey—Muziekpublique (DE) **Additional artists:** Eniesa (SK)

## Festival of Illusions

**2024–2026—legacy \*Capacity Building**

**Artistic collective TRAKT** will curate a festival of new and digital media art and intermedia performances, and transform schools, playgrounds, and squares into digitally shape-shifting interdisciplinary venues to inspire younger generations. It will include interactive installations, luminography, large scale video mapping, and video art, dramaturgically divided into day and night parts.

The day part responds to students' needs for more interactive non-formal education, and invites families and children to experience interactive sculptures, movie screenings, and try progressive digital experimentation with new media artists. A five-day interactivity workshop will focus on sonic and visual interactive tools to engage high school youth, children from social housing and university students. The workshops will be led by digital artists from

**Technical University in Košice** and **Department of Intermedia and Digital Media of Academy of Arts Banská Bystrica**, and the works will be exhibited around **Trenčín University**, transforming seldom used space into an interactive campus full of artistic experiments.

A video mapping workshop will be an international online course in cooperation with the **Beast Festival in Porto (PT)**, and its results will be presented in social housing Children's Town in Zlatovce.

A short feature workshop will focus on shooting experimental short movies under the guidance of TRAKT. This workshop will be aimed at younger audiences and participants and outcomes will be accompanied by screenings of short feature and animated films at **Artkino Metro**, selected with the talented 3D animator and movie curator **Matej Mazák**.

The festival's night part is aimed at a wider audience, presenting spectacular light digital installations, and a fusion of contemporary dance with technology and luminography. The main topics will highlight nocturnal nature, astronomy, outer space, and the environmental impact of light smog.

Video mapping by **Jakub Pišek & Bea Kolbašová (SK)** linked to an international nighttime **Luminography Workshop**. This will focus on drawing and capturing light with sensitive cameras, followed by a presentation at Elementary Art School K.Pádívý and at nearby City Park, and a series of expert-led night sky observations at the Gymnasium of L. Štúra High School rooftop observatory. Mind-boggling large scale public digital interventions will enrich the festival experience with kinetic sculpture, working with AI and gaming by **Varvara & Mar (EE/ES)**. Spectacular light artist **Philipp Frank (FR)**, will cover the city into hypnotic projection mapping, combining natural objects and optical illusions. Five more interactive installations will be placed across the city. Artists will be selected via an international open call, which will be curated in close collaboration with three other ECoC cities (**Timisoara 2023, Tartu 2024, Košice 2013, Nova Gorica 2025**).

**Budget:** EUR 300,000 **Lead:** TRAKT **Additional Partners** SK: Technical University of Košice, High School of Applied Art in Trenčín, CIKE, Department of Intermedia and Digital Media of Academy of Arts Banská Bystrica INT: TAVA Tartu in light (EE), Festival of Lights Lyon (FR), Signal festival Prague (CZ)





# Fields Redesigned

## Block 4

Fields Redesigned block aims to strengthen connection between art, design, education, entrepreneurship and digital technologies, and create a dynamic environment for the development of creative industries. The block explores opportunities in the creative workforce, capacity building, and finding new links and collaborations that would benefit a wide spectrum of citizens and businesses.

## Laboratory of Sustainable Fashion

**Flagship**  
2022–2026—legacy  
\*Region \*Capacity Building

Fashion Greenscaled will turn the Trenčín region, once a leading fashion producer in Slovakia, famously called Trenčín City of Fashion, into a unique sustainable fashion ecosystem. We plan to revive the regional fashion tradition with a new narrative: Trenčín Laboratory of sustainable fashion in collaboration with national fashion leading organization **Slovak Fashion Council**. Trenčín will strive to become an example for hundreds of European cities of similar scale in creating a responsible, independent and sustainable fashion city, joining the idea of **New European Bauhaus** calling for beautiful, sustainable and inclusive forms of living. Trenčín has what it takes—brand, tradition, lessons learnt, helping hand of partners, ambitious people, capacity building plan, and the courage to make our vision come true!

From **2022**, the Slovak Fashion Council will start quarterly networking meetings of local fashion representatives to support the development of fashion business in the region and professional capacity building, consisting of 30 targeted cross-sectoral workshops for different public groups. Continuing from **2024** onwards with a **Summer Fashion Academy** focused on children and people with disabilities and **Fashion Street Runway**, bringing a series of spectacular fashion shows to the most unexpected

locations. The accompanying fashion **Are you Ready? for Greenscaled Trenčín** hackathons will foster the interdisciplinary collaboration of fashion students from Bratislava, Trenčín and Zlín universities with industry experts. Levelling gathered talent and methods from **2025** on, the Slovak Fashion Council will launch the **Best Fashion Graduate Award** to discover the best designers from the youngest generation. The award's mentorship will guide young talents to implement sustainability into their brands and collections.

The interdisciplinary exhibition **Slovakia In Fashion!**—in **2026** celebrating the 15th anniversary of the Slovak Fashion Council—will attract both Slovak and international stars and audiences to Trenčín, including **Juraj Straka** who designs clothes for Madonna, Cate Blanchett and Anna Wintour, famous brands originally from Trenčín such as **NEHERA**, and international guests such as **MISSONI**, that began as a small family business in European city of a scale of Trenčín, Gallarate (IT), 70 years ago. We are excited to cooperate with **CONTEXTILE—Contemporary Textile Art Biennial** in Guimarães during **2026** and co-organise stunning presentations and installations of chosen projects. We have already started this collaboration and **Claudia Melo**, the artistic director, was one of the speakers at the Art in Public Space Conference organised by Hlava 5 and the Trenčín 2026 team. With **Oulu 2026's Tomorrow's Wardrobe** project, we will explore experimental costume design and innovative fabric materials in combination with traditional crafts via experimental workshops **Material Masters**. All this progress will be captured in **Fashion Map—>SK**, TN edition, city map covering all the segments of fashion, production, events and institutions.

**Budget:** EUR 500,000 **Lead:** Slovak Fashion Council **Additional Partners**  
SK: Slovak Design Centre, VŠVU-AFAD, Slovak Global Network, Šperkstreet, Slovak National Gallery INT: AFA (AT), Fashion Scout (GB), Muriel Plaser (FR), ASVOFF—film festival (FR), NotJustALabel (GB), Biofabricate (USA)





## Design Bedrock

2023–2026—legacy \*Capacity Building

Design Bedrock will be a new online entrepreneurial platform and brick-and-mortar design store. It will have exhibition space for creative producers and designers with a focus on sustainable design production. The platform will foster knowledge exchange, the commercialisation of local design products through crowdfunding projects, and international design exhibitions. The special focus will be on fashion in connection with the **Laboratory of Sustainable Fashion project**. The platform aims to develop and support a community of designers, producers, entrepreneurs, and craftspeople in the region. By 2026, Design Bedrock will have become an important design hub in Slovakia, collaborating with **Slovak Design Center** (the Design is Now initiative) and **Donio crowdfunding portal (CZ)**, with international partners such as **Zlín Design Week** and the **Michelangelo Foundation (CH)**.

From **2023**, along with the platform's technical implementation, Design Bedrock will focus on the foundations of a local creative community—mapping local creative industry stakeholders also in wider CEE context to build a visualisation of the local creative ecosystem with the help of IPT. Next will be organizing extensive capacity building in creative production, marketing, sales, and audience development. From **2025** public activities will be launched such as **Design Bedrock Xchange** (know-how and skill sharing format for hybrid lectures and workshops), **Design Bedrock Meetup** (regular community events) and **Design Bedrock Pop-up** (flexible format of exhibitions and markets). **Design Bedrock**

**Residencies**—programme for experienced international creators invited to collaborate with successful local designers based abroad—product designer **Tomáš Král**, material designer **Zuzana Gombošová**, and industrial designer **Kristína Chudíková**, as well as renowned international designers focusing on interpreting local craft heritage in a contemporary and commercial context—**Studio Rygalik (PL)** furniture and sustainable product design, **Wendy Andreu (FR)** with experimental approach to materials, **Lukas Wegwerth (DE)**, dedicated to the conception and application of sustainable design systems.

In **2026** this project will include the **Design is Work** interdisciplinary interactive conference—bringing together a think-tank of at least 30 international and local experts, and various case studies.

The five-day conference will cover three key areas: Business, Regeneration, and Innovation. Each section will have 10 speakers, half foreign experts and the second half representing successful case studies from Central Europe. This event will represent an opportunity to announce the winner of Material Design Prize, awarded for the first time as a brand new category in cooperation with Zlín Design Week's Best in Design international design contest. **Material Design Prize** will celebrate projects successful in reinterpreting existing scientific, production or material knowledge and spotlight creativity in interdisciplinary collaborations, encouraging young designers in sustainable production.

**Budget:** EUR 300,000 **Lead:** CIT, Slovak Design Center **Additional Partners** SK: CIKE, Čerstvé ovocie, Midl, n.o., crafting plastics! INT: Kaunas Design festival (LT), Zlín (CZ), Valletta Design Cluster (MT)

## Matter of Glass

2025–2026—legacy \*Region \*Capacity Building

Under the umbrella term Matter of Glass, the programme reacts to the urgent rapid decline of glassmaking know-how in Slovakia. The project aims to revive the tradition of glassworks in the regional city **Lednické Rovne** in collaboration with the association **SK-LLO**, founded by **Patrik Illo**, a leading glass artist and designer by opening a new, the only independent space for glass experimentation in Slovakia, open to the public and a site for international travelling exhibitions. The space will also connect art and design students with researchers and local glass craftspeople, drawing attention to both the tradition and future of Slovak glass production.

Starting in **2025 International Glass Symposium (IGS)** in Lednické Rovne will be organised by SK-LLO and **RONA**, with experts from the glass industry, design and art sector. The symposium will coincide with the opening of the new glassworks space-creative center in Lednické Rovne, local gallery, and art and design competition focused on creative interpretations of Trenčín's glassmaking heritage. The IGS will feature both renowned glass artists and up-and-coming talents. In 2026 the project will continue with a series of international glass design exhibitions in Trenčín, organised in cooperation with the **Michelangelo Foundation (CH)**, **The University of Trenčín**—a leader of innovative research in glass production and the **Academy of Fine Arts & Design**. The project will be complemented by a documentary series about the local glass workshop produced in cooperation with RTVS state broadcaster.

**Budget:** EUR 150,000 **Lead:** SK-LLO (Patrik Illo), A. Dubček University of Trenčín **Additional Partners** SK: Flowers for Slovakia, FunGlass—Centre for Functional and Surface Functionalized Glass, Lednické Rovne, Glass Department AFAD Bratislava, Institute of Design FAD STU Bratislava, Institute of Design TU Zvolen, Institute of Design TU Košice INT: Michelangelo Foundation (CH)

## Merino Monument

2024–2026—legacy

Based on the “wool legacy” of the Merina textile factory (1907-2009), Trenčín-born Sweden-based curator **Rado Ištok** designed an artistic and educational project about sheep wool and its processing, which played an important economic role across Europe. The project will explore the relationship between sheep herding and the rural landscape, weaving and industrialisation, and between textile design and manufacturing.

Merina factory, a branch of the Tiberghien factory from Tourcoing (FR) and established alongside a sister-factory in Verona (IT), had a significant impact on the city's economy and identity. Its legacy will ignite the research of the importance of wool industries with already confirmed partners in Slovakia, France, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Lithuania and Ireland collaborating with **Galway ECoC 2020**, starting in **2024**.

From **2025** the project will engage four specific groups in Trenčín during workshops (children, Secondary School of Applied Arts students, former Merina employees, and Trenčín's general public). The process will form a base for participatory co-creation of three collective artworks, created in **2026**. Visual artist **Peter Sit** will create a video essay with local activist collective **Premeny Meriny**, iconic Moroccan artist **Amine El Gotaibi** will design a wool based installation for public space with art students and textile designer **Kristína**

**Šipulová** will collaborate with former Merina employees on collectively woven woollen tapestry that will be presented in a public building in Trenčín—as contemporary testimony to the Merina textile factory's over a century of production, former employees, designers, and sheep farmers. Artworks will be connected to exhibitions in the **Laboratory of Sustainable Fashion** project. Essays and photographs of the artistic process and workshops by local and international contributors will also comprise a bilingual publication.

**Budget:** EUR 70,000 **Lead:** Rado Ištok, Nová Vlna **Additional Partners** INT: Nida Art Colony (LT), Mirror Institute (SE), Broumov 2028 (CZ) **Additional artists:** Lodovica Guarnieri (IT), Nadia El Hakim (FR), Lívia Rášová (SK), Jana Gombíková (SK)

## Rewiring the World

2026

In the late 19th century, wire craft was developed in Slovakia and played such an important role in Trenčín and neighbouring regions that nomadic wire weavers became a folk symbol of Upper Hungary citizens, i.e. Slovaks.

Slovak wire craftsmen spread outside Europe and established connections in North America, North Africa, and West and Central Asia. Currently, one of the largest employers in the Trenčín region is **Leoni**, a German cable and wiring systems company, which developed from a 16th-century gold and silver threads manufacturer. Another significant employer connected to these crafts is **Gleistein Ropes**, famously supplying the ropes also for works of Christo and Jeanne-Claude since 1995.

Building on the Trenčín region's historic legacy of wire craft and the current cable, ropes and wiring systems produced, the project will invite international contemporary artists to “rewire” existing as well as lost connections between past and present, and between Trenčín and the world. This project sits at the interface between material culture, traditional handicraft, innovative technologies, visual arts, nomadism, and migration.

The project curated by Slovak curator **Rado Ištok** will invite Tunisian curator **Aziza Harmel** will connect international artists with Leoni factory workers, Gleinstein employees and contemporary craftspeople from the Trenčín region. The artworks may be co-created or exhibited directly in the factories, transforming the halls into temporary creative galleries. Three works will be newly-commissioned by international contemporary artists **Joar Nango (NO)**, **Cassius Fadlabi (NO/SD)** and **Jacqueline Hoàng Nguyen (CA)** that address the cut connections across time and space that need “rewiring”, and refresh Trenčín's historical connection with nomadic wire craft.

**Budget:** EUR 70,000 **Lead:** Rado Ištok, The Centre for Folk Art Production **Additional Partners** INT: Mad'in Europe (BE)

## Trenčín Literature Fair

2025–2026—legacy \*Capacity Building

In the 1970s and 1980s Trenčín hosted the most prestigious nationwide competition for students of primary and secondary schools in literature and illustration, inspired by literature for children and young audiences. The plan is to revive the literature tradition in Trenčín and get everybody excited about reading again! The Trenčín Literature Fair project will be conducted with the help of award winning writer **Silvester Lavrík**, the **Association of Publishers and Book**





**Distributors of Slovakia**, and the local literature community. An annual event will celebrate literature in all its contemporary forms with all things book related, such as illustration, typography, graphic design, book design, sustainable production and translations.

The festival will engage national and international publishing houses and authors, present the results of literature and translation residencies, and offer curated book selections to better navigate through contemporary literature choices. The project will connect with both former and existing ECOCs, presenting the authors and successful literature related projects during the festival, such as Kaunas Literature Week of Kaunas 2022, led by Ruta Eidukevičienė. The event will also be adapted for visually and hearing impaired visitors. During **2025** we will engage the public in order to cultivate new interest in literature with public space mobile libraries, regular book swaps and slam poetry events, and **Anasoft Litera's René Prize**, a great tool to support the reading of contemporary literature among secondary school students. They will select the winner from carefully curated selection by the Anasoft Litera jury, discussing their choice with other secondary schools, sharpening their critical thinking and debate skills.

Extensive programmes and thematic blocks will be planned for **2026**, with experienced international partners such as **Short Story Festival Wrocław (PL)** based around compressed storytelling and association **Krokodil (RS)** with local actors creating an atmosphere full of curiosity and networking opportunities, while presenting leading European authors such as **Emese Rajsli (RS)**, **Julia Sherwood (GB)** and **Grazia Gotti (IT)**. The festival will be held at multiple venues, including natural spots for intimate reading camps and evening wine'n'books debates. The event will strike a balance between valuable business and networking opportunities for authors and publishers, and inspiring, diverse programmes for the public of all ages. This event will be a great opportunity to open the new **European wing of Trenčín's library**, including books published in ECOC cities during their title periods.

**Budget:** EUR 200,000 **Lead:** Silvester Lavrík, Association of Publishers and Booksellers of the Slovak Republic **Additional Partners** INT: Libreria Giannino Stoppini (IT), Tartu 2024–1984/2024 Literary Festival (EE), Portuguese Institute in Bratislava (PT) **Additional artists:** Katarína Kucbelová (SK), Ivana Gibová (SK), Olga Grjasnowa (AZ/DE), Petr Borkovec (CZ)

## Garage

**2021–2026—legacy \*Capacity Building**

The Garage project is about establishing a Trenčín-specific place for new and underground music creation, drawing on Trenčín's alternative background and giving Trenčín's youth the opportunity to musically explore and express themselves. The Garage will actually be a real converted garage and after a pilot phase at a local skate park in 2021 (p. 60), it will “travel” across the city and local area.

As the place for debut musical performances and learning cultural management, production and dramaturgy skills, Garage starts touring from **2022**, organizing capacity building programmes for children and youth through informal professional mentoring by Central Europe's biggest music event—**Pohoda Festival**. It will be open for 7 months of a year, with five cycles of 5-15 regular participants chosen through an open call. Each two-month cycle will be evaluated and showcased through a finale artistic event. The project will partner

local label **Deadred Records** and **Vinyl-LAB**, connecting young creators with experienced musical producers. Vinyl-LAB will also create a new space for creative experiences—a repurposed 1936 incinerator that will provide additional space for Garage and regional creatives, with the aim to become an interdisciplinary hub for alternative creators.

Throughout 2022-2026, Garage will train a new, capable generation of producers, bands, and trans-disciplinary artists, as well as other creative industry-related professionals. The space itself will provide professional sound, light, stage and other technical equipment, and will be open to budding musicians as well as those interested in alternative art and subcultures—sound, film, animation, design, literature, and visual creation. The Garage will be developed in collaboration with **Chemnitz 2025** project **3000 Garages** through the **RE:MAKERS Creative Europe application**, collectively submitted in 2021 with an international consortium of Chemnitz 2025, **University of Nova Gorica (SI)**, **Xarkis (GR)**, and **Pneuma (HU)**.

**Budget:** EUR 120,000 **Lead:** Pohoda Festival **Additional Partners** SK: Gympeľrock, Priestor, Slovak Institutes INT: Veszprém 2023 (HU), Faro 2027 (PT), Salzkammergut 2024 (AT)

## New generations of Creative Leaders

**2023–2026—legacy \*Region \*Capacity Building**

**Creative Partnerships for Elementary Schools**

Eight elementary schools in Trenčín will gradually join the awarded Creative Partnerships programme, led by **T-Tudok (HU)**, to bring arts, creativity and creative learning into classrooms and curriculums. Creative Partnerships programme is based on developing the “high functioning classroom”—pedagogical approach to apply teaching methodologies for various subjects derived from artistic practices in direct collaboration with artists. It prepares artists to work with teachers and students and increases the self-esteem of socially disadvantaged children. First phase will start in **2024** with a focus on building long-term relationships between creative practitioners and schools, encouraging enjoyment and engagement with learning. This programme also prepares students for the jobs of the future by teaching the skills of collaboration, authenticity, inclusiveness and flexibility, and empowers young people to imagine how the world can be improved. This initiative will transform students' experiences of schooling in Trenčín, and provide an opportunity to be imaginative, inventive and inquisitive.

**Inventive Leadership for Secondary Schools**

Creative Leadership, a programme led by innovative **LEAF Academy**, will be aimed at high schools in the region, focusing on enriching the existing curriculum and offering multidimensional education with emphasis on entrepreneurial thinking and making, proactive leadership skills, strengthening self-esteem and positive mindset, personal development and global awareness. The project piloted in June **2021** with an online workshop pilot engaging four high schools across the region (p. 73). Engaging 3 schools from **2023** and adding more each year, the project will start with up to 15 students per group/per school. In the process the project will engage students and students' councils in extra classes and workshops and in organizing various events open to the public, such as panel discussions, presentations, workshops or small festivals supporting entrepreneurship and creativity in local youth. Various selected artists from the program

of Trenčín 2026 will be giving specialized lectures and consulting directly with students in the form of an **Open Studio**, giving students a chance to discuss their work and network with both local and international creative leaders.

**Digital instruments**

Digital instruments is a project aimed at art schools of all levels, focusing on creative work with a computer through music, image and web programming courses using open source tools such as Sonic-pi, Supercollider, Tidalcycles, Processing or Puredata, offering a current view of the possibilities of digital art and increase digital literacy. The main lecturer and curator of the project will be the Slovak intermedia artist Fero Király, who will invite guest lecturers from Slovakia and abroad, starting in **2024** with the series of workshops for children and young people, adults and art teachers in the region.

**Budget:** EUR 300,000 **Lead:** IPT, T-TUDOK, LEAF Academy, OOO **Additional Partners** SK: Voices, I AMbitious, PUCLE, Growni INT: MEDIADESIGN HOCHSCHULE (MD.H) München (DE), ENGame Academy (HU), Thor Magnusson (IS/GB)

## Mesh & Echoes

**2026—legacy \*Capacity Building**

Mesh will be an attractive multimedia space equipped with an immersive projection paired with 3D sound and motion capture technology. Creation of this space addresses the needs identified during the Digital Summit (p. 59) to offer new opportunities and develop key skills for the contemporary creative industry in the Trenčín region and prevent brain drain of young people.

Mesh will house exhibitions, capacity building workshops, artist residencies, and performances and provide opportunities for artists across Slovakia and abroad to work with seldom-accessible technology that can deliver outstanding outputs in multimedia art, collaborating with the **High School of Applied Arts** animation studies, **Academy of Fine Arts and Design**, and **CAT**.

In **2026**, Mesh will host six international audiovisual residencies for three weeks based on an open call and will provide a creative base for Echoes, a digital mapping project led by established multimedia artist **Boris Vitázek** from Trenčín. In Echoes four participating artists will be selected via an international open call, and will reflect on industrial history and architecture, future leading industrial directions, and inspiring entrepreneurial journeys within the region by creating space-bending mapping projections, showcased both in Mesh space and theme-related site-specific architectural locations. Three video mappings will be transformed into large scale murals, engaging communities, employees and their families in the painting process, changing the facades from generic or neglected to spectacular and captivating. Echoes will culminate in a symposium focused on video mapping beyond abstract architectural play, rather focusing on conceptual applications—the city's social and historical context.

**Budget:** EUR 100,000 **Lead:** Boris Vitázek, Sensorium **Additional Partners** INT: NODE (EU), Signal festival (CZ), Keroxen (ES), klingklangklong (DE)

## Progress Boost

**2024–2026—legacy \*Capacity Building**

Progress Boost project, co-designed with the **Goethe Institut Bratislava**, aims to create a future-oriented learning environment that provides analytic and conceptual tools, practice-based learning experiences, and critical reflection for the unemployed and those interested in changing career and pursuing life-long learning.

Participants' skills will be developed in four key areas—cognitive: critical thinking, work planning and approaches, communication, mental flexibility; interpersonal: mobilizing systems, developing relationships, teamwork effectiveness; self-leadership: self-awareness, self-management, entrepreneurship, goals achievement; and digital: digital fluency and citizenship, software use/development, understanding digital systems.

In **2024** in collaboration with **Trenčín Library**, the **University of Trenčín** will launch this informal programme for the 30+ age group—mainly targeted at beginners, the courses will flexibly adapt to more advanced groups in the case of interest. The University of Trenčín will collaborate with **Aj ty v IT**—an organisation that focuses on building digital technology skills for women with special focus on after or during maternity leave.

A three-month rotating mobile pop-up academy will move around Trenčín city and community spaces at the **Makerspace of Trenčín University**, led by digital artist Andras Cséfalvay. Each programme cycle will target a specific theme presented by lecturers, approved by project curators. Alumni will be offered work placements in companies involved through the **Creative Cluster Trenčín** and **Zlín**.

**Budget:** EUR 100,000 **Curator:** Goethe Institut Bratislava, School of Machines (DE) **Additional Partners** SK: Trenčín Creative Cluster, Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, Aj ty v IT INT: Zlín Creative Cluster (CZ), Open Processing, Github, Mozilla Foundation, Tactical Tech (DE)



# New Grounds

## Strand 3

Exploring levels of our empathy and sensitivity, programmes in this strand address the need for a more open-minded and European community with an aim to broaden perspectives and contribute to European democracy. The strand deals with our ability to react to global challenges such as inequality or lack of trust, and invites collective actions toward the co-creation of a better future for all.

This strand divides into two blocks All Being Well and Minds Wide Open.

# All Being Well

## Block 5

Facilitating universal spaces in communities, creating a supportive environment for dialogue and communication, wellbeing, mental health, and inclusion. Participants will rediscover a sense of local and global belonging, extending inclusive and diverse cultural offerings into neighbourhoods, kick-starting collaborations, and deepening mutual understanding.

## New Peace

### Flagship 2026

**“What art is, is rather less important than what art does.”**

**Krzysztof Wodiczko**

Renowned artist **Krzysztof Wodiczko** is coming to Trenčín to revive and support democratic values and social cohesion through art thinking processes while collaborating with social workers and Cultural Ambassadors.

Trenčín's very first historical mention has a military context, from 179 AD when Roman troops passed through the city (the-then Laugaricio), and left one of the most treasured historical features—an inscription on castle rock. Trenčín remains a key base for the Slovak Army, and the town has welcomed multiple military generations.

The army is associated with warfare, aggression, defence and enforcing control, but also peace and humanitarian activities and help during catastrophes. The topic of the military opens questions about the army's contemporary role in maintaining peace (Peace Corps of the United Nations and NATO).

Peace needs to be nurtured, cultivated, and respected—at the macro scale between countries and geo-political blocks, and at the micro scale within and between communities and individuals. The latter is especially critical in the light of information wars that call into question the very veracity of data and science, heralding unprecedented levels of scepticism and distrust. Here art and culture can help, offering versatile tools to react to societal challenges, and support the development of critical thinking within communities. In **2026** we will host and commission an artwork by **Krzysztof Wodiczko**—the pioneering world-known visual and multidisciplinary artist. He tackles sensitive and contemporary social issues such as war, immigration, human rights, and the military. His bespoke work for Trenčín will elaborate on peace, dialogue, strong army identity, and our relationship with the EU. Wodiczko is very keen to partner local communities, as demonstrated by his conversations with the Trenčín 2026 team and local social workers about the city's distinctive atmosphere and societal challenges.

The local artistic community will have a unique opportunity to interact with this renowned artist, helping with site-specific research and the further development of a large-scale multimedia international level project. This project will be connected with **Oulu's 2026 Flagship Peace Machine** based on AI researcher Finnish scientist Timo Honkela, an alumni of the University of Oulu.

**Budget:** EUR 350,000 **Lead:** CIT, IPT, Gallery of M.A. Bazovský **Additional Partners** SK: Slovak National Gallery, Kunsthalle Bratislava INT: Build up (INT), In Place of War (GB), Oulu 2026 (FI)



## Every Part Counts

2022–2026—legacy \*Capacity Building

Every Part of Trenčín counts, especially the dreams and challenges of the city's residents.

This cross-sectoral programme will revive local identity and establish new urban traditions. A collaborative city-making process, utilising the potential of spaces outside the city centre will create vibrant and authentic local cultural offerings such as picnics, farmer markets, design fairs, theatre performances, and small concerts, organised by locals with everybody welcome. Starting in 2022, the **Institute for Participation** and **Creative Institute Trenčín** will assist local citizens via the **Cultural Ambassadors** programme, and partners **Virtual Square**, **Tooltest Day**, and the **Placemaking Europe**.

One of the participatory projects planned for 2026 is—**Neighbours are the Key**, led by Czech artist **Kateřina Šedá**, focusing on neighbourly relationships, solidarity, and unity. Each family will provide a photo of their kitchen, and an object that characterizes them the most. Then—in cooperation with a chosen artist—parts of submitted photos will be painted onto the walls of apartment building corridors and common areas—the paintings will comprise a continuous mural, and create a communal kitchen where neighbours can organise a gala opening

with a shared meal. This project will roll-out in buildings across the city, and our team will create a Europe-wide initiative with **Chemnitz 2025**, **Nova Gorica 2025** and **Oulu 2026**. The open call will be launched for inhabitants of those cities to share photographs of their kitchens in order to examine similarities and differences between European kitchens and methods of preparing gastronomic specialties. Project participants will be encouraged to organise events, share recipes across the globe to promote cultural diversity, and create new long-lasting friendships within their buildings, areas, and online global community that revolves around the project.

We aim for a local as well as international connection of communities—hence we're developing links with previous ECoCs to learn from best practices. We partnered with the **AltoGaste** project led by **Anna Gesualdi** and **Giovanni Trono** to welcome five invited artists in 2026 into residents' homes for two weeks, including artistic residency and the public opening of works. The project will mainly comprise an exchange between artists and dialogue between involved communities, experience sharing that relates the local to national and international dimensions.

**Budget:** EUR 450,000 **Lead:** IPT **Additional Partners** SK: Susedia na dvore, Priestor, Dialogue Centre, n.o., krasny terasy INT: Faro 2027 (PT), MestoCity (INT), Eutroplan (EU)

## Film Festivals of Inclusivity School Edition

2024–2026—legacy \*Region \*Capacity Building

Programmes for children and youth will explore equality, solidarity, cultural rights, and acceptance in collaboration with European film festivals. Thematic screenings will be organised in schools and classrooms transformed to alternative cinemas, cultural community centres and surrounding public spaces. The project will be co-curated and managed by the students themselves. The Film Festival will be supported by **Living Library**, organised in collaboration with **Amnesty International**, seeking to challenge prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination. Movies will reflect contemporary challenges, thought-provoking and age appropriate for a younger audience. The selection will be co-curated with **Film Europe Media Company** and this partner will co-organise additional programs such as **CineTalks**—debates with both film artists and society experts, or **Young Film Journalist Crew**—where experienced international journalist will work with students, and guide them in creation of first review writing pieces from their specific point of view, later published on Film Europe CineBlog website. The festival will have a special focus on animation showcases supported by **Uherské Hradiště, Zlín (CZ)** and twin city **Anecy (FR)**. The programme will be streamed in schools across the region, and initiate inclusive environments, mutual understanding, and constructive dialogue.

**Budget:** EUR 120,000 **Lead:** IPT, Film faculty of Academy of Performing Arts **Additional Partners** INT: : Athens International Children's Film Festival (GR), FILEM'ON (BE), RIFF (IS), Just Film (EE)

## Generations Together

2024–2026—legacy \*Capacity Building

Intergenerational dialogue and understanding needs to be nurtured and cultivated, especially in the post-pandemic world's critical socio-political circumstances. Generations Together creates a much needed open and inclusive space to share intergenerational and interdisciplinary knowledge, facilitate dialogue and design a model applicable for other European cities. The project will be developed with well-known Slovak performance artist **Rokko Juhasz** and the **Been There Together** collective, supported by international artist, renowned performer **Mads Floor Andersen (DK)** and his experimental **Nomadic Arts Festival**.

The project starts in 2024 with meetings of young local influencers/YouTubers and elder people organised in local clubs and the **University of the Third Age** who will learn about each other and start working on common projects. Next phase in 2025 will initiate the **Social Memory lab**, transforming exchanges into individual and collective artworks with help and guidance of invited artists. Community media outlets (newspaper, YouTube channel, podcast, etc.) will be created and run locally, based on **Bashkatib project** know-how, which has trained young people to report professionally on events in their communities. Third phase in 2026, lab participants will engage in storytelling performances as a periodical "salons", hosted in various city locations to perform, hold events, and implement subtle interventions (theatre, murals, movies). Through performances, games, festivities, honest talks, workshops, and interventions we will stitch together Trenčín's diverse generational fabrics.

**Budget:** EUR 150,000 **Lead:** IPT, Kassak Centre (INT) **Additional Partners** SK: MPhlms, Zrejme—Old's cool Festival, Department of Intermedia and Digital Media, Academy of Arts Banská Bystrica, Dialogue Centre, n.o., Pribehom na stope, Academia Istropolitana INT: toZOMIA (AT), Bashkatib (EG), Center for Cultural Community Development (CCCD), Angewandte Performance Laboratory (AT), Performance KOKkenet (DK) **Additional artists:** Paola Paz Yee (MX), Ceren Oran (TU), Robert Gabriš (SK), Viktor Fuček (SK), Nina Mikušová (SK)

## Floating Communities

2026 \*Region \*Capacity Building

This project answers the need for creative exchange between communities and strengthening subcultural grassroots culture. With Floating Communities we want to experiment on the fusion of folk and alternative subcultures, both strongly represented in Trenčín. With Danish artist **Maj Horn**, we want to curate a new set of works with representatives of non-formal traditional folklore collectives, new urban culture, and the street arts movement in Trenčín.

The project will locate and map the above-mentioned groups, explore their work and ways to connect the traditional and innovative through experimental art forms. The project will act as a platform for dialogue between traditional and alternative, creating daring and entertaining combinations such as traditional embroidery and tattoo artist workshops, folklore music with break dance choreography, parkour dubstep party with folk dance performances, and graffiti murals inspired by wire work and textile patterns! The project will result in five collectively created interdisciplinary performative experiences. Outcomes of the mapping and new collaborations will also be exhibited in **Nová Vlna** local gallery. This process will be carefully documented by Maj Horn and the communities, and resolved in a publication and guide that will create visibility for important layers of Trenčín, inspiring new initiatives, and allowing atypical creative community fusions and networks to blossom.

**Budget:** EUR 70,000 **Lead:** Maj Horn (DK), Nová Vlna **Additional Partners** SK: DIVO, Folklore groups from Trenčín and region, FestArt INT: f.eks. (DK), Plovdiv 2019 (BG)





## Degustories

2026

Degustories is a new culinary festival format that celebrates cultural diversity, shares traditions, and invents new fusions. It will be the place to engage in conversations about culinary arts and what we share as Europeans (even beyond the dining table) and how we can inspire each other. The project developed with local activists **Bezobalis**, will also explore the issue of food sustainability and food waste given that food sector-related carbon emissions are critical climate change issues.

The project will be divided into four events throughout the year organised at various venues in the city and surrounding areas. Design will play an important experiential role, as we want to use a diverse mix of traditional and contemporary design table settings from different cultures. An outside kitchen and movable exterior furniture—with the flexibility to imitate different ways of dining, such as Danish Folkekøkken and southern tapas—will be created. This project will connect with young designers, product makers, craftspeople and international artists that will add even more seasoning to this gastronomic experience.

Catalan food designer **Martí Guixé (ES)** will combine dining and technology in his ground-breaking Solar Kitchen concept, **Marije Vogelzang (NL)**, pioneer of food design, will rethink our dining rituals, and **Giulia Soldati (IT)** will create a truly memorable eating experience by literally bringing diners back into touch with their food. Side-order topics will also be addressed such as contemporary trends in gastronomy, sustainable shopping, leftovers, veganism, and how to make delicious meals out of scraps. **Cooks in residence** will demonstrate their skills in exciting delicious fusions. **Zuzana Blochová** and **David Fesl (CZ)** will show how to create a delicious menu using locally-grown herbs and crops, while **Cooking Sections (GB)** will observe the role of food at the interface of ecology, geopolitics, architecture, and design. The **Vegetable Orchestra (AT)** will be an unforgettable music experience using carved pumpkins and carrots as classical instruments. Other **ECOC cities** will be invited to bring their local specialties and customs to Trenčín. Let's dive in and bring Europe's food lovers together to enjoy this fusion of traditional and contemporary food celebration!

**Budget:** EUR 200,000 **Lead:** Bezobalis, CIT **Additional Partners** SK: Free Food (SK), Priatel'ia zeme (SK), Jem pre Zem (SK), Slovenská vegánska spoločnosť (SK), INCIEN (SK) INT: Zachraň jídlo (CZ), Békéscsaba (HU), Food List (NO), IGCAT (EU), Nova Gorica 2025 (SI) **Additional artists:** Pascual (GB)

## Chill Out Nooks

2026—legacy \*Region

Chill Out Nooks aims to create pleasant, distinctive, and well-designed site-specific spaces with an emphasis on universal design, where students can relax, talk, and deepen their friendships. With **Mária Sarková**—education, psychology and youth wellbeing expert—safe space zones for growth and personal development will be created in regional elementary schools. This project will support inclusivity, open-minded society, mutual respect, and understanding. The need comes directly from youngsters that feel the regular school curriculum overlooks their mental health and wellbeing.

The nooks will be designed by students of the **Academy of Fine Arts and Design** (the leading arts university in Slovakia), under the guidance of boundary-crossing architect **Danica Pišteková**—the first female to run a studio at the **Department of Architecture**. Her experimental studio focuses on combining a textile approach with architectural thinking. The spaces will be selected by students together with pedagogical and psychological staff. The implementation process will take one year: in the first semester, architectural students will work on designs, and in the second semester will continue with a specific prototype. Nooks will be used for self-care retreats, spaces for conversations, small libraries and reading, active listening, screenings, and workshops.

**Budget:** EUR 120,000 **Lead:** Fabrika umenia, IPT **Additional Partners** SK: Liga za duševné zdravie INT: Oulu 2026 (FI), Labanc.studio (ES)

## Fair Play

2024—2026 \*Region

Anti-fascist and anti-totalitarian spirit will spread across the Trenčín region thanks to a very popular tool—football. **UAFA cup**—an international anti-racist and anti-fascist football organisation based in Trenčín—will deliver atypical sport events with international guests who share a love of football, freedom, and fair play. Fair Play will highlight the city's anti-fascist history, the social uprising led by our sister city and current partner **Kragujevac (RS)**, and our urgent need to present democratic values to a young and impressionable audience.

UAFA will prepare matches (with afterparties) by working with amateur and atypical inspirational clubs. In friendly matches, UAFA will connect regional village leagues with international players and football enthusiasts—**Antira (DE)**, **Love Bohemians Hate Racism (CZ)** and **Cyprus fanclub Gate 9 (CY)**—that share the same principles of democracy and unity. Local players will play with visually impaired football teams **Avoy MU Brno (CZ)** and **St.Pauli (DE)**, with gender balanced team **AKS ZŁY (PL)**, with anti-discrimination team **NK Zagreb 041 (CR)**, watch unique matches of humanoid football squads **Robocup (INT)** and meet **Fan.tastic Females (INT)** seeking to illustrate diversity and the reality of female fan culture.

Pohoda Festival will collaborate on after-match parties in villages with concerts by independent bands and musicians such as the energetic fusion of punk and folk **Hańba (PL)**, local underground legends **Bez Ladu a Skladu** and **CHVM**. The music programme will be connected to young local musicians performing at the **Garage**. This programme and new tradition will kick off at a symbolic time—the 80th anniversary of the Slovak national uprising in 2024.

**Budget:** EUR 100,000 **Lead:** UAFA cup



# Minds Wide Open

## Block 6

MindsWideOpenisaboutdevelopingcriticalthinking,wideningperspectives,andembracingaEuropeanvision.TheseprojectsaimtostrengthentheEuropeanvaluesoffreedomanddemocracy,anddeepentheunderstandingofcurrentchallenges,includingthepandemic.Theprojectsexplorenewtechnologies,reinforcingtheneedtobolsterdigitalliteracyanddevelopactivecitizenshiptocollectivelyshapeour shared future.

# Sounds of Democracy

## Flagship 2026

This project celebrates the values of democracy and freedom upon which Europe is built. Developed with the **Pohoda Festival**, this project will offer a unique intergenerational opportunity to reflect on the different perspectives of a well-functioning democratic society. The project is structured around democratic revolution milestones in our collective European history and will celebrate European democratic national uprisings, and speculate about the future of democratic society, human rights and equality.

**CIT** and Pohoda Festival will mark year-long keydays of democracy, such as the 25 April Portuguese revolution, 6 September Baltic Independence, and the iconic **17 November Velvet Revolution** that brought democracy to Slovakia, and more. The project will comprise four large-scale multidisciplinary events and five smaller-scale events throughout **2026**, full of revolutionary concerts, thought-provoking movie and documentary screenings, and constructive discussions with artists, activists and diplomats from across Europe. We need

to actively remind ourselves of contemporary social European challenges, the growth of extreme nationalism, radical conservatism, and society-corroding populism that exploded during the pandemic. The project will be organised in different venues around the city, one being the unique memorial dedicated to victims tortured during WWII in forest Brezina, burdened by communist regime. With democratic artistic expressions, this project can restructure the label that the memorial carries.

The events will also present multi-generational artists and subcultures from countries currently struggling with oppression and social injustice (Belarus, Ukraine, Iran, Russia, and Syria). Trenčín will also enjoy the performances of Latin alternative collective **Che Sudaka (ES)** formed by Hispanic American immigrants living in Barcelona and **Shutka Roma Rap (MK)**, the rebellious side of Skopje. Pohoda Festival will invite **Zohra (AF)**, an all female orchestra from Afghanistan, **DakhaBrakha (UA)** and **Dakh Daughters (UA)**, a sonic feast and visual spectacle, showcasing the diversity and power of traditional and contemporary music in the context of recent political and social unrest in Ukraine. All from Europe and beyond are invited to join this celebration of revolution and collectively form the future of democracy.

**Budget:** EUR 350,000 **Lead:** Pohoda **Additional Partners** INT: Timisoara 2023 (RO), Veszprém 2023 (HU), Yourope (EU), The NECE—Networking European Citizenship Education (EU), Institutes **Additional artists:** Bez ladu a skladu (SK), CHVM (SK), The Plastic People of the Universe: Leading Horses (symphonic version of album The Plastic People of the Universe by Brno Philharmonic), Auktyon (RU)

## Art&Science&Curiosity Festival

2024- 2026—legacy \*Capacity Building

The Art&Science&Curiosity Festival is one week of inspiring cross-sectoral experimentation developed in collaboration with **Irini Papadimitri (GR/GB)**, the creative director of **Future Everything**. The project aims to empower people to become positive about science, knowledge, and their potential and ability to make a difference in the world. As both art and science are creative tools for understanding and discovering the world, this project will connect these two crucial disciplines—bringing science out of the lab and closer to people. The project aims to rebuild trust in scientific research through creative tools, and mobilise collective agency and intelligence to build strong collaborative cross-sector networks.

The thought-provoking exploration starts in **2024**, in collaboration with **TEDx Trenčín**, where the Cultivating Curiosity Festival will be introduced in a special segment. During **2025**, participants will be chosen via an international open call organised with Future Everything for six, one-month **Artist & Scientist tandem residencies**. Tandem collaborations will use emerging technological tools such as bespoke software and apps, creative and speculative science and engineering, co-design, and creative prototyping in combination with contemporary artistic language. Via **Cultural Ambassadors**, tandems will also creatively engage local communities of students, classrooms, and local activists in ideas of alternative ecologies, economies, and new stories about planetary recovery such as creating human-plant-animal communications, ideas for extinct species recovery, bioengineering, and innovative material explorations.

The project will showcase the results of residencies during the week-long event, together with an opening exhibition of five large-scale and five small-scale commissioned artworks, which elaborate on scientific topics from various artistic angles. We will explore the work of internationally celebrated artists **Yuri Suzuki (JP)**, who will create transporting sonic sculptures, pioneering artists **Nils Norman (GB)**, experimental designers **Marlene Huissoud (FR)** and **Superflux (GB/IN)**, who will present groundbreaking projects that respond to sustainability and technology, inviting people to reimagine architecture, music, materials, and human-nature relationships of the future. The main venue **EXPO Trenčín** will be transformed by spectacular immersive theatre collective **Coney (UK)** with all these artworks and over 20 creative collisions from residency tandems becoming part of immersive scenes and artistic storytelling. The week-long event will deliver thought-provoking talks, and interactive artistic activities on the unlikely crossover of disciplines such as physics and magic. The exhibition will be installed for three months after the main event. The plan is to organise this extraordinary event biennially to enable this international gathering and networking place for creative minds from across Europe. With playful and mind-opening experiences, we will shape Trenčín into a European city of the future that is innovative, sustainable, and responsive to the climate emergency.

**Budget:** EUR 350,000 **Lead:** Future Everything, CIT **Additional Partners** SK: Slovak Space Office INT: Ars Electronica Linz (AT), Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research (GB), Future Everything (GB)

## Global Equality and Hospitality

2024—2026 \*Capacity Building

Set in a post-Brexit, post-pandemic situation this project revolves around the ecological, economic and social consequences. This project is a large scale international exhibition, focusing on visual art and performance, developed by the international curatorial team of **Ilona Németh (SK)**, **Edit Andras (HU)**, **Raluca Voinea (RO)**, **Margarethe Makovecz** and **Anton Lederer (AT)**, and **Emily Verla Bovino (US)**.

The exhibition will bring to the light almost forgotten ideas of humanism, equality and fraternity, and pose questions of how to live together without exploiting, subordinating or destroying the Other.

Invited artists will confront populism, rising nationalism, racism, gender inequality by referring to human rights, immigration and discrimination across Europe and globally, and between the global north and global south. In the artistic search for European hospitality and solidarity, this exhibition will bring outstanding artists to Trenčín, as photographers and filmmakers **Artur Zmijewski (PL)** that reflect individual societal trauma, and **Oliver Ressler's (AT)** focus on migration and the climate crisis. **Anca Benera & Arnold Estefan (RO)** will provide a unique perspective on shaping the man-made landscapes around us, and filmmaker and widely known visual artist **Hito Steyerl (DE)** will explore the depth of late capitalism's social, cultural and financial imaginaries.

The mid-term exhibition will be organised in **2024** to include presentations of participating artists. The main exhibition is planned for **2026** with 15-20 artists and will include an Open Forum around Europe to open globally relevant topics with invited experts. Among accompanying events there will be special workshops (run by educators from **Kunsthalle Bratislava** and **GMAB**) engaging students and teachers from regional elementary and secondary schools in discussions and raising their intercultural competencies and knowledge. The participating students will later act as exhibition guides and debate leaders for their peers and beyond.

**Budget:** EUR 300,000 **Lead:** Consortium of curators: Ilona Németh (SK), Edit Andras (HU), Raluca Voinea (RO), Margarethe Makovecz and Anton Lederer (AT), and Emily Verla Bovino (US) **Additional Partners** SK: Gallery of M.A. Bazovský, Kunsthalle INT: <rotor> Gallery, Graz (AT), MMSU, Rijeka (HR) **Additional artists:** Csaba Nemes (HU), Szabolcs KissPal (RO), Nemere Kerezsi (HU), Jaro Varga (SK), Zdena Koleckova (CZ), Ferenc Grof (FR), Cooking Section—Alon Schwabe & Daniel Fernández Pascual (GB), Tomas Rafa (SK), Aneta Mona-Chisa & Lucia Tkacova (SK/CZ), András Cséfalvay (SK), Sanja Iveković (CR), Wolfgang Schlag & Birgit Lurz (AU), Brigit Lurz (AT)

## Dialogue Decoded Lab

2026 \*Capacity Building

This initiative is developed with the director of **Connecting the Dots (MX)**, **Carmen Salas Pino**, bringing five international artists, policy makers and digital experts to Trenčín, to work with locals on sharpening the digital literacy, to better navigate an algorithmic future and strengthening the ability to be more comfortable in the world run by technologies. To fully benefit from the potential of digitalisation, governments and public organisations need to take measures to ensure a more human-centric, fair, safe, inclusive, and democratic digital future.





This project will offer participants the opportunity to better understand digital rights and identity by participation in the design and creation of a digital rights toolkit. The activities will bring together around 200 people on site and an estimated 500 online via live stream.

Artist, researcher, and educator **Benjamin Gaulon (FR)** will work with the **Trenčín's University of third age** (seniors) and school children to create a series of learning materials, open-source prototypes, and activist-oriented material about privacy, digital rights and planned obsolescence.

School children can also learn how fashion can be used as camouflage against face-detection technology (surveillance) by participating in the **Computer Vision Dazzle Camouflage** software concept with artist **Adam Harvey**. These activities will be developed in collaboration with local adult organisations (representing over 2,000 seniors) and schools over three months.

**The Disruption Network Lab** will present talks and a digital publication related to freedom of speech, digital security, misinformation and fake news, and data sovereignty.

Through a three weekend-long workshop, artist and researcher **Joana Moll (ES/DE)** will build an online repository/open archive featuring research, information and examples of online artworks and browser-based installations. These aim to reveal issues related to our data-driven society, including virtual surveillance and data privacy. Digital policy expert **Francesca Bria (IT/ES/GB)**, will work with local policymakers to build a digital manifesto for Trenčín city. The results will be communicated via Trenčín City Council, IPT, and the ECoC Consortium channels, as well as through participant networks. Once the manifesto is created, the City of Trenčín will apply to become a member of the **Cities Coalition for Digital Rights**. This will be a unique opportunity to increase the project's legacy and visibility, offering opportunities for further collaborations with other cities in Europe and beyond.

**Budget:** EUR 100,000 **Lead:** Connecting the Dots (MX), Cultural and Creative Industry Center Hviezda **Additional Partners** SK: I AMbitious Academy INT: Disruption Network Lab (DE), Globsec (EU), The NECE—Networking European Citizenship Education (EU), Broumov 2028 (CZ) **Additional artists:** Tatiana Bazzichelli (DE)

## Destination All-Inclusive

**2023—2026—legacy**

This project is dedicated to ethnic and national minorities, and will be created and implemented in cooperation with **Šimečka Foundation** (one of the oldest NGOs in Slovakia that focuses on the inclusion of minorities in culture and democracy), **IPT**, **Cultural Ambassadors**, and representatives of ethnic and national minorities. The project will start in 2023 with extensive mapping connected to audience development (p. 72) and promoting intercultural dialogue. Special focus will be put on immigrants and newcomers, and question how they could be better integrated into society in cooperation with the **ICORN** (International Cities of Refuge Network). The plan is to organise short-term study visits of ICORN-related persecuted writers, journalists, and artists who will then work with local immigrants and national minorities to help their integration, collect personal stories, and share community experience.

Another creative branch of this project will engage the city's largest communities: Ukrainian, Serbian, Czech, German, and Roma. They will actively collaborate with muralist **Peter Štuller** and collective **FestArt** to collectively conceptualise and design three murals to be painted in a participative manner, engaging all ages and communities to interact. Among the accompanying events we will hold multicultural painting parties, enjoying traditional food presentations, and cross-cultural musical events conversations. Destination All-Inclusive will be a multicultural, multi-genre exhibition that celebrates the diversity of Trenčín and Europe, exhibiting **ICORN** members' work in a curated selection, together with celebratory unveilings of vernissage of completed murals.

**Budget:** EUR 150,000 **Lead:** Milan Šimečka Foundation **Additional Partners** SK: CVEK—Research Center for ethnicity and culture, Ústav výskumu sociálnej komunikácie SAV, FSEV UK BA, Islamic Foundation in Slovakia

## Bridging the Gap

**2026 \*Region \*Capacity Building**

Bridging the Gap is a programme of residencies in which artists work with local communities, especially youth and local stakeholders to research, design, and activate art+tech+science driven projects in rural areas around Trenčín. Pop-up rural maker spaces will facilitate access to easy-to-use tools, resources, knowledge and guidance as well as cultural activities. This initiative aims to help bridge both the global digital and urban-rural divide.

**Rural Hack** in partnership with the maker space at **Trenčín University** will set up an accessible environment and creative programmes for learning Arduino and other free and accessible open-source tech tools. By bringing together young people, craftspeople, artists, small businesses, social entrepreneurs, and institutions around specific topics such as a different sense of food production, this initiative will help bridge the rural-urban divide, while fostering a culture of sustainability and protection towards biodiversity, the environment, and people.

For the first three-month residency, in collaboration with children, students, community residents of nearby village **Chocholná**, Mexican artist **Gilberto Esparza** will build an iteration of his project **Nomadic Plants** where a recycled-tech robot extracts water from contaminated rivers, decomposes its elements, and helps produce energy that creates clean water. By experimenting with electronics, robotics, organic materials, microorganisms and their bio-electrochemical processes, participants will learn tools useful for creative projects and understanding of how pollution can be harnessed to create energy. This residency will also provide an opportunity to critically address the human-nature relationship.

**Budget:** EUR 75,000 **Lead:** Sensorium, A.Dubček University of Trenčín **Additional Partners** INT: ACT Programme (MX), Art, Tech Nature Culture Network (INT)

## Waiting Places

**2024—2026—legacy \*Capacity Building**

This project will bring site-specific artistic interventions to five public institutions in Trenčín: the labour office, hospital waiting room, police station, post office and City Hall Front office—places with various functions, overlapping interests and conflicts, expectations, and disappointments. During the pandemic, institutions' physical interaction has been reduced, direct personal contact between officials and citizens has been distanced or minimised, and most administrative tasks have gone online. Yet hospitals worked at full capacity, post offices were overloaded, and the police overworked—they played a strong role in mitigating and overcoming the pandemic crisis. This project is an opportunity to re-evaluate and reconsider future relations between the city's citizens and the institutions that ensure its day-to-day running.

The project is developed with leading Slovak artist and curator **Jaro Varga**, inviting stellar artists **Superflux (GB/IN)** with a view for positive changes in the era of unprecedented technological growth, climate change and political unrest: visionary **Atelier van Lieshout (NL)** reflects everyday human behaviour balancing between utopia and dystopia; **Lucia Tkáčová (SK)**, experimental and brave artist and curator explores new possible universes in existing places; and author **Agnieszka Kilian (PL/DE)** examines the

relation between art and the public domain. The Waiting Places' hospital intervention will be connected with **Oulu 2026's SmART Hospital** project, which aims to combine cultural wellbeing with high quality medical care. Starting in 2024, each intervention will be first conceptualised through **Institution Incubator** with **IPT**, in five small work-research groups where artists, curators and societal experts interact with representatives of the selected public institution, co-creating an opportunity for public institutions to become a part of city's cultural life. The final artistic interventions will be implemented in 2026.

**Budget:** EUR 250,000 **Lead:** Jaro Varga, IPT **Additional Partners** INT: ZKU—Center for Art and Urbanistic Berlin (DE), N3plus—NEW INC (US), Meetfactory Praha (CZ), Chiquita Room Barcelona (ES) **Additional artists:** Erich Weiss (BE), Amol Patil (IN)

## Meditations for the Future

**2026 \*Region \*Capacity Building**

**Marcus Aurelius** sought inspiration in Trenčín to compose part of his famous **Meditations**—a stoic philosophy milestone work that remains important for personal development and modern psychology. This connection is the perfect opportunity to open a discussion about philosophy, how attitudes and beliefs affect our mental health and stress levels in the post-covid reality, and initiate a dialogue about the future of our society, our mission and responsibility in the world as humans, seeking ways to transform current uncertainty into a promising future.

This project will explore contemporary and experimental philosophy approaches, associated with psychology and cognitive science. Conceptual thought will be provoked by quantum physics, and parallel/multiple universes. Imagination and speculative dialogue will be supported by an exploration of magical realism and speculative fiction. The project will be produced with local antiquarian **Čierne na bielom**, **TEDx Trenčín** and regional libraries. The month-long event will travel through four towns within the wider region. It will be built around weekly talks and roundtables with international and local authors, literary readings and immersive philosophical walks and will be accompanied by family-friendly fun interactive games. Four philosophy-inspired artworks will be produced and selected via open call, and installed/performed in four various regional towns.

Addressed to youth, primary and secondary school students, teachers, parents and friends, it will also make philosophy fun—with slam poetry dipped in magical realism, all-night DJ-set dance parties with VJ-ing of philosophical quotes, and the latest physics theories presented at libraries at midnight through immersive technologies. This project aims to empower curious minds to discover new perspectives on life, to understand oneself and others better, and consider a better future for society.

**Budget:** EUR 150,000 **Lead:** Monokel, Public library of Michal Rešetka in Trenčín **Additional Partners** SK: Novotvar Festival, The Institute of Philosophy of the Slovak Academy of Sciences INT: Braga 2027 (PT)

**Additional artists:** Maria A. Ioannou (CY), Lukáš Cabala (SK)



# 07

The current programme has been developed from and built around the team's extensive and wide-ranging research—both in the city and regionally—during the first round of bidding. Key needs and goals were identified alongside over 2,000 citizens and hundreds of cultural workers, organisations, institutions and schools during up to **3,700 meetings** and focus groups (p. 72).

An open call with project guidelines was announced in early 2020, and after receiving up to 110 submissions we proceeded to individual meetings with local, national, and international cultural actors. The temporary artistic team together with the Programme Board ensured that projects developed by artists and curators are in line with the ECoC goals and overall objectives, with an emphasis on the participation and involvement of all social groups and communities.

Regular meetings were held with the **Programme Board of experts**, which provided feedback on every stage of programme development. The seven-member Programme Board was officially formed after we proceeded to the final selection of various national and local experts (many of whom we worked with during the first phase of bidding). The members are:

- **Ilona Németh**—outstanding visual artist and curator, advises the President of Slovakia about minorities
- **Michal Kaščák**—musician, founder and director of Pohoda Festival
- **Mária Beňačková Rišková**—member of the New European Bauhaus Roundtable and former director of the Slovak Design Center
- **Michal Vašečka**—eminent sociologist and university professor
- **Petra Fornayová**—leading director and choreographer, founder and director of Nu Dance Fest
- **Lucia Molnár Satinská**—linguist, writer and translator from the Slovak Academy of Sciences
- **Peter Kohout**—City of Trenčín architect and musician

Regarding the final bidbook's projects, we have collaborated with **48 curators from 10 countries, 16 organizations, and 158 artists and cultural actors** to ensure that every need is met and that the programme is well balanced between local and European.

Through an extensive consultation process—including other ECoC cities and experts—we sought to ensure the programme's artistic quality and diversity. **Thematic summits** with local and national cultural authorities (p. 59) were essential in developing the programme.

The ECoC team, and indeed the future mission of CIT, aims to support and produce a high-level, dynamic, and artistically provocative programme for the preparatory phase, 2026, and beyond. The artistic content and talent necessary to ensure excellence will be sought externally to direct, curate, and inspire every project. CIT will have an Artistic Director and Artistic Board appointed in 2022 to select and develop further projects, and supervise the programme's artistic quality. The Artistic Director and the

team will continue consultations with international and local experts, building flexibility into the programme to ensure adaptations to challenges, such as the pandemic.

**Open calls for artists will be announced for 35% of already outlined projects, with scope for about 40 more projects to be developed.** EUR 4,000,000 is reserved for new calls and proposals that will contribute to current EU and local themes that may emerge during the preparatory phase. Open calls with well-defined criteria for local, national, and international actors and cross-sector experimentation will be announced. Requirements will be aligned with ECoC goals and Trenčín 2026 with an emphasis on the European dimension, innovation and experimental expressions, development of creative industries, imaginative use of city space, regional collaboration, inclusivity, and Cultural Climate Action. Each call will have a gender-balanced, independent jury. Just like the pre-selection version, the final bid book and ETR version of the bid book will be published on our website. Presentations and participatory workshops will be organised with the Institute for Participation to ensure the engagement of citizens, Cultural Ambassadors, artists, cultural institutions, NGOs, schools, and the creative sector in further developing the programme.

How will the cultural programme combine local cultural heritage and traditional art forms with new, innovative and experimental expressions?

# 08

Trenčín 2026 wants to showcase itself as a city that values heritage, yet also wants to break boundaries in cultural city life with experimental cross-section perspectives, innovative concepts, and extraordinary experiences. Projects based on Trenčín's established traditional art forms, historic legends, and architectural heritage will be complemented by a new experimental approach and translated into a contemporary language—with technology, material and philosophical research supercharging the cultural content to be more exciting, very relevant, and openly accessible.

**Contemporary reinterpretation of tangible heritage** **Modernism Revisited** invites international artists and architects to design experimental solutions for cultural heritage or New function for functionalism via the residency program.

In **Sensitively on Brutalism**, the late modernist ODA army building will be combined with street and urban culture by rapper and architecture enthusiast Vladimír 518 (CZ), and with satiric and critical installations by Biancoshock (IT).

**CAT** will present 20th century architectural heritage through interactive virtual and urbanist models. The design of public space interventions will be developed with parametric tools, AI, and participative digital process in **Cool Interventions** and **City Reimagined**.

**Underneath the Arches** combines digital contemporary art, local archeological sites, and involves experimental archeology processes.

**Castle Contemporary** invites progressive and digital artists to the medieval castle to create spectacular app- and digital-based interpretations of historical sites and legends. Under the curatorship of new media artist **Ekme Ertan (TU)**, the traditional tales will be given a futuristic spin through the lens of post-human ecosystems.

Traditional industries and industrial architecture will influence the outputs of interactive digital mapping in **Mesh&Echoes**, and medieval urbanism will be the canvas for luminography workshops in **Festival of Illusions**.

**Intangible heritage as a baseline for interdisciplinary experimentation** **Seekers Formation** will deliver Trenčín's legends and myths through new formats such as slam poetry, sci-fi, comics, animation, and a subjective city atlas, and in **Public Escapades** Trenčín's history will inspire architectural pavilions in public space.

In **Meditations for the Future**, ancient philosophy meets experimental thinking combined with magical realism and an artistic exploration of quantum physics.

Vojtech Zamarovský's historical literature will be reinterpreted through new performative arts in **New Circus on the Block**.

Artists will combine traditional dances with the latest performance expressions, technology, AR, and other digital tools in **TAT**.

Classical music will be fused with digital experiments and improvised sounds, and presented in lo**CAT**ions with a surprising acoustic character in **New New Music** and **Tuning of the City**.

Slovak folklore will explore its Roma, Jewish, Turkish and Middle Eastern influences by combining traditional instruments with electronic experimentations in **World Music Fusions**.

Folklore communities will invent unexpected new artistic expressions by combining dubstep, punk, graffiti and breakdance culture in **Floating Communities**.

The **Creative Wellness** will use traditional musical instruments (such as the Slovak fujara) in alternative new ways to create an immersive meditative environment.

The **Biennale of Contemporary Jewish art** will present Jewish culture and Yiddish language in contemporary multimedia forms, bringing innovative content to the city's historic synagogue.

**Degustories** will recontextualize European and local traditional cuisine by experimenting with technology and design with **Martí Guixé**, who will bring his progressive Solar Kitchen concept to Trenčín. **Rural Fermentations** will rediscover traditional rural agricultural processes with science-based artistic approaches.

**Traditional crafts that support sustainable innovative design** **Laboratory of Sustainable Fashion** builds on the city's textile and fashion heritage, creating a new narrative guided by sustainability and innovation.

**Merino Monument** rediscovers the traditional regional material of wool in an international context through the lens of natural and synthetic material development and industrialization.

**Rewiring the World** contrasts traditional nomadic wire crafts with contemporary wire factories through contemporary art.

**Matter of Glass** introduces new curiosity-driven, artistic and technological research to the region's glass production heritage.

How has the city involved local artists and cultural organisations in the conception and implementation of the cultural programme?

# 09

Building on the city's **Trenčín si TY** urban strategy (which included mass-participation surveys, brainstorming, and workshops) developed for the 2013 bid, initial meetings for ECoC 2026 were attended by a wide range of local cultural actors and organizations. The outcome was a temporary team/local creative task force that includes Trenčín's cultural managers, festival organizers, artists, creative entrepreneurs, architects, production managers, and musicians.

After we proceeded to the final selection and still during lockdown, we organised online project presentations for the regional independent cultural scene, local and regional cultural institutions, and key future partners from the national independent scene and national cultural organizations. These meetings covered the ECoC format, the jury's pre-selection bid feedback, and sought opportunities for immediate and future participation as well as programme co-creation. Partnerships were initiated and questions answered during these fruitful meetings where we met 70 people from 55 institutions. In March, a two-day workshop was held for the local Cultural & Information Centre (first point of contact with visitors) to ensure further collaboration, and to align the Trenčín 2026 team's strategies and activities with ECoC project goals.

These meetings were followed by nine thematic summits between February and August 2021 that were well-regarded on the local and national cultural scene. The summits covered: **Digital Culture and Innovation, Architecture and New European Bauhaus, Visual Art and Public Space, Literature, Audio&Visual Art, Music & Interdisciplinary Performance, Regional Creative Industries, Creative Entrepreneurship, and Green Environmental Solutions**.

Summits included local scene representation, national leaders of cultural and other fields, and in five of nine cases also international guests. Every summit comprised 8-12 guests and the Trenčín 2026 team. Summits were instrumental in identifying and confirming the programme's key issues and directions, and were a great opportunity to connect local and national experts and benefit from international perspectives. These meetings outlined projects and new proposals from the local scene, main programme objectives, opportunities for partnerships, and ensured reflection and contribution to resolving art and culture issues.





The second bidding phase included over **1,300 hours in meetings and calls with local and regional actors**, determining the forms of future collaboration, conceptualizing projects, and ensuring local cultural scene. These meetings have resulted in over **45 letters of intent** from the local and regional cultural scene with confirmed project leaderships and co-production and many further connections and partnerships.

Please give some concrete examples and name some local artists and cultural organisations with which cooperation is envisaged and specify the type of exchanges in question.

# 10

Local and regional cultural groups are fully committed to participating in and implementing the Trenčín 2026 programme. They will cooperate with international partners and artists in bringing new ideas to the region, and showcasing local quality art to the world. During the final selection bidding phase, our **eight successful pilots** of programme projects engaged **47 cultural actors** and the public.

29 local artists and organizations co-produced **Saturday on Sunday**, the biggest participation project ever in Trenčín with over 40 events over two months (July-September). Project leader, a Czech artist, Kateřina Šedá created a concept to compensate for the cultural, social and sport events missed last year. The project including surprising events such as a basketball match between a girl folklore ensemble in traditional folk costumes and boys from the local AS Trenčín football team, local rockers Volume and Roma group Gipsy David Band playing their favourite song twice, double performances with actors Palo Seriš, City Theatre of Trenčín and mime Vlado Kulíšek, a double screening at local cinema Square festival by Artkino Metro, etc. This project serves as pilot for her project in **Every Part Counts**.

Local bands Fraktúra, Cherry Street and Fyasko were part of a pilot event for **Garage** (September) at the local skatepark. Trenčín 2026 and Pohoda Festival collaborated on production, and local skateboard community representative Milan Hanuliak and bike enthusiasts

Divo curated the programme and activities for young subcultures and the wider public audience.

Public art and architecture group Hlava 5 and the Trenčín 2026 team organised a conference on Art in Public space (June) with 15 local and international speakers from Latvia, Croatia, Great Britain, and Portugal as a pilot for **City Reimagined**. The event was co-produced with Kaunas Biennial (LT). The group also exhibited a sculpture from the former Merina textile factory at the European Cultural Center, a parallel event to the 17th Architecture Biennale in Venice.

Local choreographers Marta Blašková and Lucia Melcerová collaborated with Trenčín 2026 on the TELESO contemporary dance event this summer. During a one-week workshop, 10 young dancers prepared a performance about architectural heritage, material properties, and stories of public space as a pilot for the **TAT** project.

Trenčín-born young performer Pavol Seriš performed his hilarious stand-up comedy-based play at seven train stations around the region (October), proving that great theatre can be presented in the most unusual venues, as a successful pilot for **New Circus on the Block**.

Local young creative entrepreneurs from Pucle, Hlava 5 and Bezobalis were part of an online festival (June) with motivational workshops featuring students from local and regional secondary schools led by the LEAF Academy and Trenčín 2026 as a pilot for **New Generation of Creative Leaders** project.

Trenčín 2026 and studio Subdigital organised a kick-off project of **Cool Interventions**, 'Digital Modularity' (August) led by Tomáš Tholt and other experts on digital architecture, parametric design, and prototyping. This regional workshop took place in Partizánske and Zlín, sharing a history of industry, technology, and functionalism that lead to architectural solutions for climatic challenges in public spaces.

Trenčín 2026 and local independent gallery Nová Vlna connected with Skopje 2028 to kick-off artistic mobility and send local artist Matej Červeňan for Art Colony Skopje 2028 residency (September). The 10-day visit was a unique experience for a young painter and an example of **AiR exchange programmes**.

## 26 examples of Planned Cooperation with Local Artists and Organisations:

| Project                                 | Description of collaboration   |
|---|--|
| Opening Ceremony                        | Local folk group Textilanka will prepare an atypical performance with international orchestra Rebel Babel Ensemble combining hip-hop and folk.   |
| City Reimagined                         | Hlava 5 is the main local partner and co-producer for research and mapping activities for workshops and debates, and the main coordinator of public space interventions. Department of Architecture and Urban Planning Trenčín is the main consultant of legislative processes in the implementation of visual smog regulations.                 |
| GMAB Centre for Architecture            | Local modern architecture researcher Lucia Mlynčeková and the curator of Gallery of M.A. Bazovský, Radka Nedomová, will work on the revitalisation process, partnerships, and exhibitions plan.  |
| Counter Effect                          | Pohoda Festival will collaborate with research and provide dramaturgy for the musical part. Filmmaker Simon Seriš will participate in the documentary.   |
| Underneath the Arches                   | The main venue and co-producer will be the Museum of Trenčín.  |
| Rooted in Trenčín                       | The Gallery of M.A. Bazovský will be the main producer, venue and partner. The co-producer will be Nová Vlna.  |
| The Biennale of Contemporary Jewish Art | Conducted in collaboration with the Jewish Community, taking place in the reconstructed interior of Trenčín's synagogue, and the Gallery of M.A. Bazovský.   |
| Seekers Formation                       | Local and regional libraries will be the main producer of capacity building, education and collective artistic outputs.  |
| Green Line                              | Magdaléna Švorcová, project manager of the Horná Nitra mining region's revitalisation, is a consultant. Richard Medál, leader of CEA (Centre of Environmental Activities), supervises the project from an early stage. Priatelía Zeme and Zelená hliadka are involved activist local groups with Hala, a performance and contemporary art group. |
| Splanekor 2.0                           | Priestor festival crew and DIVO will be responsible for production.  |
| Within the Sound                        | Ornithologist and eco-activist Radovan Jambor will be a main consultant and specialist for music projects in protected natural areas of Váh riverbanks.  |
| Trenčín-All-Theatre                     | Local folk ensembles and active dance groups will be part of capacity building and performance groups. Sám na javisku will partner theatre and dance performances.   |
| New Circus On the Block                 | Local mime and theatre performer Vlado Kulíšek will co-produce open-air performances.  |
| Public Escapades                        | Fabrika Umenia is a regional partner and production lead in the public arts and installations.   |
| World Music Fusions                     | Regional folk groups, festivals and active individuals such as Jureš Líška, MFF Myjava, Trenčianske folklórne slávnosti and Dubnický folklórny festival will participate in the new fusions of traditional and experimental music.   |
| Festival of Illusions                   | Digital artists Štefan Oliš & Lukáš Matejka (TRAKT) are project leads, coordinators of workshops, and directors of dramaturgy.   |
| Laboratory of Sustainable Fashion       | High School of Applied Arts, Trenčín University and creative individuals such as fashion designer Veronika Kostková will participate in capacity building and collective artistic outputs.   |
| Merino Monument                         | The author and producer is Rado Ištók, an independent curator from Trenčín and the co-producer is Nová Vlna. The High School of Applied Arts will participate in research, local activist group Premeny Meriny will provide extensive information and artistic expressions around the former wool factory.                                       |
| Garage                                  | Pohoda Festival is behind the concept, providing mentorship in dramaturgy and production. Vinyl producer Ondrej Slivka and Deadred records will provide recordings for emerging local artists. Young organisers from local festivals Gypselrock and Priestor will participate in the mentoring process.  |
| Mesh and Echoes                         | Digital artist Boris Vitázek is behind the technological creative space Mesh and mapping project with educational aspects Echoes.  |
| Every Part Counts                       | This community project will be an outcome of the collective work of Priestor festival, Trenčín na korze city market, and the Institute for Participation and Creative Institute Trenčín.   |
| Floating Communities                    | Gallery Nová Vlna will provide venue and artistic coordination as a co-producer. Local dance communities Aura and Goonies will participate in artistic expressions.  |
| Degustories                             | Bezobalis, local zero waste activists, and entrepreneurs coordinated the concept of sustainability.  |
| Fair Play                               | Antifascist local group UAFA Cup will organise football matches and independent music events.  |
| Sounds of Democracy                     | Pohoda Festival will provide event dramaturgy and production of events.  |
| Meditations for the Future              | Monokel publishers and regional libraries will co-produce the artistic content and regional travel production.   |



# European dimension

# 11

**A.** Promoting the cultural diversity of Europe, intercultural dialogue, and greater mutual understanding between European citizens

**B.** Highlighting the common aspects of European cultures, heritage and history, as well as European integration and current European themes

## Trenčín 2026's six long term goals are based on European themes:

**#NatureMatters**—Raise awareness about the importance of environmental protection and climate change goals in the EU, and especially in the Trenčín Region.

**#CityMatters**—(Re)examine what makes a sustainable, creative and ecological city for the future in Europe, and contribute to the New European Bauhaus initiative.

**#PeopleMatter**—Stimulate individual creativity and promote culture as a crucial factor to generate new European energy.

**#CultureMatters**—Develop the creative sector through cross-border cooperation with partners in the broader region to create a European region for creative industries.

**#CommunityMatters**—(Re)connect Trenčín citizens to Europe and promote inclusion in the cultural and community life.

**#EuropeMatters**—Create new links between Trenčín's residents and fellow Europeans by stimulating mutual curiosity and exploration of the future of democracy in Europe.

The ECoC is a catalyst of change through which we as a European community can respond to the pandemic-heightened crisis of fundamental European values and freedoms, citizens' well-being and solidarity, and face climate change. Artistic programme uses methods such as reviving, celebrating, and re-connecting through the **Common Ground strand** that facilitates the discovery of our fluid European identity; opening up opportunities to learn, share, and co-create new European cultural climates in Europe's cultural sector in the **PlayGround strand**; and deepening the knowledge and mastering the skills necessary for the future of European values, human rights, and democracy through civic cultural activism by using forward-thinking models in the **New Grounds strand**.

## Trenčín Connects and Highlights European Cultures

We want to connect, share, and speak out on cultural experiences locally and internationally. Across all strands of the programme, guests and partners from nearby regions and abroad will be included with the aim to foster new dialogues and intercultural communities. The Cultural Ambassadors (p. 74) will enable local

community leaders from various social, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds to develop community projects that illustrate the richness of Europe's cultural diversity on a micro scale:

→ **Biennale of Contemporary Jewish Art**—citizens rediscover and celebrate Yiddish culture and material heritage, and its influence on the present city and identity.

→ **World Music Fusions**—citizens learn about multicultural influences on our folklore culture, something typical of all European cities and communities.

→ **Destination All-Inclusive**—citizens meet and help to integrate immigrants into local communities through specially designed sessions of storytelling and cultural events.

→ **Fair Play**—citizens discover diversity in direct interaction through multicultural football matches in villages across the Trenčín Region.

→ **Degustories**—citizens connect during culinary experiences, facilitating new connections and deeper understanding of different cultures with a special focus on ethnic and national minorities, and sustainability.

**Skills improved:** ● multicultural awareness ● intercultural trust ● courage ● open-mindedness.

## Trenčín addresses European architectural heritage and New Urbanism for Europe

We want to highlight neglected and forgotten European architectural heritage, such as the modernist gem Sanatorium Machnáč (Trenčianske Teplice) and other culturally-relevant buildings in Europe. We draw attention to the modernist and brutalist architectural heritage of the Trenčín Region in the context of the broader international community. We celebrate and expose the European social and humanistic perspective, embracing a sense of community and technological progress, and the wish to initiate a Europe-wide dialogue and practice disseminating values and qualities that cross borders and unite Slovak architecture with the best European creations.

→ **Modernism Revisited**—rediscovering the value of modernist and brutalist architecture with contemporary tools.

→ **Sensitively On Brutalism**—connecting brutalist architecture in a new European cultural route and reflecting on late-modern architecture in many European countries, including House of Army ODA.

→ **City Reimagined**—collaboration of European researchers and artists on the transformation of the visuality and quality of public spaces, especially in post-socialist countries.

→ **Public Escapades**—co-creating inclusive outdoor architecture with citizens.

**Skills improved:** ● cultural heritage appreciation and reuse ● connecting through space and common past ● collaborative problem solving.

## We are Europeans!

The everyday cultural experience of Trenčín's citizens confirms their belonging to Europe and rather concealed European identity. Yet to make this self-identification process more dynamic, we will take an experimental angle towards historical sites and heroes, and discover our contemporary European character.

The management, reinterpretation, and role of cultural heritage sites in contemporary Europe is best demonstrated in **Castle Contemporary** through cooperation with Europa Nostra experts and international art co-productions—spanning from Turkish digital art masters to international participatory projects, the artistic programme will make Trenčín Castle an innovative heritage site on Europe's cultural map and attract new audiences.

→ **Cultural Route of Contemporary Castles**—mapping and connecting the most progressive European castles to share best practices in the innovative showcasing of cultural heritage and audience development.

→ **Counter Effect**—celebrating European cultural underground movements which originated in protest against the military presence in European countries.

→ **Underneath The Arches**—sharing significant discoveries about European archeology with archaeological newbies, and to celebrate UNESCO heritage.

**Skills improved:** ● identity-building ● cultural heritage ● appreciation ● reuse ● critical history knowledge.

## Trenčín—the Pride of Europe

Trenčín needs to appreciate just how much it has to offer. By 2026 we aim to have a profoundly changed perspective through projects in all programme strands to truly recognize and then also share our assets. Trenčín needs to become established on the European map by asserting its quality, dignity, and pride.

→ **Merino Monument, Rewiring the World**—re-connecting Europe's wool industry and wirecraft communities.

→ **Meditations for the Future**—celebrating the literary authors and philosophies that influence Europe's minds.

→ **Rooted In Trenčín**—rediscovering exceptional Trenčín talents who have impacted the European visual art scene.

→ **Seekers Formation**—connecting storytellers of forgotten European narratives and the search for a new identity.

**Skills improved:** ● European societal and community awareness ● sense of local pride ● capacity for mutual appreciation.



## Let's Localise Europe's Climate Solutions!

To facilitate collective understanding, and promote and implement new habits to tackle climate change and its ecological effects, Trenčín 2026 will initiate and support nature preservation activities through building awareness with cultural events that highlight the issues.

- **Green Line**—connecting European climate and biodiversity-focused artists with activist communities in highlighting climate scenarios.
- **Aqua Vitae**—collaboration of international artists with water system experts in search of solutions for the pollution of Europe's city rivers.
- **Climate Sensing**—promoting European Green Deal goals by digital artists.
- **Cool Interventions**—initiating a joint international New European Bauhaus programme in collaboration with digital architects, landscape designers, and urban/rural communities through modularly connected artistic interventions.
- **Within the Sound**—celebrating urban nature areas through European sonic artists and their connection with citizens to raise biodiversity awareness.
- **Rural Fermentations**—reinstating the rural as the home of multiplicity of European cultures and natures.

**Skills improved:** ● ecosystemic thinking ● empathy for the planet ● respect for nature.

## Science Decoded and European Well-Being Restored

The multiple crises of health, wellbeing, and critical thinking started long before the pandemic. Sociological and political statistics show increased mental illnesses, political polarisation, and radical tendencies. We approach the evident need for smart solutions by raising social and digital awareness, empathy, and capacity to share resources and knowledge.

- **Art&Science&Curiosity Festival**—bringing together European scientists in creative collaborations with artists to make science cool, respected, and approachable to wide groups of European citizens.
- **Dialogue Decoded**—building skills of European youth and seniors by the participatory development of a globally-available digital rights toolkit.
- **Bridging The Gap**—sharing and adjusting Europe's accessible technological knowledge and resources by international artists taking residencies in rural areas and connecting with village communities.
- **Matter of Glass**—co-inventing new, sustainable materials by European scientists, designers and artists.

**Skills improved:** ● digital literacy ● critical thinking ● trust in science ● raw materials for Europe.

## Cultural Climate Courage

The candidacy period highlighted the creative potential and positivity of citizens. That's why we want Trenčín to tap into this potential by becoming a platform to instill courage in communities and unleash their creative spirit, supporting cultural, educational, and civic organisations and institutions in the inclusive process of co-creation.

- **Fiesta Bridge**—interdisciplinary artistic platform for collaborations between a wide range of European cultural organisations and institutions, producing events that will attract wide European audiences.
- **Trenčín-All-Theatre**—inviting stellar world performance talent to co-create joy in an inclusive movement celebration popular across Europe. Platform for a European dialogue on the reinvention of theatre.
- **New New Music**—involving leading European classical and experimental musicians in site-specific collaborations.
- **Design Bedrock, Laboratory of Sustainable Fashion**—creating synergy of European designers in one creative economy that focuses on sustainability.
- **Garage**—building skills of youth to imagine and create their future Europe.
- **Creative Wellbeing**—connecting European spa cities through a contemporary programme of offers and joint activities to increase Europeans' wellbeing.
- **Progress Boost**—training a generation of future workers, especially women after maternity leave, by European academics and creative businesses.

**Skills improved:** ● European cultural co-creation and operations ● cultural and youth leadership ● European dialogue ● international audience development.

## United in Diversity

Trenčín 2026 aims to contribute a set of solutions for combating low political participation and a sense of disenchantment, especially of the young and peripheral, and disenfranchised communities through projects dedicated to democracy-focused methodologies and topics that open primarily toward local and regional communities, as well as international experts and European citizens.

- **Sounds of Democracy**—bringing European countries together in remembrance of democratic transformations, celebrating the freedom that democracy brings, and collaborating with European artists in imagining democratic futures with cross-generational European citizen groups.
- **Every Part Counts**—creating sustainable opportunities for European citizens to produce events and strengthen communities.
- **Generations Together**—inviting different generations of Europeans towards producing art, with outcomes and methodologies applicable in other European cities.



- **Waiting Places**—interventions of European artists that change the perception of public institutions, especially in post-socialistic countries, from bureaucratic to being supportive and citizen-friendly.
- **Floating Communities**—creating connections between traditional and alternative communities, inventing new interdisciplinary combinations.
- **New Circus On The Block**—European circus performers will involve marginalised groups in performances with citizens, particularly those in the peripheries.

**Skills improved:** ● ensuring rights for everyone ● resilience to threats ● social transformation, intergenerational peership ● transversal conviviality.

## Deep Peace: Restoring Relationships and Openness

Trenčín 2026 aims to prove that culture is the key precondition to consolidating peace. With cultural dialogue, collaboration and positive attitudes, we open up and enter new grounds towards mainstream peace—ambitiously and proudly across Europe and into the world. A new awareness about the importance of peace-making and pacifism will be fostered by numerous projects.

- **New Peace**—learning how to maintain peace through European army-related social structures and disadvantaged groups, learning to communicate without cultural or social prejudice.
- **Global Equality and Hospitality**—learning that as Europeans we are part of a very diverse ecosystem, and that the post-pandemic condition makes it necessary to forefront hospitality and care within our communities and beyond.
- **Film Festivals of Inclusivity School Edition**—building knowledge and attitudes in youth to embrace diversity.

**Skills improved:** ● community peacebuilding ● active citizenship ● equality awareness ● hospitality and care for all ● borderless collaboration.



|                                    | Challenge   | Approach  | Current Status and Lookout   |
|------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| City of Trenčín                    | Improve and expand cooperation with twin cities: Zlín, Békescaba, Annecy, Kragujevac, Tarnow      | Develop specific projects with all five twin cities   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cities confirmed their partnerships for these Trenčín 2026 programmes:</li> <li>● Zlín—Design Bedrock, Laboratory of Sustainable Fashion, Progress Boost</li> <li>● Békescaba—Degustories</li> <li>● Annecy—City Reimagined, Film Festivals of Inclusivity School Edition</li> <li>● Kragujevac—Tuning the City, City Reimagined</li> <li>● Tarnow—Biennale of Contemporary Jewish Art</li> </ul> |
|                                    | Raise European cultural cooperation across all sectors  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Join European networks:</li> <li>● Eurocities</li> <li>● EuropaNostra</li> <li>● UNeECC</li> <li>● UrbAct—On stage Brno</li> <li>● Act now—Mayors network</li> <li>● ACT Now—Youth network</li> <li>● UNESCO Design cities</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●</li> <li>● City will apply in 2022</li> <li>● City in application process</li> <li>● University will apply in 2022</li> <li>● member since 2021</li> <li>● member since 2021</li> <li>● member since 2021</li> <li>● City will apply in 2023</li> </ul>   |
|                                    | Improve international cooperation among European cities   | Organise annual European cities partnership building forum hosting 10 European cities to discuss current European topics  | The project is prepared with budgets secured, and the first cities (Annecy, Kragujevac, Tarnow) have confirmed interest in participation   |
| Cultural & creative industry scene | Raise knowledge of European languages   | Free English language courses for 50 representatives of the cultural scene and tourism sector per year  | Planned in the budget, courses identified, starting from 2022  |
|                                    | Increased number of local stakeholders and cultural operators in European networks                | Creative Institute Trenčín will partially subsidize network membership fees and mobility for a minimum 10 local cultural organizations until 2026   | <b>The mechanism started in 2021 by supporting membership in:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Culture next network</li> <li>2 ACT Now Mayors network</li> <li>3 ACT Now Youth network</li> <li>4 UrbAct—On stage Brno</li> <li>5 Europa Nostra</li> </ol>   |
|                                    | More international partnerships   | Culture Shuttle—study visits of cultural operators from the city to three European cities per year to learn from their experience and develop partnerships  | Planned in ECoC budget, starting from 2022   |
|                                    | Raise European mobility of cultural workers from Trenčín  | Annual mobility grants for 50 European cultural professionals in the city   | Planned in ECoC budget, starting in 2023   |
|                                    | More EU-funded cultural projects in the city  | European fundraising capacity building project and professional support for 50 representatives of the cultural scene performed by 2026 by leading European project experts  | Planned within the framework of capacity building projects   |
|                                    | Reconnect textile and wirecraft industry  | Programme for creating new models for cross-sectoral cooperation between culture and industry, leading to establishment of modern creative industries concept in the city and Europe  | In the ECoC programme plan, and budget starting from 2023  |
|                                    | Stimulate creative industry and innovation partnerships across Slovak-Czech border and beyond     | Programme of cross-border cooperation between creative industry organizations from Trenčín and Zlín in order to build capacities and long term partnerships   | Planned within the framework of capacity building projects   |
| Trenčín 2026                       | Build capacities and partnerships to successfully implement Trenčín 2026 project                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Intensive training, capacity building and strategic partnership with networks</li> <li>● IGCAT network</li> <li>● CultureAction Europe</li> <li>● On the move</li> <li>● In Situ</li> <li>● TransEuropean Halles</li> <li>● Culture next</li> <li>● Identifying and contracting event agencies which will support large scale productions</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●</li> <li>●</li> <li>● Partner for Degustories</li> <li>● In contact, will join in 2022</li> <li>● In contact, will join in 2022</li> <li>● In contact, will join in 2022</li> <li>● LOI signed, will join in 2022</li> <li>● member</li> </ul>  |
|                                    | Increase number of international meetings (conferences, formal and informal debates)              | Trenčín 2026 international projects will include partnership building events for the local scene to connect to European counterparts.   | Planned in the budget and programme plans of Trenčín 2026  |
|                                    | Increase number of international cultural events in the city                                      | Engaging over 500 international artists, curators and producers and organizing over 90 new innovative and European cultural projects until the end of 2026  | Planned as part of the programme and secured in the budget of Trenčín 2026   |
|                                    | Increase mobility of local artists and improve presence of contemporary European arts in the city | TrenAIR (artist in residence programme) with over 180 incoming/outgoing residents hosted in the city from 2023 til the end of 2026  | Planned as part of the programme and secured in the budget of Trenčín 2023—December 2026   |

C. Featuring European artists, cooperation with operators and cities in different countries, and transnational partnerships

# 11

## Needs-based reconnections

Trenčín will gradually become, and in 2026 take the central position in the broader region, as a meeting place and forum where European and other international artists, cultural, and creative workers come together, devise, and boost creative exchanges for the future. In cooperation with local actors, the Trenčín 2026 team has developed a comprehensive strategy to encourage international cultural cooperation based on the creative sector's identified and mapped needs. It consists of projects and measures aimed at increasing cooperation led by cultural operators in the city, its administration, and the Creative Institute Trenčín—with the latter playing a leading role.

## Community-driven residencies for deep artistic networks

TrenAIR will become the first formally organised Artist in Residence Programme in Trenčín, and will enable more than 130 European artists to visit Trenčín for residency programmes in the 2023-2026 period. Organised in cooperation with cultural actors, we aim to create long-lasting networks and cooperation between locals and artists across Europe. In 2022, CIT will launch the Artists In Residence Hosts Wanted Campaign to support connections between international and local artists and creative actors. TrenAIR is developed in cooperation with the Košice 2013 legacy organization KAIR as a main partner. With regard to the legacy, the city will provide two new AiR apartments with ateliers in the new Cultural Center Dlhé Hony, to be completed for 2026. The CIT-led AiR programme will continue after 2026.

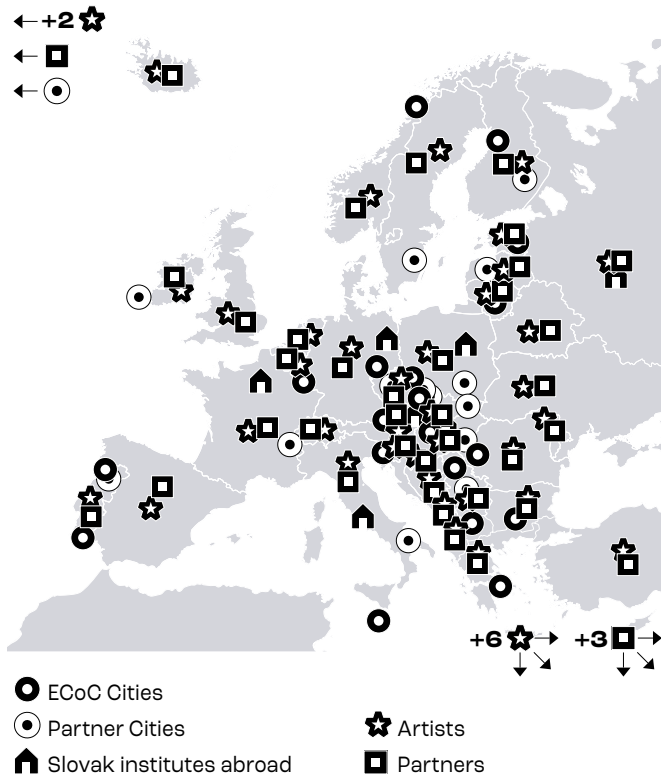
| Project name                                     | Artists |
|--|---------|
| Visegrad residencies (Architecture)              | 32      |
| Design Bedrock (Design)                          | 6       |
| Underneath the Arches (Performance)              | 3       |
| Green Line (Visual)                              | 10      |
| Merino Monument (Visual)                         | 3       |
| Floating Communities (Visual)                    | 3       |
| Aqua Vitae (Multimedia)                          | 7       |
| Waiting Places (Visual)                          | 4       |
| Cooks in Residence—Degustories (Gastronomy)      | 5       |
| Rural Fermentation (Gastronomy and visual arts)  | 8       |
| Trenčín Literature Fair (Literature)             | 3       |
| Trenčín-All-Theatre (Performance)                | 12      |
| Laboratory of Sustainable Fashion (Fashion)      | 3       |
| Bridging the Gap (Arts and science)              | 3       |
| Fiesta Bridge (Visual)                           | 5       |
| Every Part Counts—AltoGaste (Theatre)            | 5       |
| Art&Science&Curiosity Festival (Art and science) | 6       |
| Echoes&Mesh (Audiovisual)                        | 6       |
| Climate Sensing (Art and science)                | 3       |
| Contemporary Castle (Curators)                   | 6       |
| Incoming residencies in total                    | 133     |
| Outgoing residencies from Trenčín to Europe      | 50      |





D. Name some European and international artists, operators and cities with which cooperation is envisaged and specify the type of exchanges in question. Name the transnational partnerships your city has already established or plans to establish

# 11



Our initiative to increase European partnerships has already resulted in:

**320 partnerships** with Letter of Intent signed with cultural operators and cities across Europe, and 200 additional partnerships in progress. Over **230 European and world artists** and artistic ensembles have confirmed participation at Trenčín 2026 projects. Involving artists, operators, partners and cities from all **27 EU member states**, 10 other European countries and 10 world countries, resulting in representation of **50 countries**. Concrete projects prepared with **17** past, present and future **ECoC** and consultation support from **5** more. **100%** of projects to be implemented in cooperation with **international partners**.

| Project                           | Artist   | Partner   |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Global Equality and Hospitality   | Hito Steyerl (DE)  | <rotor> Gallery, Graz (AT)                              |
| Global Equality and Hospitality   | Sanja Iveković (CR)  | Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (CR)              |
| Degustories                       | Cooking Sections (GB)  | Food List (NO), Békéscaba (HU)                          |
| New Peace                         | Krzysztof Wodiczko (PL)  | In Place of War (UK)                                    |
| Aqua Vitae                        | Stano Filko (SK)   | KAIR (SK)   |
| Aqua Vitae                        | Zuzana Husárová (SK)   | Urbanas Studio (EU)                                     |
| Castle Contemporary               | Krišton Kintera (CZ)   | Ljubljana Castle (SI)                                   |
| Castle Contemporary               | Ekmel Ertan (TU)   | Ujazdowski Castle (PL)                                  |
| Trenčín-All-Theatre               | Jozef Fruček (SK/GR)   | L-DH DANCEHOUSE LEFKOSIA (CY)                           |
| Trenčín-All-Theatre               | Florentina Holzinger (AT)  | Iagostudio / Italian Perf.Platform Forlí (IT)           |
| Opening Ceremony                  | Kronos Quartet (US)  | Yourope (EU)  |
| Rewiring the World                | Anca Benera a Arnold Estefan (RO/AT)   | Mad'in Europe (BE)                                      |
| Dialogue Decoded Lab              | Francesca Bria (IT)  | The NECE—Networking European Citizenship Education (EU) |
| Art&Science&Curiosity Festival    | Marlene Huissoud (FR)  | Ars Electronica (AT)                                    |
| Green Line                        | Oliver Ressler (AT)  | Translocal Institute for Contemporary Art (GB)          |
| Green Line                        | Assemble Studio (GB)   | MAP—Make Art with Purpose (US)                          |
| Rooted in Trenčín                 | Ladislav Mednyánszky (HU)  | Tartu Art Museum (EE), AiR 351 (PT)                     |
| Every Part Counts                 | Kateřina Šedá (CZ)   | Eutropian (EU)  |
| Sounds of Democracy               | Zohra (AF)   | ATLAS WEEKEND (UA)                                      |
| Sounds of Democracy               | The Plastic People of the Universe (CZ): Leading horses symphonic version of album The Plastic People of the Universe by Brno Philharmonic | Globsec (INT)   |
| Laboratory of Sustainable Fashion | Juraj Straka (SK/BE)   | ASVOFF—film festival (FR)                               |
| New Circus on the Block           | Ilona Jäntti (FI)  | Galway Community Circus (IE)                            |
| Waiting Places                    | Superflux (GB/IN)  | Chiquita Room Barcelona (ES)                            |

Can you explain in detail your strategy to attract the interest of a broad European and international public?

# 12

Europeans, their needs and cultural understanding, represent the epicentre of our strategic approach. We invite all Europeans to visit Trenčín, to celebrate and enjoy the artistic and cultural diversity with friends, family and new acquaintances. Estimated total impact of cultural and artistic content, participative activities, and volunteering programmes aim to reach out to more than 300,000 unique new visitors and curious citizens.

We will develop hybrid programme format tools to stay connected (see Hybrid Production Lab p. 97). Programmes with interactive websites **The Opening Ceremony** and **City Reimagined**, subjective maps by citizens **Seekers Formation**, live streamed shows and talks **TAT**, and **Dialogue Decoded Lab**, supported by far-reaching multi-platform social media campaigns to reach a wide and diverse audience. These tools for telling stories, sharing experiences, and collaborating across the world will be crucial for all major projects. Together with the Trenčín Region Tourist Office, we planned a clear strategy, fully aligned with our Trenčín 2026 goals, to build a new European creative tourism hub, which will be incorporated into the new **Tourism Conception 2024–2028**:

### Unmissable Names, Sites and Events

Stimulating visibility in international media will encourage European visitors to discover Trenčín and keep them informed and attracted by our city's cutting-edge projects. We have commissioned some of the most recognizable international artists, such as: Krzysztof Wodiczko, Hito Steyerl, and Kronos Quartet to put Trenčín 2026 onto European maps of artistic excellency. We aim to offer quality cultural and gastronomic tourism options through culture and arts but also fun, unique experiences and the ability to learn, observe and discover in the whole region. These projects are both niche in their target group and topic, and interesting to a broader audience due to their timeless appeal: the production of vinyl records **Garage**, new sustainable materials with worldwide research **Matters of Glass**, and new genres of circus and music **New Circus on the Block**, and **New New Music**.

Other projects will attract Europeans with solutions for our collective challenges, cultural and natural heritage preservation and presentation. Europe will hear about the transformation of Trenčín Castle **Castle Contemporary** and the synagogue **Biennale of Contemporary Jewish Art**, reactions to environmental issues through public installations in the city and wider region **Green Line** and **Cool Interventions**. Visitors will feel like home thanks to projects presenting our traditional differences and similarities in **Degustories**, **World Music Fusions**, and **Destination All Inclusive**. Visitors of Trenčín will have many reasons to stay longer to explore the regional spas, bike routes and natural surroundings.

### Engaging citizens as project communicators and promoters

Trenčín 2026 will launch a communication campaign in all European countries in 2024 through Slovak embassies, institutes, and European institutes (see details in the communication strategy, p.92). We connected with Slovak immigrants in other European countries, asking them to become promoters of Trenčín 2026 at public and diplomatic events. Slovak embassies and consulates across Europe are already accepting our invitations to become specific information centres where citizens can learn about Trenčín 2026 projects, and provide assistance in connecting with CIT. Information as well as visuals (flags and logos) will be provided by CIT on a regular basis through the Ministry of Transport and Construction.

### Trenčín 2026 Exposure and Networking

In order to secure international visibility, global media coverage, and EU citizens' interest, CIT together with the Trenčín Tourist office and the Ministry of Transport and Construction will participate throughout the following five years in the:

- Largest international tourist fairs and conferences such as: ITB Berlin, TTI London, Rendez-Vous en France Travel Paris, ICFTD Rome, B Travel Trade Show Barcelona, IAAPA Expo London, etc. (to firmly establish Trenčín on tourist maps).
- European and international cultural fairs and conferences: Biennale of Art in Venice, Creative World Conference in Frankfurt, book fairs in Leipzig, Helsinki, Frankfurt and Bologna, and EXPO (to position Trenčín and its cultural professionals in international cultural circles).
- On cultural routes such as TRANSROMANICA—The Romanesque Routes of European Heritage and European Route of Jewish Heritage of the Council of Europe. We will initiate the Cultural Route of Brutalist architecture and Contemporary Castles.

From 2023 to 2027 Trenčín will use its potential as a European centre for debate in culture and arts, which attracts experts and audiences from across Europe to discuss key culture and arts issues across the continent.



| Year      | Conference   | Number of European experts   |
|-----------|--|--|
| 2023-2026 | <b>ECoC Lab:</b> Merging European Capitals   | 10 representatives of most recent European capitals per year.  |
| 2026      | <b>Climate Sense</b> Hybrid Forum  | 40 artists, researchers, activists, thinkers and students from Slovakia and abroad.  |
| 2022-2026 | <b>City Reimagined:</b> New European Bauhaus—Public Space Perspectives                     | 20 experts from the fields of design, architecture, ecology, history, politics, sociology, gender equality and urban planning. |
| 2026      | <b>Modernism Revisited:</b> Forum on regional urbanism and European architectural heritage | 50 experts in urbanism and heritage protection.  |
| 2024-2026 | <b>Sensitively on Brutalism</b>  | 50 architecture scholars, experts and students in the field of architecture.   |
| 2026      | <b>TAT:</b> Manifest of Future Theaters  | 30 experts across the fields of theatre and performance art.   |
| 2026      | <b>Design Bedrock:</b> Design is Work  | 30 experts in the field of design, science, business and innovation.   |
| 2024-2026 | <b>Art&amp;Science&amp;Curiosity Festival:</b> Cultivating Curiosity TEDx                  | 20 artists, social activists and scientists per year.  |
| 2026      | <b>Global Equality and Hospitality:</b> Open Forum   | 20 artists and experts on equality, human and cultural rights.   |

Describe the links developed or to be developed between your cultural programme and the cultural programme of other cities holding the European Capital of Culture title

# 13

●The Best of ECoCs—supporting presentations of 20 former ECoC productions selected and supported with up to EUR 10,000 to be performed in Trenčín in 2026. Hence we will demonstrate the legacy and richness of the ECoC initiative. We have developed almost 30 projects with 17 ECoC cities as presented below:

With the aim to secure a successful and enduring legacy for Trenčín 2026 as well as future ECoCs, the Trenčín 2026 team will exchange practices, connect programmes, learn from past experiences, and transfer knowledge. We have already learnt a great deal when consulting our bidding process and bid book with almost 20 ECoCs. We have developed programmes to continue ECoC cooperation in 2022 and beyond 2027.

### Our ECoC Lab programme comprises complete project sets planned for 2022 to 2026:

●Annual ECoC workshop in Trenčín inviting all ECoCs from 2022 to 2026 for project pitching and discussions to foster more efficient cooperation and develop quality programmes together.

●Capacity building project ECoC Sessions with educational activities:

- Study visits from 2022–2024 of the Trenčín 2026 team to 15 previous, present and future ECoCs to deepen competencies in project implementation.
- Job shadowing—study visits of Trenčín team members to Novi Sad, Kaunas and Esch to gain experience about best strategies in ECoC implementation in 2022.
- Study visits of representatives of former ECoCs to Trenčín and feedback on the preparation processes.
- Strategic cooperation with Košice 2013 legacy organization and Artist in Residence project in order to successfully develop TrenAiR project.
- Trenčín 2027: Collection and analysis of data to transfer the knowledge gained during the preparation and implementation to new candidates and future ECoCs. After 2027, Trenčín will become a knowledge sharing center with an open data website for free and accessible download. The data will be collected by the evaluation team and published by the CIT.
- ECoC Library—collecting books, reports and reading materials from previous and future ECoCs and exhibiting in the newly opened ECoC library in Trenčín (both printed and digital).

| ECoC                  | Project of cooperation                                   | TN 26 project                     | Topic  |
|-----------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| Oulu 2026             | The Nook   | Chill Out Nooks                   | Safe space, design, youth                      |
|                       | Tomorrow's wardrobe                                      | Laboratory of Sustainable Fashion | Sustainable fashion and future of the industry |
|                       | SmART Hospital   | Waiting Places                    | Mental health, tolerance                       |
|                       | Peace Machine  | New Peace                         | Peace  |
|                       |  | City Reimagined                   | Visual pollution                               |
| Valletta 2019         | Valletta Design Cluster                                  | Design Bedrock                    | Design, creative industry                      |
| Novi Sad 2022         | Hope Bridge  | Fiesta Bridge                     | Bridges  |
|                       |  | Opening Ceremony                  | Slovak minority in Vojvodina, music            |
| Kaunas 2022           | Modernism for the future                                 | Modernism Revisited               | Architecture                                   |
|                       | Kaunas Design festival                                   | Design Bedrock                    | Design   |
| Esch-Sur-Alzette 2022 | H2Only   | Aqua Vitae                        | Water, sustainability                          |
| Veszprém 2023         | Street Music Festival                                    | Garage                            | Music, youth                                   |
| Timisoara 2023        | Slowing Down Festival                                    | Degustories                       | Food sustainability                            |
|                       |  | Festival of Illusions             | Light, technology                              |
| Eleusis 2023          |  |                                   | Cooperation through Culture Next network       |
| Tartu 2024            | 1984/2024 Literary Festival                              | Trenčín Literature Fair           | Literature                                     |
|                       | Psuhotek   | Sounds of Democracy               | Alternative and underground scene, revolution  |
| Salzkammergut 2024    | The Unconvention and/or European Music Club              | Garage                            | Exchange of bands                              |
|                       | Flow, Migration Distillation                             | Aqua Vitae                        | Water, sustainability                          |
| Bodø 2024             | Leave Nothing But A Footprint, Connecting Waste or K-lab | Green Line                        | Sustainability, ecology                        |
| Nova Gorica 2025      | Christmas Lights   | Festival of Illusions             | Light  |
|                       |  | Degustories                       | Food, sustainability                           |
| Faro 2027             | Rooftop festival   | Tuning the City                   | Fun in the city                                |
| Braga 2027            | Hygiea's Site  | Creative Wellbeing                | Spa culture, mental health                     |
|                       | Connecting Commutes                                      | Public Escapades                  | Music and sound in public space                |
| Broumov 2028          | In creation process                                      | Merino Monument                   | Sheep wool, sustainability                     |
|                       |  | Dialogue Decoded Lab              | Digitalisation                                 |
| Brno 2028             | In creation process                                      | City Reimagined                   | Visual pollution                               |
| Skopje 2028           | In creation process                                      | Sensitively on Brutalism          | Brutalistic architecture                       |





# Outreach

## 14

Explain in detail how the local population and your civil society have been involved in the preparation of the application and will participate in the implementation of the year.

From the beginning of the candidacy, our goal is to involve as many people as possible to create a project that is truly joint work. Citizens, communities, stakeholders, and cultural workers went beyond merely contributing to the project's idea—they have been actively involved through **3700 online and offline meetings, 42 focus groups, 21 presentations, 20 Cultural Ambassadors, 18 workshops, 17 projects with production, 10 discussions, six social media channels, and two international conferences.** Over **4,000 people** across the region have taken part in the preparatory and conceptual phase, and thousands more involved as audiences.

Throughout the candidacy we have visited schools, companies, playgrounds, festivals, and streets to ask people straightforward questions they'd never been asked before: **How do they perceive culture? What does the EU mean to them? What cultural and community activities would they like in the city?**

### New and rejuvenated European perceptions and cooperation

The bidding team has been stimulating changes in the perception of Europe, opinions about culture, and collaboration between organizations. Activities such as Saturday on Sunday saw previously passive bystanders become active creators of culture. Cultural Ambassador programme led to new collaborations that rejuvenated

the city's community life and vibrancy. Seven European campaigns have enabled people to share their views about Europe: favourite places, views about the future, and its opportunities.

### Trenčín's unique cultural participatory project—Saturday on Sunday

The pandemic proved to be significant obstacle to citizen participation: missed experiences, cancelled events, curfews. In 2021 we organised a project with Czech artist Kateřina Šedá to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the cultural life of Trenčín's citizens. This resulted in the city's largest ever participatory artistic project—positively impacting numerous city communities and stimulating people to become cultural event organisers, artists and cultural managers for the very first time. In just two months we organised 43 events with over 70 organisers, 12 Cultural Ambassadors, and 40 volunteers: soldiers, cultural organisations, restaurants, hairdressers, sports clubs, Roma communities, seniors, people without homes, children, skaters, people with disabilities, and even nuns became cultural organisers.

### Young people spearhead own cultural events

The **Garage** at the local skatepark gave 80 young people the opportunity to move from idle spectators to actively curating their own cultural events—gaining confidence and know-how. The opening event was attended by over 500 kids and young people, as well as their parents, 10 volunteers and four Cultural Ambassadors, and three local bands that happily took to the stage.



### Public spaces open eyes

At the 2020 Priestor Festival, visitors shared their visions for Trenčín in 2030. Then a year later we joined up with NGO Björn to create a site-specific version of BEEN THERE TOGETHER communication game, serving as a pilot for community-based programme **Every Part Counts.** More than 1,000 people used 3,000 communication cards to look around and notice their surroundings, reach out to others, and consider certain issues for the first time.

### Creative thinking and entrepreneurship

The TNT21 festival (pilot of **New Generations of Creative Leaders**, creative exchange of viewpoints and sharing of valuable inputs that aimed to raise awareness of the importance of culture and the creative industries among primary and secondary school pupils. The project encouraged creative thinking and entrepreneurship among these 40 young regional talents through expert-led workshops and discussions with five local young entrepreneurs.

### Culture back on track

Slovak theater actor Pavol Seriš travelled the region for two days with the bidding team and performed at seven towns' railway stations as a **Circus on the Block** pilot. The team presented the Cultivating Curiosity project, and talked to more than 250 passengers about its potential impact on them and their cities—such as connecting with Europe, involving communities, and revitalizing the city.

### Forward together

Two mechanisms will support continued citizen participation: the Institute For Participation Trenčín, and the Cultural Ambassadors programme.

### Institute for Participation Trenčín (2022–2026 and legacy)

This new municipal office admin unit will be a platform to support citizen participation from 2022. IPT will contribute to a better understanding of citizens' needs, and influence municipal policies, as well as the activities of CIT, Cultivating Curiosity Volunteering programme, Cultural Ambassadors, and initiatives of city representatives and partner institutions.

### Goals of Institute for Participation Trenčín:

- Identify and map the needs of local people; collect, analyze and evaluate related data and use them in cooperation with Culture Living Lab Trenčín, CIT and City Hall.
- Increase the level of involvement of stakeholders, organizations and communities and increase opportunities for their participation to open up culture and democratize the city's creation process.
- Strengthen the dissemination of information on active citizenship, culture, the EU, inclusion, participation, and environment among citizens.
- Implement Participatory budgeting in elementary schools and in the city for cultural projects.

To ensure the correct setting of participatory processes in 2022, a complete diagnosis of projects, data, and tools will be taken at Trenčín City Hall in cooperation with Participation Factory and include all the city's departments and units. A training programme will subsequently be created for City Hall and CIT employees with Academia Istropolitana Nova to strengthen participatory tool knowledge and ECoC management.





IPT will cooperate with CIT (Programme Department) in facilitation meetings with citizens and organizations, in the creation of outputs, focus groups and research, e.g. architectural heritage in **City Reimagined** and natural heritage in **Aqua Vitae**. In **Waiting Places**, IPT will cooperate in creating the Institution Incubator, where public employees and artists can share examples of occupational good practices.

**Cultural Ambassadors programme** (2021-2026 and legacy), run by the Institute for Participation Trenčín.

Cultural Ambassadors are active citizens of diverse community groups who support culture and community life, as such they increase project visibility and respond to communities' needs and cultural potential.

**Goals of the Cultural Ambassadors programme:**

- Engage members of Trenčín's diverse groups and communities and meet their needs.
- Mediate contacts and build relations between the project team and communities.
- Build local capacity for cultural production and community development.
- Grow relations: local, national and international connectivity.
- Cultivate active citizenship and creation of local initiatives and campaigns.
- Implement Cultivating Curiosity projects with local community groups.

The two supporting tools—capacity building (City Playground Academy) and the community grant programme—will empower Ambassadors to initiate new events and organise joint activities.

After completing the capacity building programme, Cultural Ambassadors (working jointly with project leaders) can become co-creators of programmes or accompanying events of the Cultivating Curiosity programmes. In **Every Part Counts**, Cultural Ambassadors will be associated with international artists, providing the tools to become active co-creators of their local culture, and proudly presenting where they live using collaborative research, planning, and idea implementation. In **Public Escapades**, Cultural Ambassadors connect communities with artists and architects. Together, they will create urban interventions based on urban legends, and needs they collect from citizens.

With the Decision 21 organisation, they will produce a **Community Guideline** (related to Green Cultural Production Guidelines) for Cultural Ambassadors and citizens to ensure they are well managed and understand the cultural, community, environmental, and inclusive aspects of organizing activities. **The Community Grant programme** will provide support to Cultural Ambassadors in creating their own cultural events.

**Partners of IPT and Cultural Ambassadors:** The Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of the Civil Society, PDCS, Metropolitan Institute Bratislava, Europe Direct, Wellgiving, Dialogue Centre, Academia Istropolitana Nova, Punkt, Virtual Square (INT), Participation Factory (CZ), Berman Group (CZ), Eutroplan (HU), CIVINET (CZ), Placemaking Europe (EU), Decision 21 (CZ), Globsec (INT)

**"Thanks to the Cultural Ambassador programme, we have joined forces and created a volunteer project that connects students with children from excluded communities in spending their free time together. We also participated in the project Saturday on Sunday and the TNT21 festival. It was nice to watch the communities come together to achieve a common goal—the title of European Capital of Culture."**

Terézia Dominika Lukáčová—founder of I AMbitious and Cultural Ambassador & Patrik Čech—Community social worker and Cultural Ambassador

**Everyone can contribute**

In the Cultivating Curiosity programme, everyone can become a creator, co-creator, participant, Cultural Ambassador or volunteer. For example, the **Tuning the City** is based on work with local citizens who will comprise most of the involved actors. The main target group will be the general public guided by Cultural Ambassadors, volunteers, schools, folk ensembles, and civic platforms. In **Degustories** meetings of various cultures and minorities through traditional food and drinks is planned, as well as an exploration of contemporary gastronomic trends. In **New Peace** the urgent challenge is to lead a constructive dialogue with mutual understanding within our own communities, leading to communicative consensus despite scope for differences of opinion.

How will the title create in your city new and sustainable opportunities for a wide range of citizens to attend or participate in cultural activities, in particular young people, volunteers and the marginalised and disadvantaged, including minorities? Please also elaborate on the accessibility of these activities to persons with disabilities and the elderly. Specify the relevant parts of the programme planned for these various groups.

**15**

The bidding team has engaged groups that were hard to reach—especially seniors, children and youth, people with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. These groups have led the way in becoming our Cultural Ambassadors, volunteers, members of the Trenčín 2026 team, collaborators, as well as consultants of our Bid Book which has been created in an Easy-To-Read version to ensure that Trenčín 2026 project is universally understandable.

**"I work in an educational center and as a Cultural Ambassador, I engaged children with disabilities and their parents, with whom we identified barriers in culture and helped to create a Cultivating Accessibility Plan based on their needs."**

Diana Gerbočová—founder of educational center Krtko and his friends (NGO) and Cultural Ambassador

**Cultivating Accessibility Plan**

Accessibility of cultural and community life is presented by the Cultivating Accessibility plan—as part of the Audience Development Strategy—that removes physical barriers as well as barriers of cultural content, communication, and information. The plan is implemented through CIT (Outreach Manager) and the programme, while region-wide cultural and community organizations, institutions and services can participate through an open call.

**● Access Audit and Access Plan (2023-2026 and legacy)**

The Access Audit is an assessment and analysis of the status of more than 50 organizations/institutions in terms of communication, physical accessibility, satisfying the needs of current and potential audiences, offered content, and cooperation. The Access Plan is a set of operational projects and activities based on findings, analyses and proposed solutions from the Access Audit that the organization/institution should implement to improve functioning and enhance work with the audience. Legacy will be provided with publication on examples of good practices and instructions on how to create Audience development strategy.

**● Exchange and mentoring programme as facilitators of learning and cooperation (2023-2026)**

Exchange programme: one week study visits by representatives of 50 cultural organizations and institutions in Bodø to learn accessibility best practices.

Mentoring program: engaging experts to mentor organizations involved in the Cultivating Accessibility Plan, and assisting with the implementation of Access Plans.

**● Accessibility Coordinators programme (2023-2026 and legacy)**

Accessibility Coordinators to support Trenčín 2026 activities will be recruited, as well as city and regional organisations and institutions. Their task will be to advocate for inclusive solutions and to train and support the cultural sector, programme leaders, Cultural Ambassadors, and City Hall employees in delivering solutions.

Coordinators will participate in an intensive training programme to gain expertise in all tools related to universal design and rules: from understanding disability, self-advocating, inclusive and accessible language, and communication tools, design and production of accessible events, and familiarity with accessible architecture.

**● Accessibility Checklist and Tools Library (2023–2026 and legacy)**

Directives for project-wide accessibility—a set of requirements that programme leaders, artists, and partners will be asked to follow. To provide organisers with implementation tools, CIT will set up an accessibility library where prerequisite items can be borrowed (such as ramps, info signs, tools for audio description, etc.).

**Partners of Cultivating Accessibility Plan:** Cultivating Curiosity Volunteering programme, IPT, Milan Šimečka Foundation, Silnejší Slabším, Theatre without housing, Impact Foundation (PL), Bodø 2024 (NO), Bodø's library Stormen (NO), MultiKulti (BG)

**Everyone welcome**

A main goal is to ensure that regardless of age, education, mental/physical ability, cultural background, etc. everyone is welcome to all events and happenings. And the bidding team has also developed projects that focus on certain needs-based audience groups:

The **New Circus on the Block** addresses the need for inclusion and involvement of marginalized groups such as seniors, people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, social care homes, shelter for people without homes and social workers. Together with artists, they will create needs-based cultural content through street theatre, contemporary circus, and site-specific performances.

The **World Music Fusions** and **On Stage** projects are united by the aim to break down social barriers through music. Senior folklore groups, underground bands, ethnic minorities and many others will unite in World Music Fusions, where talented local musicians from various backgrounds will play alongside world artists. The On Stage project brings an inclusive environment to schools through music lessons—led by talented foreigners, seniors and volunteers—and community performances.

In **Generations Together**: empathy, solidarity, and common knowledge will be cultivated in collaboration with seniors, youth, local residents, artists, journalists, influencers, and experts. The art of performance, storytelling, gamification methods, and experiential approaches will offer a diverse age group the opportunity to view the space and people around them anew.

Young people have already become part of the **Garage** pilot project, which will continue and through which they will acquire new competencies in organizing cultural events. Young people will also acquire new competencies through the **Splanekor 2.0**, which will give them construction skills, recycling knowledge, and the opportunity to build a competitive boat.

Multicultural project **Destination All-Inclusive** engages ethnic minority groups to act as exhibition guides, engaging audiences in the stories of Trenčín's multicultural residents in guided walks full of vibrant interdisciplinary and culinary experiences. In the **Biennale of Contemporary Jewish Art**, the local Jewish community presents its traditions, cultural heritage, personal stories, and together with residents, explores how has Jewish culture influenced the city.

Body positivity and inclusion will be emphasized in **Trenčín-All-Theatre** through dance and capacity—building elements, engaging local art schools and folklore groups, children, students, and teachers, encouraging them to gain new experiences and skills. The project will connect communities without words through culture. People will learn the basics of sign language, reading Braille, and learning a foreign language through literature at the **Trenčín Literature Fair**, and a different community will present their favourite reading at a monthly book club.

**Cultivating Curiosity Volunteering programme (2021–2026 and legacy, run by Creative Institute Trenčín)**

In 2021, the Trenčín 2026 team launched the Volunteering programme that has attracted over 50 volunteers. Our goal is to involve at least **500 volunteers** (called “cultivators”) including a wide range of social groups, ages, educational level, and social status. The volunteering team will give support to volunteers with various barriers (physical, language). New volunteers will work first with an experienced person to gain skills and confidence, while experienced volunteers will become volunteering managers leading smaller groups during



events. With Novi Sad, CIT (Programme Department) will create a Volunteer Card providing volunteers with cultural benefits.

Examples of volunteer activities in the project: short-term volunteering at events, long-term volunteer positions in programmes, volunteering in organizations that create their Audience Development strategy, European volunteers from the European Voluntary Service, expert volunteering, housing volunteering, Curious Buddy.

Volunteers will acquire communication and organizational skills in **Tuning the City**, where they will help create a unique musical city experience by involving a wide range of participants such as soldiers, parents, children, seniors and firefighters.

**Cultivating Curiosity Volunteering programme partners:** Platform of volunteer centres and organizations, Trenčín Volunteer Centre, Regional Youth Centre, Novi Sad (RS), Galway (IE)

Explain in detail your strategy for audience development, and in particular the link with education and the participation of schools.

# 16

During the candidacy audience development principles were present in our pilot projects and capacity building processes. The Impact Foundation (PL) organised four audience development trainings for the regional cultural organizations and Trenčín 2026 team. Based on these trainings, cultural organizations and institutions began creating activities for new audiences. For example, Trenčín Municipal Theatre has increased its audience reach to include parents with children with disabilities.

Cultural Ambassadors sought to engage communities that had been passive during the Cultivating Curiosity project. For example, Saturday on Sunday enabled culture to reach new spaces and events for the very first time—such as churches, running competitions, hockey matches, weddings, rehabilitation centers, hairdressers, and swimming courses—and thereby attract cultural newbies.

## Going from strength to strength

The candidacy highlighted good practices that we will keep up and thereby build our audience development strategy, which includes:

- Transforming the audience into Cultural Ambassadors, Volunteers, creators, co-creators and cultural participants who involve audiences from various communities.
- Supporting cultural workers through capacity building programmes such as **Curiosity Engineers Bootcamp** (p. 22) where 200 cultural workers will improve their cultural management and audience development skills, and establish local, national and international cooperations.
- Bringing culture closer to people, such as **Within the Sound** held in nature and forests, and where through accessibility, playfulness, and surprises, sounds will reach audiences where they least expect an artistic experience.
- **Chill Out Nooks** will create site-specific spaces at schools by engaging pupils and teachers.
- **Fair Play** will connect sports fans with culture.
- Engaging broader audiences through online streams and activities and **Hybrid Production Lab** (p. 97).

- Helping cultural organizations and institutions to create their Audience development strategies (based on the Cultivating Accessibility Plan).
- Connecting visitors with volunteers in the **Curious Buddy** programme, where volunteers help visitors reach cultural institutions and events, and to overcome physical-, language-, and cultural barriers. Eager volunteers will go through capacity building, and be included in an online database of curious buddies who will be available to those who request assistance.
- Mapping, data collection, and research on various topics for audience development, e.g. in cooperation with IPT on specific projects.
- **Destination All-Inclusive** will bring research to better understand interethnic and social relations. The Milan Šimečka Foundation will use several research methods with the cooperation of the Cultivating Accessibility plan. The outcome will be a research report about minorities and social inclusion in the City of Trenčín. The project will include training and supervision on intercultural and inclusive communication, and support several minority individuals as active members of the local community and create a networking platform.

## New cultural education

The candidacy involved every kindergarten and primary school in the city, and all secondary schools and universities in the region. Every school has a School Ambassador (usually a teacher or a school psychologist) who communicate with Trenčín 2026 team to discuss their progress and needs. Primary and secondary schools' and universities' students have been involved in creating the Cultivating Curiosity project from the outset.

In 2022, a Trenčín 2026 School Board will be established where representatives of schools, School Ambassadors, and youth from student councils will regularly meet with the CIT (Program Department), IPT, cultural workers, project leaders, and Volunteer Coordinator (CIT). Together they will plan specific Cultivating Curiosity programme activities at schools and in the community. For example:



| Target Group                          | Programmes  | Impact  |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Kindergarten and primary schools      | On Stage (2021-2023)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Two-year URBACT ON STAGE BRNO project—students' social inclusion through music.</li> <li>● Through international know-how transfer, an inclusive environment is created in schools and involves pupils in joint community activities through music, dance, and song.</li> </ul>  |
| Kindergarten and primary schools      | Fiesta Bridge   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Children with artists will curate accompanying programmes on the bridge.</li> </ul>  |
| Primary schools                       | Participatory Budgeting (2022-2026)                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pupils will learn the basics of participatory budgeting through a board game.</li> <li>● IPT will guide pupils through project management to create their own culture-related project at school.</li> <li>● The whole school will vote for projects, and the best projects will be supported from the participatory budget.</li> </ul>   |
| Primary schools                       | Film Festival of Inclusivity School Edition                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Schools will be part of capacity building, education processes, and host an art project.</li> <li>● Classrooms will be transformed into thematic screening rooms, pupils help organise the event.</li> <li>● High quality additional programmes and activities will focus on a young audience to develop empathy and broaden perspectives on current social issues.</li> </ul>   |
| Primary schools                       | Creative Partnerships   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The aim is to give pupils the capability to solve individual and collective problems, and to build confidence and develop a positive attitude towards future learning and lives.</li> <li>● Schools will participate in capacity building, education, and collective artistic outputs.</li> <li>● In every session, teachers and artists devote time to community-building based on each child's individuality and diversity.</li> </ul>   |
| Primary schools                       | Children guides for art and culture (2024-2026)                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Aims to involve children directly in creating accompanying events.</li> <li>● Kids will learn about art in a fun way from a gallery teacher—then they can act as guides for exhibitions and cultural events.</li> </ul>  |
| Primary schools and secondary schools | Tuning the City   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● High School of Applied Arts and all primary art schools in Trenčín will participate in capacity building, education, and collective artistic performance.</li> <li>● Preparatory workshops and seminars focused on new music and the discovery of creative process will prepare pupils for the final project phase—a several-hour happening.</li> </ul>  |
| Secondary schools                     | Inventive Leadership  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● With very little project and event organised, pupils will build their confidence, and contribute to a proactive and supportive culture. At programme end, pupils will be ready to present themselves at the international level, be open to diverse teamwork across different countries, enter or create new entrepreneurial networks in the region, and therefore start their own projects focused on the creative sector or similar entrepreneurial projects.</li> <li>● Teachers are an important part of this project's legacy and further sustainability of proactive thinking. They will get resources and support to become empowered and up to date to impact generations of students through teaching entrepreneurial and creative skills. The absolvents from programme from the previous year will join efforts and the LEAF Academy will shadow local trained teachers and provide legacy phases support.</li> </ul> |
| Secondary schools                     | Laboratory of Sustainable Fashion                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Includes the Summer Fashion Academy created with the Slovak Fashion Council.</li> <li>● The Academy will give everyone an opportunity to experience working in fashion and organise a fashion show, as well as skills-learning and interactions with industry professionals.</li> </ul>  |
| Secondary schools and universities    | Young Festival Producers  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Capacity building programme where students manage their own events and tutor peers.</li> <li>● Skills learnt: time management, creating site plans, risk assessments, and marketing.</li> </ul>  |
| Universities                          | Communication and management in culture and creative industries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● This study programme is designed for mastering skills in organizing and managing artistic and culture work/events on the level of contemporary knowledge of general and field-specific disciplines of fine art and design, performing arts, and visual arts.</li> </ul>  |
| Universities                          | Matter of Glass   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Linking university glass research with local designers' artwork.</li> <li>● In cooperation with all major art and design universities in Slovakia, young designers will compete to tell the story of Trenčín through evocative functional and decorative glass items.</li> </ul>   |
| Universities                          | Climate Sensing   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hybrid forum organised at A. Dubček University of Trenčín will gather international and local artists, practitioners, and thinkers, and especially young outstanding students and child activists.</li> <li>● The forum aims to envision and discuss future technological developments, the human condition, and ecological landscapes by gathering 200 participants live and many more via interactive streams led by involved artists.</li> </ul>  |
| Teachers                              | Lessons at primary schools (2023-2026)                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Created with Kunsthalle art teacher Lucia Kotvanová.</li> <li>● Combining school educational programmes with museum and gallery pedagogy for creative teaching of subjects with art tools.</li> <li>● Teachers will increase formal attestation by participating in methodological meetings and creating activities in state certified Cultivating Curiosity programmes.</li> <li>● Methodological meetings will show how to implement programmes with different age groups and their connection to school curriculums.</li> </ul>   |
| Teachers                              | Online platform for primary and secondary schools (2023-2026)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Teachers will join an online platform created by the Slovak National Gallery.</li> <li>● The platform offers methodologies for working with contemporary and historical art, and acts as a forum for discussions between pedagogical staff, museum and gallery teachers, and pedagogical researchers.</li> <li>● In cooperation with CIT (Program Department) and programme leaders, platform methodologies will be adapted to the Cultivating Curiosity programmes.</li> </ul>  |





# Management

## Finance

Total operating budget (i.e. funds that are specifically set aside to cover operational expenditure)

# 17

Trenčín 2026 has increased the operating budget with a focus on funding programming and streamlining management costs. Work has been done to rework programming budgets to achieve high artistic quality and international cooperation, create contingency planning with respect to unforeseen externalities, and set up a strategy to secure private sector contributions.

| Income to cover operating expenditure: |                               |                                    |                                |   |
|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| From the public sector (in euros)      | From the public sector (in %) | From the private sector (in euros) | From the private sector (in %) | Total income to cover operating expenditure |
| €29,477,913                            | 93.59%                        | €2,017,840                         | 6.41%                          | <b>€31,495,753</b>                          |

What is the breakdown of the income to be received from the public sector to cover operating expenditure? Please fill in the table below:

# 18

In contrast to the first bid book, the city and region's financial participation has increased. Other income includes ticket sales, merchandising, state-run grants, contributions from embassies and foreign institutes, and financial support from state-run enterprises.

| Income from the public sector to cover operating expenditures 2021–2027 | In euros    | %      |
|---|-------------|--------|
| <b>National government</b>  | €15,000,000 | 50.89% |
| <b>City</b>   | €5,420,000  | 18.39% |
| <b>Region</b>   | €5,000,000  | 16.96% |
| <b>EU (without Melina Mercouri Prize)</b>                               | €3,020,000  | 10.24% |
| <b>Other</b>  | €1,037,913  | 3.52%  |
| <b>Total</b>  | €29,477,913 | 100%   |

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

# 19

### City of Trenčín

The city council confirmed its continuing support for the candidacy, its operational expenditures totalling **EUR 5,000,000**, and co-establishment of the Creative Institute Trenčín with the Trenčín regional government. The decision was made on 22 September 2021 with unanimous support across political parties and groups. The vote followed decisions from previous months that had set the budget for project preparation at EUR 420,000. Between 2021 and 2027, the City of Trenčín will directly invest EUR 5,420,000 into the European Capital of Culture project.

### Trenčín regional government

Trenčín's candidacy is supported by the head of the regional government and across the regional political spectrum. On 27 September 2021 the regional council unanimously approved a contribution for operational expenses totalling **EUR 5,000,000**. The council also approved the co-establishment of the Creative Institute Trenčín with the City of Trenčín. The council reconfirmed its support for the candidacy, as approved and communicated in 2020. The regional council represents nearly 590,000 residents across nine regional districts, 18 cities, and 258 villages.

### National government

National government representatives are yet to declare the amount that will support the winning city's operating expenditures. On 14 July 2021, the Ministry of Culture published a press release on its official website stating: "The Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic confirms that the ECoC 2026 city will receive **EUR 40 million** from European Structural and Investments Funds. The sum will go towards the winning Slovak city's investment projects. Additional funding for the winning city will be assigned from the national budget". During the candidacy phase, the candidacy cities communicated with the Ministry of Culture whereupon **EUR 15 million** was agreed to be negotiated with the national government for the selected city.

What is your fundraising strategy to seek financial support from Union programmes/funds to cover operating expenditure?

# 20

The new EU funding period 2021-2027 commences during the bid submission. Our Long-term Strategy goals are aligned with EU funding policy objectives. Objective no. 2—a greener, low-carbon Europe will be forwarded through projects such as **Green Line** and **City Reimagined**. Objective no. 3—a more connected Europe will interlink projects such as **New Peace**, **Fiesta Bridge**, and **Global Equality and Hospitality**. Objective no 4.—a more social and inclusive Europe will promote equal opportunities in projects such as **Trenčín-All-Theatre** and **Generations Together**. Objective no 5.—Europe closer to citizens is represented in projects such as **Every Part Counts** and **Degustories**.

The city and regional administrations have direct experience with projects from **Horizon 2020** (partner Oulu, Finland), **Interreg V-A**, **Erasmus+**, **EU Social Fund**, **URBACT** (partner Brno, Czech Republic), **EEA** and **Norway Grants**, **national funds**, and **private foundations** in energy, education, inclusion, social work, strategic planning, and green initiatives. A. Dubček University of Trenčín, a Trenčín 2026 partner, has extensive know-how in running the largest R&D Horizon 2020 project in Slovakia (EUR 12 million).

Cultural Institute Trenčín will start implementing a strategy to gain financial support from EU programmes and external public sources from 2022 using the internal capacity of the development manager, city hall and regional expertise, and external consultants. Allocation totalling EUR 475,000 for co-funding is part of the programming budget to facilitate straightforward access to EU funds.

With help from the CIT Development Manager, all programming partners will be incentivized to identify and apply with CIT for potential public funding schemes—this with the aim to develop capacity building and create new international partnerships. The CIT International Relations Manager will provide links with other ECoC cities and databases of potential international partners. The additional identification of funding schemes will be done in cooperation with the Slovak European Information Center, Eurodesk Slovakia, and EUROPE DIRECT Trenčín.

The appropriate European funding schemes include **Horizon Europe**, **European Social Fund Plus**, **Erasmus+**, **CERV**, **URBACT**, **INTERREG VI-A**, **European Solidarity Corps**, **Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE**, **Visegrad Fund**, **EEA**, and **Norway Grants**, national schemes funding local artists to travel abroad, and **Slovak national funds**.



| Funding scheme                                  | Programme name                               | Approximate funding |
|---|--|---------------------|
| Erasmus+  | Curiosity Engineers Bootcamp                 | €100,000            |
| Erasmus+  | New Generations of Creative Leaders          | €120,000            |
| Erasmus+  | Young Festival Producers                     | €160,000            |
| European Social Fund Plus                       | Cultivating Curiosity Volunteering programme | €180,000            |
| European Social Fund Plus                       | Matter of Glass                              | €100,000            |
| Creative Europe—media strand                    | Festival of Illusions                        | €200,000            |
| Creative Europe—culture strand                  | Laboratory of Sustainable Fashion            | €200,000            |
| Creative Europe—culture strand                  | Climate Sensing                              | €180,000            |
| Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme | Sounds of Democracy                          | €250,000            |
| Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme | Institute for Participation Trenčín          | €200,000            |
| Interreg VI-A                                   | Green Line                                   | €250,000            |
| Interreg Central Europe                         | Rural Fermentations                          | €150,000            |
| Interreg Central Europe                         | Biennale of Contemporary Jewish Art          | €100,000            |
| EEA and Norway grants                           | Cultivating Accessibility                    | €165,000            |
| Visegrad Fund                                   | Modernism Revisited                          | €200,000            |
| Visegrad Fund                                   | Bridging the Gap                             | €70,000             |
| Danish Art Council                              | Floating Communities                         | €25,000             |
| Italian Art Council                             | Underneath the Arches                        | €25,000             |
| Slovak Art Council                              | Merino Monument                              | €50,000             |
| Slovak Art Council                              | Cool Interventions                           | €100,000            |
| Slovak Art Council                              | Rewiring the World                           | €45,000             |
| Audio visual fund Slovakia                      | Mesh & Echoes                                | €80,000             |
| Audio visual fund Slovakia                      | Seekers Formation                            | €50,000             |
|   |  | <b>€3,000,000</b>   |

According to what timetable should the income to cover operating expenditure be received by the city and/or the body responsible for preparing and implementing the ECoC project if the city receives the title of European Capital of Culture?

# 21

Year 2022 is structured without the national government contribution, allowing ample time to negotiate the funding structure details for the winning city. The 2022 costs for the Creative Institute Trenčín will be covered solely by the city and regional governments, which will facilitate a smooth start to project implementation.

| Source of income for operating expenditures | 2021            | 2022              | 2023              | 2024              | 2025              | 2026               | 2027              | Total              |
|---|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| EU (without M.M. prize)                     | €20,000         | €25,000           | €150,000          | €475,000          | €1,000,000        | €1,200,000         | €150,000          | <b>€3,020,000</b>  |
| National government                         |                 |                   | €800,000          | €1,900,000        | €4,015,000        | €8,185,000         | €100,000          | <b>€15,000,000</b> |
| City  | €420,000        | €890,000          | €600,000          | €800,000          | €860,000          | €1,500,000         | €350,000          | <b>€5,420,000</b>  |
| Region                                      |                 | €890,000          | €600,000          | €800,000          | €860,000          | €1,500,000         | €350,000          | <b>€5,000,000</b>  |
| Sponsors                                    | €17,840         | €22,056           | €238,444          | €347,452          | €450,584          | €869,664           | €71,800           | <b>€2,017,840</b>  |
| Other                                       | €35,433         | €25,000           | €120,000          | €230,000          | €250,000          | €350,000           | €27,480           | <b>€1,037,913</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>€493,273</b> | <b>€1,852,056</b> | <b>€2,508,444</b> | <b>€4,552,452</b> | <b>€7,435,584</b> | <b>€13,604,664</b> | <b>€1,049,280</b> | <b>€31,495,753</b> |

What is the fund-raising strategy to seek support from private sponsors? What is the plan for involving sponsors in the event?

# 22

In the first bid book, we introduced the **Curious Company** programme concept—the way for companies, entrepreneurs, donors, and their customers to participate in the Trenčín 2026 project. We established close collaboration with a business strategist who, together with the bidding team, reached out to regional businesses and entrepreneurs to co-design the Curious Company programme.

While personally approaching key partners, we are also developing an easy-to-use online platform on the Trenčín 2026 website where companies can sign up and design their sponsorship and participation package.

Although the Trenčín 2026 minimum private funding goal (as set in the budget) is EUR 2,000,000, we aim to reach EUR 5,000,000. We have already started by meeting CEOs and organising fundraising events.

During a cultural partnership event in 2021, thirty large employers, creative entrepreneurs, and innovative businesses approached the bidding team to express their interest in sponsoring Trenčín 2026 and involving their networks. These are leading regional business figures and those who would benefit from the culture and innovation heralded by Trenčín 2026.

During the candidacy period, Trenčín 2026 and the city administration has received direct support from private companies and individuals. Such assistance has included free office rental for the Trenčín 2026 team, advertising space and services, lodging, catering services, consulting services, PR and copywriting work, in-kind contributions, software, and other items—with a total value of almost EUR 55,000.

CIT will offer a **Curiosity Engineers Bootcamp** (p. 22) to cultural professionals to develop their fundraising skills, and lead to a more sustainable and diversified income stream. They will gain skills on how to assess marketing value, spot potential revenue streams, run crowdfunding campaigns (e.g. GoFundMe), build paying audiences with membership platforms (e.g. Patreon), and approach companies and individuals.

The strategy of collaborating with the private sector is to be truly inclusive and engage with businesses operating within the city and region, and secure European and international participation. Most importantly, it aims to attract creativity, innovation and sustainable solutions to the city and region with a view to making Trenčín a unique and valuable ECoC over the next six years and far beyond.

## Flagship sponsors

Target: EUR 960,000

5 x Slovak regional and national sponsors, 3 x European sponsors

## Co-creation partners

Target: EUR 550,000

20 x Slovak regional and national sponsors, 5 x European sponsors

## Co-branding and Event partners

Target: EUR 355,000

35 x Tier 1 sponsors EUR 5,000 each—Trenčín 2026 branded events, plus Tier 2 benefits

40 x Tier 2 sponsors EUR 2,500 each—Product showcases, merchandise, media exposure

80 x Tier 3 sponsors EUR 1,000 each—Media exposure

Sponsors—with the primary objective of marketing their products/services—can select various events and promotions: co-branded events, opportunities to showcase their range during selected events, and marketing activities across multi-channels and social media. All activities are supported by the Trenčín 2026 team in accordance with agreed guidelines.

## Individual contributors and well-off donors

Target: EUR 135,000

100 x Tier 1 sponsors—EUR 100 each

500 x Tier 2 sponsors—EUR 50 each

5000 x Tier 3 sponsors—EUR 20 each





## Operating expenditures:

# 23

Please provide a breakdown of operating expenditures by filling in the table below.

|  | in %   | in Euros    |
|--|--------|-------------|
| <b>Programme expenditure</b>               | 71.50% | €22,518,212 |
| <b>Promotion and marketing</b>             | 14.10% | €4,439,720  |
| <b>Wages, overheads and administration</b> | 11.23% | €3,537,821  |
| <b>Other (monitoring)</b>                  | 3.18%  | €1,000,000  |
| <b>Total</b>                               |        | €31,495,753 |

Expenditures are better categorized to express their real connection with administration, marketing or programming. Administrative expenses are developed in cooperation with the Director of Trenčín City Hall and the Head of Finance of City Hall, and are based on real City Hall expenses.

Wage taxation is rather high in Slovakia. The actual total cost of labour is approximately double the net wage. CIT is structured to be competitive in the labour market, focusing on attracting talent and keeping low employee turnover.

The “Overheads, wages and administration” category includes establishing new offices with related expenses, equipment, wages of essential CIT employees including the director, finance, HR, fundraising, monitoring, and IT employees, employee capacity building and travel, mandatory expenses by the government related to employees, energy costs, rent, telco costs, IT and software, transportation costs, legal, consulting, insurance, accounting, auditing, banking, and related services necessary for the day-to-day operation of CIT.

“Promotion and marketing” includes all marketing expenses and wages of the marketing and communication team (questions 35–40).

“Programme expenditure” includes all budgets for cultural programmes, outreach, capacity building, and wages of employees who are dedicated solely to the programme (questions 5–10). Programming budget entails EUR 825,000 reserve. Category “Other” is dedicated to monitoring activities (question 4).



Planned timetable for spending operating expenditures:

# 24

|                       | Programme expenditure |        | Promotion and marketing |        | Wages, overheads and administration |        | Other (monitoring) |        |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------|-------------------------|--------|-------------------------------------|--------|--------------------|--------|
| <b>2021</b>           | €90,000               | 0.40%  | €35,000                 | 0.79%  | €368,273                            | 10.41% |                    |        |
| <b>2022</b>           | €1,093,388            | 4.86%  | €356,188                | 8.02%  | €327,480                            | 9.26%  | €75,000            | 7.50%  |
| <b>2023</b>           | €1,470,184            | 6.53%  | €448,188                | 10.09% | €490,072                            | 13.85% | €100,000           | 10.00% |
| <b>2024</b>           | €3,154,620            | 14.01% | €692,184                | 15.59% | €580,648                            | 16.41% | €125,000           | 12.50% |
| <b>2025</b>           | €5,616,532            | 24.94% | €892,184                | 20.10% | €726,868                            | 20.55% | €200,000           | 20.00% |
| <b>2026 ECoC year</b> | €10,641,720           | 47.26% | €1,773,180              | 39.94% | €839,764                            | 23.74% | €350,000           | 35.00% |
| <b>2027</b>           | €451,768              | 2.01%  | €242,796                | 5.47%  | €204,716                            | 5.79%  | €150,000           | 15.00% |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>€22,518,212</b>    |        | <b>€4,439,720</b>       |        | <b>€3,537,821</b>                   |        | <b>€1 000,000</b>  |        |

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

# 25

| Budget for capital expenditure                             |                    |             |
|--|--------------------|-------------|
| Income from the public sector to cover capital expenditure | in Euros           | in %        |
| <b>EU</b>  | €33,930,144        | 39.49%      |
| <b>National government ECoC funding</b>                    | €38,000,000        | 44.22%      |
| <b>National government co-financing of ERDF</b>            | €3,805,635         | 4.43%       |
| <b>City</b>  | €6,330,543         | 7.37%       |
| <b>Region</b>  | €3,593,578         | 4.18%       |
| <b>Other (Trenčín University, foreign partner)</b>         | €265,446           | 0.31%       |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>€85,925,346</b> | <b>100%</b> |

All Slovak regions except Bratislava are categorized as “less developed” in EU funding schemes—hence municipalities across the country have access to significant funding for capital expenditures.

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

# 26

### City of Trenčín

The city council approved the capital expenditure plan on 22 September 2021. Funding of EUR 8.93 million has been secured from various funding schemes by the city. Major capital expenditures include the new Hviezdodvor cultural space, reconstruction of the Creative Cultural Centre Hviezda and Dlhé Hony and Zlatovce community centres, enlargement of pedestrian and community zones, the **Fiesta Bridge**, and joint investment with the regional administration into the Museum of Trenčín.

### Trenčín regional government

On 27 September 2021 the regional council approved capital expenditures related to ECoC programming and regional development. Funding of EUR 9.09 million has been secured from various funding schemes by the region. Major regional investments include an overhaul of the Gallery of M.A. Bazovský and Michal Rešetka public library, and joint investments with the city administration in the Museum of Trenčín and Trenčín Castle. All organizations are run by Trenčín regional government.

### National government

On 14 July 2021 the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic published a press release stating that the ECoC 2026 capital expenditures in Slovakia would be supported by EUR 40 million from European Structural and Investment Funds. The funding scheme requires 5% co-financing from the beneficiary. Appropriate co-financing of EUR 2 million is budgeted in question no. 24.

### Other entities

Additional investments include the Creative Center at A. Dubček University of Trenčín and reconstruction of the synagogue. Funding of EUR 5.28 million has been secured from various funding schemes by the A. Dubček University of Trenčín and the Jewish community—both of which are directly connected to ECoC through the **Matter of Glass** and **Biennale of Contemporary Jewish Art** programmes.



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

# 27

Both city and regional administrations have departments dedicated to securing ERDF funding and the implementation of infrastructural projects. In recent years they have jointly secured over EUR 117.85 million (EUR 19.25 million—city, and EUR 98.60 million—region) for capital expenditures. In coordination with the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization, a community-led local development action group has been established to effectively allocate resources for the next EU funding period (2021–2027).

The Cohesion Policy 2014–2020 funding period and its 2021–2027 continuation is managed via the appropriate ministries of the Slovak Republic. The 2014–2020 funding period is being supplemented by REACT-EU funds, and made available to municipalities to mitigate pandemic impacts and invest in green infrastructure

The 2021–2027 funding schemes will be under the umbrella of OP Slovensko (Operational Programme Slovakia). The most suitable schemes for our capital expenditures are ERDF, the Cohesion Fund, and Interreg. The Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization is planning to open the first 2021–2027 calls by the end of Q2/2022. Both city and regional municipalities have multiple projects ready to submit.

At the local level, EUR 23.3 million has been secured by various regional actors for ECoC-related investments. With EUR 38 million from the national government allocated for ECoC, the total amount of secured financing for capital expenditures exceeds EUR 61 million.

The remaining planned investments of EUR 25 million target cultural infrastructure improvements, the green development of public and community spaces, and sustainable mobility investments for cycling infrastructure. All investments are in line with the European Green Deal, OP Slovensko, Integrated Territorial Investment strategic plans, Sustainable Mobility Plan, and the city's Climate Change Adaptability Strategy.

According to what timetable should the income to cover capital expenditure be received by the city and/or the body responsible for preparing and implementing the ECoC project if the city receives the title of European Capital of Culture? Please fill in the table below.

# 28

The Trenčín 2026 team will regularly meet with city/regional financial and investment departments to coordinate activities and review capital expenditure planning and progress.

| Source of income for capital expenditure | 2021              | 2022               | 2023               | 2024               | 2025               | 2026            | Total              |
|--|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| EU                                       | €3,145,124        | €9,919,480         | €10,162,340        | €5,797,000         | €4,906,200         |                 | €33,930,144        |
| National government ECoC                 |                   |                    | €950,000           | €8,260,000         | €28,515,000        | €275,000        | €38,000,000        |
| National government                      | €369,897          | €1,037,586         | €1,101,452         | €719,500           | €577,200           |                 | €3,805,635         |
| City                                     | €1,030,650        | €768,793           | €1,061,000         | €1,493,500         | €1,951,600         | €25,000         | €6,330,543         |
| Region                                   | €72,873           | €180,000           | €1,975,705         | €355,000           | €1,010,000         |                 | €3,593,578         |
| Other public funds                       | €51,425           |                    | €214,021           |                    |                    |                 | €265,446           |
| Sponsors/private                         |                   | €150,000           |                    |                    |                    |                 | €150,000           |
| <b>total</b>                             | <b>€4,669,969</b> | <b>€12,055,859</b> | <b>€15,464,518</b> | <b>€16,625,000</b> | <b>€36,960,000</b> | <b>€300,000</b> | <b>€86,075,346</b> |

If appropriate, please insert a table here that specifies which amounts will be spent for new cultural infrastructure to be used in the framework of the title year.

# 29

Please see p. 97 in Capacity to Deliver.

## Organisational structure

What kind of governance and delivery structure is envisaged for the implementation of the European Capital of Culture year?

How will you make sure that there is an appropriate cooperation between the local authorities and this structure including the artistic team?

How will you ensure that this structure has the staff with the appropriate skills and experience to plan, manage and deliver the cultural programme for the European Capital of Culture project?

According to which criteria and under which arrangements have the general director and the artistic director been chosen—or will be chosen? What are—or will be—their respective profiles? When will they take up the appointment? What will be their respective fields of action?

The **Creative Institute Trenčín (CIT)**, a newly established non-profit organisation, will provide ECoC Trenčín 2026 governance and delivery structure. The governance model has been widely consulted with City of Trenčín lawyers, procurement experts, and cultural organisations in Slovakia, and ECoCs Košice 2013, Galway 2020, Novi Sad 2022, and Nova Gorica 2025. This model should provide the most effective legal form to deliver the right mix of accountability, transparency, and flexibility with public, private, European, and other international support.

**CIT was unanimously approved by local and regional authorities in September 2021**, and will be set up by the City of Trenčín and Trenčín Region in January 2022, subject to a successful bid. CIT will implement the ECoC programme, including preparatory activities from the beginning of 2022. CIT's founding parties are the City of Trenčín and Trenčín Regional Council, and the main statutory representative is the executive director (CEO).

CIT will be an arm's length body, independent from local and regional public authorities and political/private interests. It will make its own decisions, based on the approved strategy, aims, and goals of Trenčín 2026. The Governance Chart above illustrates the coordination and responsibilities shared within CIT. The organisation will submit annual financial and activity reports to the City Council, and closely cooperate with the City of Trenčín, its administration, and Trenčín Regional Government. Regular information meetings and presentations of CIT, the City Council, and the Regional Council will facilitate smooth communication between all parties.

Cooperation between Creative Institute Trenčín (CIT), Institute for Participation Trenčín (IPT I), Culture Living Lab Trenčín and local administration will be based on two basic principles—minimum interference in the artistic programme (maximum autonomy of the Trenčín 2026 Foundation) and maximum cooperation/coordination between local authorities. In order to achieve better coordination between local public bodies and CIT, we plan to establish the Trenčín 2026 coordination agenda in 2022. Bringing together monthly representatives of financial departments and the infrastructure department that will lead capital investment projects, then tourism and cultural

# 30,32 33,34

offices to maximize the project's tourism and monitoring potentials, representatives of the police, fire and health departments, and other public services that are important to providing for a safe and healthy Trenčín 2026. This coordination team will enable us to prepare and implement projects, and share resources effectively and safely.

### In accordance with Slovak legislation, CIT is governed by a Board of Trustees and Supervisory Board:

The organisation's main decision-making body is the Board of Trustees with a functional three-year period. The Board of Trustees is appointed through a selection committee: two nominations by the City of Trenčín, two nominations by Trenčín Regional Council, one nomination by A.Dubček University of Trenčín, one nomination by Antena (association for independent cultural organisations), and three nominations by the Trenčín 2026 programme board. The Board of Trustees will convene at least twice a year.

### The first Board of Trustees comprises:

- 01 Mgr. Richard Rybníček**, Mayor of Trenčín
- 02 Ing. Jaroslav Baška**, Director of Trenčín Regional Council
- 03 Milena Dragičević Šešić, PhD**, Head of the UNESCO Chair on Interculturalism, Art Management and Mediation and former President of the University of Arts, Belgrade
- 04 Prof. Ilona Németh, DLA**, Artist, professor at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, curator of exhibitions and organiser of art festivals
- 05 Prof. Dušan Galúsek, DrSc.**, FunGlass Director, Slovak scientist of 2019, Director of NATO and Horizon 2020 research projects
- 06 Mgr. Silvia Hroncová**, cultural manager, former director of Slovak National Theatre and Prague National Opera
- 07 Dipl. Ing. Peter Gero**, urbanist, expert collaborator on Trenčín SI TY urban development plan
- 08 Mgr. Veronika Staňková**, teacher at Trenčín School of Arts
- 09 Mgr. Art. Šimon Kliman**, statutory representative of one of the biggest cultural centers in Slovakia—Nová Cvernovka



**Board selection criteria are based on professional and managerial excellence in cultural and creative domains, and allow for:**

- Gender balance
- International experience
- Local experience
- Interdisciplinary capacity

CIT annual budget and accounts will be audited by the Supervisory Board. Three members represent the City of Trenčín, two the Trenčín Region, and two are appointed by the Board of Trustees. Their role is to control budget expenditures and advise the Board of Trustees, and to advocate Trenčín 2026 interests for financial fluency at the city, region, and private sector levels. At the beginning of 2022, CIT will establish an Advisory Board comprising representatives of key partners from cultural and other institutions, private sector, governmental bodies (ministries, institutions), and local players (10-15 people).

During the selection stage, the bidding team appointed a Programme Board to advise and provide credibility in decision-making according to different cultural genres. Continuing this practice, the executive and artistic directors will also create a Programme Board consisting of experienced international curators, artists, and cultural managers from various spheres whose function is to ensure that Trenčín 2026 delivers a varied artistic programme.

CIT will launch an **open call for an Executive Director** (CEO) in January 2022. The founding CIT members will appoint an interim Executive Director in January 2022 for the first three months of CIT's existence, during which time the selection process for an Executive Director will be performed via an international open call, interviewed, and appointed by the Board of Trustees. Selection criteria include: cultural management qualifications, international experience, responsiveness to specific ECoC Trenčín 2026 requirements, previous ECoC involvement, and other relevant experience with similar projects

ECoC is a once in a lifetime opportunity, as are the jobs it directly creates. By consulting with previous ECoCs, we are clear on the skills and experience necessary to manage such a large-scale cultural event. Our own bidding team, while mainly Trenčín-born, are people with international experience that have returned to their hometown to work on the ECoC bid. This unique group of highly-skilled professionals have the passion and desire to collaborate with professionals from across Europe, and build on the human resources and legacy of Košice 2013. International recruitments have already been announced, and the team has grown from six in the pre-selection stage to ten full-time, five part-time, and four interns. We prioritise building the team's professional capacities and competences through a continuous improvement process.

Future CIT employees will be selected mainly through national or international open calls, in specific cases we would also headhunt skilled experts. Evaluation of candidates will include previous involvement in the ECoC project bidding process and other experiences with similar large-scale, international projects. The criteria for selection will include: qualifications, experience, ability to respond to ECoC Trenčín 2026 requirements, and previous involvement in the ECoC and other significant experiences with similar projects. The recruitment process will aim to build regional professional capacities to ensure project legacy.

Trenčín 2026 already has strong interest from Slovakia and abroad to join our activities—we aim to attract at least 80% Slovak and 20% international cultural professionals to settle or relocate in Trenčín, City schemes to support this are being considered, including language courses, housing support, and child tuition.

In order to ensure international knowledge transfer and a network for cultural professionals and managers, we have designed an intensive capacity building program for CIT staff and the city/region's cultural professionals. This will be implemented from 2022 and throughout the preparatory phase, being adjusted as per respective project phase needs.



The **Curiosity Office** hosted three interns in a pilot programme, and we are proud that three extended their originally planned three months collaboration. The Curiosity Office will continue in and beyond 2022 with open calls for four new interns each year with a minimum stay of six months. The recruitment process will target candidates' openness, proactiveness, passion, and motivation to learn and grow. That new team members can align with the project's values and vision will be key.

The hiring process will ensure the team has complimentary skills, and senior staff will be supported by juniors and interns. We will also provide flexible working, hours and home working options.

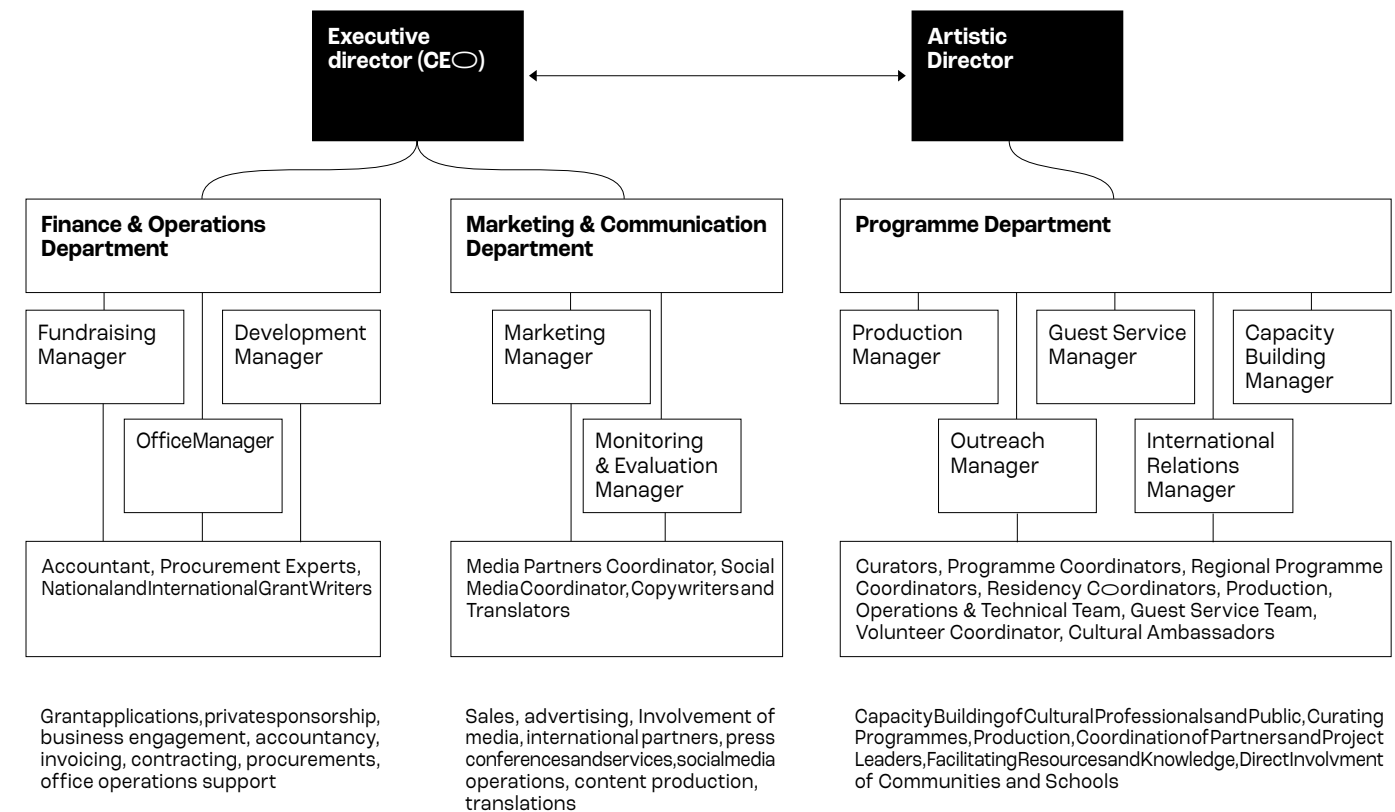
**Hiring timeline**

|  | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Directors                              | 2    | 2    | 2    | 2    | 2    | 2    |
| Finance and Operations                 | 3    | 4    | 5    | 7    | 7    | 2    |
| Marketing, Communications and Outreach | 6    | 7    | 8    | 8    | 9    | 4    |
| Programme Department                   | 13   | 15   | 19   | 28   | 32   | 3    |
| TOTAL                                  | 24   | 28   | 34   | 45   | 50   | 11   |

How will this structure be organised at management level? Please make clear who will be the person(s) having the final responsibility for global leadership of the project?

**31**

**Creative Institute Trenčín Management Chart**





The Executive Director, Artistic Director, and senior managers have responsibility for CIT management and operations. The **Executive Director** is responsible for fulfilling the Trenčín 2026 vision, executing the implementation plan, overall leadership, and all CIT management duties. As a statutory representative, he/she manages operations and acts in its name. The Executive Director will organise the CIT's operational structure, and plan for and employ the necessary staff. Together with the relevant team members and stakeholders, he/she will supervise the development of strategic partnerships and thematic networks, and maintain synergy with the city's cultural strategy. The Executive Director together with the Artistic Director will propose budgets to the city and regional governments.

The **Artistic Director** will be recruited via an international open call, and be interviewed and appointed by the Board of Trustees and Executive Director. He/she will be in charge of Trenčín 2026 artistic vision's professional and independent implementation in line with set goals, programme concept, and structure. The Artistic Director will lead the team that selects and cooperates on artistic proposals and projects, and leads the curator team to deliver artistic concepts and programmes. His/her team will include programme coordinators (incl. outdoor programme manager), educational and professional development manager, international relations manager, production and technical team manager, and guest service manager.

The **Administration and Finance Manager** will coordinate and supervise economic and legislative tasks and obligations, signing and executing contracts. He/she will also be responsible for key financial reports and all legislation-compliant public procurement processes for goods and services. He/she will closely cooperate with other team members, including the Fundraising Manager.

The **Fundraising Manager** will be the key person for the execution and coordination of all fundraising from public grants and private sponsorships. Particular emphasis will be on creating strategies for attracting and successfully coordinating financial support from EU and international (Visegrad) funds and grants.

The **Development Manager** will closely cooperate with CIT directors and the International Relations Manager. He/she will seek new opportunities for collaborations, new projects, and partners. He/she will pay special attention to developing strong links between the programme and commercial partnerships.

The **Communications Manager** will lead all communication-related tasks. His/her work will encompass the implementation of marketing and media strategies and campaigns, public relations, and other activities that generate visibility for ECoC Trenčín 2026.

The **Monitoring and Evaluation Manager** will liaise CIT with cultural organisations on data collection and with the Culture Living Lab Trenčín on data analysis/evaluation to ensure alignment and coordination with the Trenčín 2026 goals. He/she will consult on the delivery of M&E mid-term and final reports, and their dissemination through the Communications Department.

The **Capacity Building Manager** will be responsible for launching and coordinating capacity building programmes. In collaboration with the outreach team, he/she will ensure all interested organisations and individuals can join needs-based capacity building programmes.

The **Guest Service Manager** will liaise with all programme guests, overseeing their logistics (transport and accommodation) and comfort in Trenčín, and ensuring a unique and rewarding city experience.

The **Outreach Manager** will manage relations with and the involvement of all communities in the Trenčín region. He/she will collaborate with cultural ambassadors and the volunteer coordinator, and ensure all contributions to Trenčín 2026 are welcome. The Outreach Manager liaises with the Institute for Participation and Cultural Ambassadors.



Have you carried out/planned a risk assessment exercise?

What are your planned mitigating measures?

# 34,35

In collaboration with Alan Grady, Operations Manager and Risk Mitigation Expert of Galway 2020, we carried out a risk assessment workshop with a special focus on unforeseen and unwelcome developments.

## Risk Assessment Trenčín 2026

|                                  | Risk   | Likelihood | Who controls the risk   | Mitigation strategy   |
|----------------------------------|--|------------|---|---|
| <b>Financial &amp; Political</b> | Failing to secure the planned budget, inefficient use of budget                                | medium     | Board of Trustees and CEO   | Regular communication with all the contributing bodies; diversifying private sponsors from various sectors. Restructuring programmes in accordance with approved budgets. A reserve sum of EUR 825,000 is already included in the programming budget.   |
|                                  | Lowered or loss of political support—change in 2022 local elections                            | low        | Board of Trustees and CEO   | Communication with citizens and media to ensure ECoC is part of politicians' thinking during elections. Constant communication with national, regional, and local decision-makers, and cross-party political support.   |
|                                  | Pressure on management from local and regional councils to change programme                    | low        | Board of Trustees and CEO   | Establish proper management plan and coordination strategy to secure team autonomy.   |
|                                  | European Dimension   |            |   |   |
|                                  | Failing to deliver planned international partnerships due to the covid crisis or other reasons | medium     | International Relations Manager                                       | Develop covid mitigation strategy and plan to establish cooperation with partners from other countries with better covid resilience. Proposing more online events.  |
| <b>Participation</b>             | Insufficient public interest to take part/attend   | low        | Outreach Manager  | Develop a comprehensive audience development strategy. Programme monitoring and flexible approach in order to adjust programmes to the interests of local and international audiences.  |
|                                  | Low accessibility to cultural events   | medium     | Outreach Manager, local public institutions and local decision makers | Constantly work to raise awareness about the importance of venue accessibility. Implement accessibility rules for all newly-built infrastructure. Work closely with local stakeholders to secure accessible venues and events.  |
| <b>Communication and Image</b>   | Marketing communication does not reach local and international audiences and media             | medium     | Marketing & Communication Department                                  | Develop new communication strategies focused on digital tools and direct communication. Change approaches and revisit existing communication tools and develop new ones. Involve famous artists and other public figures in communicating project events and messages.  |
|                                  | Public misunderstanding of ECoC and failure to identify with the project                       | medium     | Marketing & Communication Department                                  | Implement an extensive strategy of communication to the wider public and audience in 2022 about ECoC and explain the role of citizens and other stakeholders in the process.  |
|                                  | Negative perceptions of the ECoC project and Trenčín   | medium     | Board of Trustees, CEO and Marketing & Communication Department       | Implement crisis management strategy and prepare visible and high quality artistic events. Intensify work with Ambassadors.   |
| <b>Environmental</b>             | Change in operational possibilities at venues—especially natural spots                         | medium     | Board of Trustees, CEO and Local Infrastructure Department            | Constantly monitor the cultural infrastructure preparation by Trenčín 2026 Board and active role of the Coordination Agency in order to secure intersectoral measures. Implement safety, ecological and other expert measures in building, renovating and preserving cultural venues and heritage. Implement ECO standards chart when organizing cultural projects. |
|                                  | Unforeseen events, global crisis—economic, health, climate                                     | low        | Board of Trustees, CEO and Artistic director                          | Implement pre-prepared alternative forms of events in accordance with the changed circumstances—"Plan B" strategy.  |



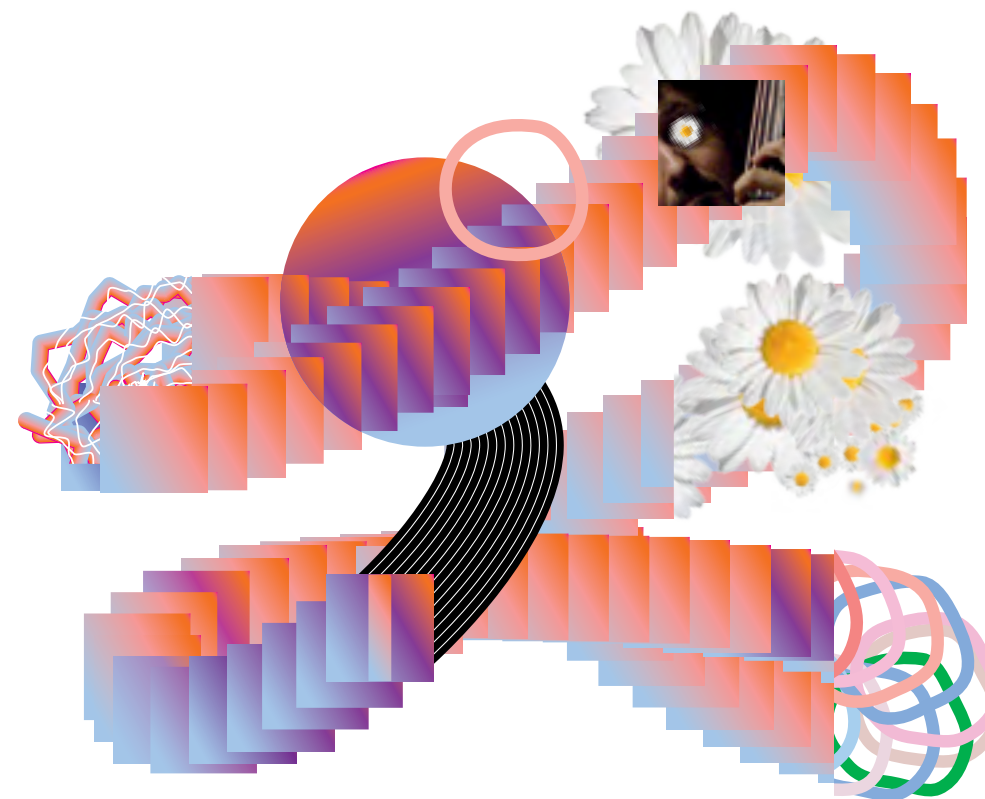
|             |   |        |   |   |
|-------------|---|--------|---|---|
| Managerial  | Unforeseen need for expert skills or underestimation thereof                              | medium | Board of Trustees                               | Organise new open calls and intensify collaboration with European expert networks to source expertise.  |
|             | Cultural professionals not building capacities as expected                                | high   | Capacity Building Manager                       | Organise new capacity building programmes and involve international educators. Invite experts from other ECoC projects to help, and invite production and project managers from big regional centres such as Bratislava and Prague.   |
| Ethical     | Cultural production and marketing do not achieve ecological sustainability goals          | low    | CEO and Marketing Manager                       | Establish financial penalties from project leaders that fail to enact ecological standards. Personnel changes in the communication team. Involving representatives of ECoC organizations in the Trenčín 2026 team.  |
| Performance | Failure to achieve goals  | medium | Board of Trustees                               | Continuous monitoring and regular evaluation of preparatory processes and intermediate results. Develop close cooperation with a panel of independent experts in order to overcome challenges. Develop partnerships with other ECoC and experts. React promptly to observed shortcomings. |
|             | Mass tourism consequences   | low    | CEO, Board of Trustees and Local administration | Work closely with the local tourism office in developing sustainable tourism strategies. Implement measures to use mass tourism as an asset to promote tourism and the Trenčín region and so support regional development.  |
|             | Poor synergy and engagement from the region and municipalities                            | medium | CEO, Board of Trustees and Local administration | Establishing regular meetings between municipality authorities and public bodies. In the case of poor reactions, clearly present problems during meetings and work in a participative way to overcome challenges.   |
|             | Operational/Planning  |        |   |   |
|             | Insufficient public service capacities (police, firefighters, technical production, etc.) | medium | CEO and Local administration                    | Cooperation with national, regional and EU government bodies on providing adequate support.   |
|             | Implementation timeline too ambitious   | high   | CEO and Board of Trustees                       | Rescheduling project phases and prioritizing programmes and activities.   |
|             | Infrastructure projects not finished before programme starts                              | medium | Trenčín 2026 team, City of Trenčín              | Regular meetings with the bodies responsible for the capital investments implementations to prevent such developments. Activate "Plan B" that consists of alternative places in Trenčín city and region for each event.   |
| COVID 19    | Restrictions on public gatherings and events.   | medium | CEO, Production Manager                         | Prepare easy-to-use hybrid models and build capacities in the cultural sector. Implementing Trenčín 2026 covid traffic light monitoring system.   |

| COVID 19 | Traffic Light System Trenčín 2026  | Prevention  | Implementation  | Alternatives   |
|----------|--|---|---|--|
| High     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High COVID incidence in Slovakia</li> <li>High COVID incidence in Trenčín region</li> <li>High COVID incidence in artists' and producer's home countries</li> <li>High and medium incidence in countries with new virus variants</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vaccination certificate</li> <li>Obligatory free tests on site</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government will set a maximum visitor numbers</li> <li>Physical distance and free seats to help social distancing</li> <li>Reschedule visits of artists and partners from affected countries</li> <li>Apply all sanitary measures</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organise digital events</li> <li>Organise hybrid forms</li> <li>Reschedule events</li> <li>Invite artists and/or producers and partners from low incidence countries</li> <li>Invite local artists and/or producers and partners from Slovakia</li> </ul> |
| Medium   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medium COVID incidence in Slovakia or countries of partners' origin</li> <li>Beginning of new COVID transmissions in Slovakia or partners' countries</li> <li>Countries with potential new variants with low level of incidence</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vaccination certificate and/or PCR test within 48 hours of departure</li> <li>Obligatory free tests on site</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government will set a maximum visitor numbers</li> <li>Apply all sanitary measures</li> <li>Negotiate with partners about project implementation options.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hybrid forms</li> <li>Provide digital and/or video material to increase visibility</li> <li>Organise open air events</li> <li>Flexible programmes in accordance to the epidemiological situation</li> </ul>   |
| Low      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low or none COVID incidence in Slovakia and the Trenčín Region</li> <li>Low or none COVID incidence in artists' and producer's home countries</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Antigen tests or vaccination certificate</li> <li>Voluntary testing available on site</li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Live events</li> <li>Apply all sanitary measures and medical advice</li> <li>No other limitations</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digital formats</li> </ul>  |

## Marketing

Could your artistic programme be summed up by a slogan?

# 37



# Cultivating Curiosity

#NatureMatters  
 #CityMatters  
 #PeopleMatters  
 #CultureMatters  
 #CommunityMatters  
 #EuropeMatters



What is the city's intended marketing and communication strategy for the European Capital of Culture year, in particular with regard to the media strategy and the mobilisation of large audiences? This includes the use of digital communication channels.

# 38

## Target Groups

### City and regional audiences

- All communities from the city and region (including marginalised and disadvantaged groups).
- Public and private tourism agencies.
- Small and medium enterprises.

### National audiences

- Slovak residents across the country.
- Foreigners living in Slovakia.
- Public and private tourism agencies.
- Journalists and media representatives.
- Large companies, international corporations.

### International audiences

- Foreigners temporarily staying in the city/country.
- EU experts and international journalists.
- European and international audiences abroad (connecting through online communication, interactive online activities, and streamed events).
- Foreign diplomatic posts in Slovakia and abroad.

The City of Trenčín fully supports the Trenčín 2026 marketing and communication strategy, which aims to engage all target groups in order to:

- Communicate the importance of the ECoC initiative.
- Value culture and creative industry.
- Understand and celebrate European cultural diversity.
- Encourage everyone to take part in Trenčín 2026.
- Proudly spread the word about Trenčín as a creative and welcoming hub.
- Produce cultural content for communities.
- Enjoy its beautiful natural and cultural heritage, and original, experimental programme.
- Think ecologically, inclusively, and open-mindedly.

| TOOLS TO REACH TARGET GROUPS AND EXAMPLES  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| City and Regional audience   | National audience  | International audience   |
| Citylights, OOH campaigns (on transport), articles in newspapers, Cultural Ambassadors, volunteers, IPT, Curiosity Engineers, artists, radio, social media communications and campaigns, partnerships, website, media partnerships, INFO Trenčín magazine, Trenčín 2026 programme, ECoC website, mobile app, newsletter, press releases, public space for marketing campaign, Instagram takeovers, podcasts, blogs, vlogs, ads on social networks, YouTube, Tripadvisor, Foursquare  | Articles in newspapers, radio, TV commercials, podcasts, social media communication and campaigns, transport campaign (planes/trains/buses), partnerships, website, citylights in Slovakia, OOH campaigns in Slovakia, PR conferences, influencers, opening ceremony, Trenčín 2026 programme, mobile app, artists, journalists newsletter, IPT, press releases, podcasts, blogs, vlogs, national Tourists fairs and conferences, application, ads on social networks, YouTube, Tripadvisor, Foursquare   | Articles in newspapers, radio, TV commercials, social media communication and campaigns, partnerships, website, transport campaign (planes/trains/buses), tourist platforms, influencers, OOH campaigns in surrounding countries, ads on social networks, Trenčín 2026 programme, YouTube, Tripadvisor, Foursquare, partner cities, twin cities, diplomatic posts, EU platforms, OCI platforms, art platforms, mobile apps, artists, journalist visits, newsletters, press releases, podcasts, blogs, vlogs, tourist fairs and conferences, Biennale   |
| SEO, analysing QR codes, social media shares, usage #, media partners, marketing deals, app usage, website visits, website and social media conversion of fundraising, social media exposure and engagement  |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Regional cycle routes will feature art exhibitions and advertising campaigns.</li> <li>● A small train will transport tourists to the spa town Trenčianske Teplice. The train will be redecorated to host a walking gallery and tourist info about ECoC.</li> <li>● A special edition of INFO Trenčín 2026 magazine will be distributed monthly for free to all households in Trenčín and suburbs (also available online). It will contain all information about ECoC and Trenčín 2026.</li> <li>● Regional radio stations will communicate message of <b>#cultivating curiosity</b>.</li> <li>● Regional villages with local radio will broadcast news about Trenčín 2026.</li> <li>● Ecologically sourced merchandising items about Trenčín 2026 and ECoC will be available online and in shops across the region.</li> <li>● Pre-guide videos, alternative text, subtitles, easy-to-read versions of texts are part of universal communication.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Slovak Railways will advertise Trenčín by announcing "Trenčín, European Capital of Culture" on train lines that pass the city and at stations. Custom graphics will be presented on digital info-boards on trains.</li> <li>● Throughout 2026 <b>"Curious Tickets"</b> will be introduced. Travellers will receive tickets with fun riddles with 2026 programme info. Travellers will win free tickets to events by submitting correct riddle answers.</li> <li>● CIT in cooperation with SAD (Regional Transport Authority) will create "Culture Shuttles" in a 26 km radius around Trenčín. These buses will provide transportation to flagship events from suburban areas, and give short presentations about ECoC.</li> <li>● Together with partner Zlín-Luhačovice Region (Czech Republic), fun cross-border adverts will invite people to visit the entire Trenčín region.</li> <li>● Commercials in travel magazines will promote the Trenčín region as a vibrant place to visit.</li> <li>● Around cities which are near cycle paths to Trenčín, flyers will be distributed with information about Trenčín 2026 together with cycle routes.</li> <li>● Partnerships will be established with top 20 online and offline newspapers to promote the programme and project.</li> <li>● General public and journalist kiosks will be set up in regional cities with promotional materials.</li> <li>● Slovak Radio will broadcast live streams from music concerts.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Through train companies, CIT will communicate Trenčín and Slovakia as best places to visit in 2026.</li> <li>● Special deal "Enjoy Slovakia 2026" will be created for transport tickets together with sales for regional accommodation, cheaper exhibition entry, and bike rentals.</li> <li>● Articles in travel magazines and culture magazines.</li> <li>● Connecting international artists with media from their countries and promotions.</li> <li>● Presence at Bratislava International Airport with a promotional stand during the peak holiday season.</li> <li>● From 2024 CIT will distribute postcards with the message "Send Curiosity to Europe" from a Trenčín 2026 stand at the biggest cultural gatherings around Slovakia (such as Pohoda, Grape, Artfilm, hotels spa resorts castles and other happenings in the region).</li> <li>● Flagship events will be innovatively documented online via Trenčín 2026 channels in cooperation with influencers and hybrid events.</li> <li>● Communication and promotion will experiment with technologies such as Augmented Reality, Virtual reality and Artificial Intelligence.</li> </ul> |

## Our communication strategy has already reached over 300,000 people:

- More than 300,000 people reached via social media (3000+ followers on Facebook, 2000+ followers on Instagram, 100+ followers on Twitter, 100+ followers on LinkedIn, 20,000+ views on TIKTOK, 150+ subscribers of newsletters, 80+ website news, 1,000+ views on YouTube).
- 25,000 households receive monthly INFO magazine with articles about the candidacy.
- #trencin2026 stickers on 50+ shop displays.
- Europe Day campaigns reached out to 70,000+ individuals and more than 300 European partners, cities and organizations with 243 pictures gathered.
- Discussions at Pohoda Festival (2,000 visitors), Punkáči deťom festival (1,000 visitors), Priestor festival (3,000 visitors).
- Over 70 articles about the candidacy were published at regional (INFO, Square Trenčín, SME Trenčín, Trenčiansky Terajšok, Trenčiansky BLESK, News Trenčianske Teplice, etc.), national (SME, Pravda, Webnoviny, Dobré noviny, Rádio FM, Rádio Regina, Denník N, zlavomat.sk, etc.), and international (ECoC News, The Mayor EU, Culturenet (IDU), Heroine, Artalk.cz, Czechdesign, Aktualne.cz, etc.) levels.
- Pilot version of the "Online Artistic Exchange" communication project was created with Finnish cities, with 10 exchanges already. Every week the project presented one artist from Trenčín and one artist from abroad.

Please describe the partnerships planned or established with media with a view to ensuring wide coverage of the event

# 39

## Planned partnerships

Marketing and PR managers will develop cooperation with regional and national newspapers, radio, and television, leading on traditional forms of communication, media partnerships schemes, tourist and regional agency partnerships, and live presentations of events.

The International Relations Manager in CIT will work closely with the Marketing Department to build media connections at the international level. Press conferences with international guests will be held before flagship events.

Special hospitality programmes will be dedicated to local and international journalists. Infrastructure for on-site work, interviews and reportage will be provided. Close cooperation with Slovak, Czech, Polish, Hungarian and other Information and PR Agencies will be developed for a successful communication campaign in Central Europe. Cooperation will be established with leading EU media such as: Arte, Euronews, Eurozine, EUobserver, Euractiv, Politico, and Euronews.

## Examples of communication channels:

INFO and ECoC Magazine: Starting in 2024, the city newspaper INFO Trenčín will contain 12 extra Trenčín 2026 pages. In 2026 this magazine section will become a stand-alone ECoC magazine.

Information points: To engage people and spread the word about Cultivating Curiosity, Trenčín 2026 will work with shops, companies and schools around the city, region, twin cities and partner cities to run a bicycle mobile art cafe roaming the region to spread the information,

bind communities and present mobile exhibitions and performances.

**Press visits:** 20 journalists from across Europe will be invited to Trenčín annually from 2023 with a focus on promoting the city and Slovak culture in foreign countries, and unique regional travel opportunities. Multi-day press visits will include cultural programmes, presentations, traveling, and gastronomy. Several leading Slovak and European influencers will be invited to Trenčín to promote its tourist potential. Multiple influencers (with at least 100,000 followers each) will spend a weekend in Trenčín to experience and promote at least one programme to their audience. CIT will open a call for digital nomads to visit Trenčín and report on social media.

**Press conferences:** In 2025 two large press events will be organised by the city authorities and CIT: one in May, to present the artists of 2026 with the main graphic visual campaign, the second in November for the whole Trenčín 2026 ECoC programme. In 2026, fully equipped media kiosks will be set up in the city for journalists.

**Curiosity Trenčín App:** By 2024 CIT with the partner Been There Together agreed to design and create a mobile app with guides, interactive games, and treasure hunts with interactive activities reaching into the physical world.

**Cultural Institutes:** We established cooperation with Slovak institutes abroad (Paris, Budapest, Vienna, etc.) and with EU cultural institutes in Slovakia (Goethe, Polish, Czech, etc.). They will share Trenčín 2026 through their channels with newsletters and social media posts.

Trenčín 2026 has established partnerships, relationships and cooperation with regional, national and international media. Key players include:

- Square Trenčín (online media)—reach: 300,000 people/month using #trencin2026 #curiouseurope, weekly post about candidacy, video infos, podcasts.
- INFO Trenčín—municipality newspaper—reach: 25,000 households/month using monthly articles about candidacy, interviews.
- Trenčín city, Cultural—Information Centre Trenčín and Trenčín Region social media—reach: 71,000 people through social media with #trencin2026 @trencin2026, interviews and articles on a regular basis.
- ECoC NEWS, Culturenext.eu, Themayor.eu—over 10 articles about Trenčín 2026.

How will you mobilise your own citizens as communicators of the year to the outside world?

# 40

Cultural Ambassadors are already involved in many projects. A main task is to inform and involve their communities in Trenčín 2026 projects and communication. Ambassadors come from different communities to ensure wide-scale social propagation. Interviews, podcasts, discussions, and Instagram takeovers with Ambassadors will inspire others to join the programme.

Volunteers will spread ECoC information and attract people to volunteer. An Instagram takeover will show what volunteers do, podcasts will describe how to become a volunteer, blogs will cover programmes, etc.



Cultural organizations will learn to create communication and marketing strategies in the Audience Development plan (p. 76). They will communicate with their co-production partners on their websites, social networks, and discussions. They will inspire other organizations to get involved, and share examples of good practice.

Schools and teachers will use websites, notice boards and magazines to share their ECoC projects and activities. Parents will be especially informed about activities they can join with children via the EDU PAGE (online parent-school communication channel).

The social media manager will collaborate closely with local secondary schools and youth organisations to organise Instagram takeovers, lead on podcasts, and new communication channels.

Cooperation with sport clubs will be used for promotion. The "Cultivating team spirit" banner is already prominently displayed at the new football stadium. Football club AS Trenčín and hockey club Dukla Trenčín will have the Trenčín 2026 logo on their jerseys. Stadiums will have info points with Trenčín 2026 materials. Special promo campaigns will be created with clubs, with athletes invited to participate. During sports events, the moderator will draw attention to Trenčín ECoC 2026 activities. Teams will represent Trenčín ECoC 2026 with flags and pre-arranged media appearances after the matches. Tickets to matches will have information about Trenčín ECoC 2026 as a European project. Sports fans will be part of the **Fair Play** programme at unusual football matches connected to culture.

Trenčín 2026 logos and banners will be placed in public spaces, vehicles, etc. The **City Reimagined** project will look for creative solutions to achieve tasteful promotion that does not contribute to visual smog.

Undergraduates of A. Dubček University of Trenčín will be involved in digital communication challenges within programmes **Climate Sensing**, **Festival of Illusions** (p. 22), **Progress Boost**, and **Dialogue Decoded Lab**.

Taxi and bus drivers will act as project messengers, sharing news about Trenčín 2026 with their customers (monthly project updates and materials provided by CIT).

Restaurants, bars and catering services around the region will be involved in promotion: waiters with badges, stickers on doors (already 50+ restaurants in Trenčín display stickers to support the candidacy), various businesses are putting a connection to Trenčín 2026 and Trenčín on their menus (e.g. curious drink, culture pancake, etc.), information brochures, trenčín2026.eu will have a special "Explore Trenčín 2026" section and "Trenčín 2026 culinary friends" map.

Employees of information centres in the region, hotels, partner cities, cities in surrounding areas—CIT will run monthly "Cultivation meetings" to share important info. It will also organise trips in Trenčín, prepare ticket deals, and publish a newsletter.

World-famous hockey players Marián Hossa, Marián Gáborík and Zdeno Chára and American tennis player Mike Bryan proudly call Trenčín their home and strongly support our candidacy. They agreed to support Trenčín 2026 as influencers.

The CIT marketing team will use connections with international artists involved. The marketing team will contact media from each country with exact names and proposals for media cooperation. The artists will be active event promoters through #trenčín2026.

How does the city plan to highlight that the European Capital of Culture is an action of the European Union

# 41

The international marketing strategy is based on the #EuropeMatters goal. We aim to put Trenčín on the map of Europe, and bring Europe to every citizen in the city and region. We want to present all the opportunities that the European Union offers thanks to the ECoC title.

## Proudly European

On all communication and marketing materials, the opening sentence will read: "Trenčín 2026 is proud to be supported by the European Union" with the ECoC and European Union branding.

## Examples of highlighting the European Union and European Capital of Culture

- Logos in all digital and written promotion materials and on merchandise and banners during programmes.
- Logos on the website, social media, ads, and all graphic materials.
- EU and Trenčín 2026 flags around the city and region, in the capital city, at airports, and main train stations.
- Stickers in windows of restaurants, services, organisations, and businesses.
- QR codes related to Trenčín 2026 inspired by the EU logo.
- Main square's stage will be named Europe Stage.
- Pohoda Festival will present ECoC and the European Union as a branded music performance space and discussion venue.
- All partners and stakeholders will receive a PARTNER KIT materials and logo (Trenčín 2026 and EU logo) for their websites with guidance on correct usage.
- CIT will prepare texts for public use to show the project is a European Union event.
- IPT, Europe Direct and Globsec will run campaigns, events and debates to inform about the EU and its benefits and opportunities for citizens, schools and organisations.
- European Union representatives will be invited to opening ceremonies and key events.

## ECoC exploration project

From 2023 we will annually celebrate the ECoCs (2023 Timișoara and Eleusis, 2024 Tartu, Bad Ischl—Salzkammergut, Bodø, 2025 Nova Gorica and Chemnitz) with at least five events (folklore, exhibitions, literature, screenings of opening ceremony, musical performances, etc.) in Trenčín and region. These activities will show citizens what to expect from ECoC 2026 and spread the European feeling of belonging.

## Flags which identify us

CIT will open a call for artists in 2023 working with flags, flag design and national identity representations to propose a celebratory flag project to address the 40 years of the EU flag (conceived in 1986) in 2026. Engaging an expert committee with a representative from each EU country, this project will be a site-specific outdoor exhibition of flags in Trenčín that will subsequently travel worldwide.



# Capacity to deliver

Please supply evidence of the continuous political support and commitment from the relevant authorities.

# 42

Trenčín's Mayor and City Council unanimously approved the ECoC candidacy on 19 May 2021, and have provided EUR 420,000 in operating expenses for the bidding process initiated by the Mayor of Trenčín. The Trenčín 2026 plan and budget was unanimously approved by the City Council on 22 September 2021. This is in addition to the strong economic support for Trenčín's future cultural strategy and the EUR 730,000 invested in cultural infrastructure through TRENČÍN si TY. The Trenčín Regional Government agreed an operational budget of EUR 5 million for ECoC on 27 September 2021, following extensive cultural infrastructure investments. This confirms the region's active and unequivocal support for culture. All mayors of seventeen Trenčín municipalities, as well as Czech partner Zlín and Uherské Hradiště, confirmed their cooperation for Trenčín 2026's cultural programmes in meetings and aim to transform the city and region into key cultural players in Europe.

**"People represent the Trenčín Region's greatest strength and potential. I am very proud that Trenčín is one of the three shortlisted Slovak candidates for ECoC 2026. Our combined activities include supporting the region's cultural institutions and secondary schools with groundbreaking artistic experiences, and we're fully committed to continuing the candidacy's momentum."**

Jaroslav Baška, President of the Self-Governing Region of Trenčín

**"Trenčín 2026 is a unique opportunity for us to celebrate the present and transform the potential of this European region through long-lasting cultural and creative industry ties. Through the cross-border cultural collaborations outlined in this bid book, the ECoC will have a positive impact on our Zlín region that will benefit residents on both sides of the border. We strongly support Trenčín's candidacy for ECoC 2026!"**

Radim Holíš, Governor of the Zlín region (CZ)

The Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Defense, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs have expressed their support and declared active cooperation for the Trenčín 2026 project in personal meetings between the Mayor of Trenčín and respective ministers. They will support all of Trenčín's activities by connecting to their networks and resources in Slovakia and abroad involving embassies and foreign Slovak Institutes.

## Transport

All forms of transport (public and private transport, railways, bus, taxi, shuttle bus, aviation) are involved in this process, and clear cooperation agreements have been concluded at meetings with all city and regional transport companies.



## International transport



|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Prague</b><br>347 km<br>🚗 4h 30 min<br>🚆 5h<br>🚝 5h 40 min<br>➔ 35 min | <b>Budapest</b><br>264 km<br>🚗 3h 55 min<br>🚆 3h 10 min<br>➔ 35 min | <b>Košice</b><br>337 km<br>🚗 3h 40 min<br>🚆 4h 18 min<br>🚝 5h 50 min<br>➔ 50 min |
| <b>Zlín</b><br>76 km<br>🚗 1h 30 min<br>🚆 5h                               | <b>Piešťany</b><br>45 km<br>🚗 30 min                                |  |
| <b>Piešťany</b><br>45 km<br>🚗 30 min                                      | <b>Krakow</b><br>286 km<br>🚗 3h 50 min<br>🚆 6h 55 min<br>➔ 40 min   |  |

## Green city and region transport

Ecology, sustainability, and accessibility are priorities for the city and the region. Trenčín will gradually phase out traditional transport modes with alternative and ecological options. It will support the concept of park-and-rides and modify streets for bicycles. The city's future transport strategy aims to connect all city districts with safe cycle paths.

By 2021, 38 km of new cycle paths were completed in the city planning and another 66 km in the region. The city and regional self-governments will continue to invest jointly EUR 9,6 million in new cycle paths (approx. 15 km in the city) and adapt streets for alternative forms of transport. These improvements are scheduled for 2022 to 2025.

From 2022, the city will have new environmentally-friendly buses with alternative propulsion, low-floors, and internal LED info screens. Trenčín's regional bus operator will have adopted 100% ecological propulsion vehicles by 2023.

Scooter and bicycle rent services will be available by 2024 as flexible ways to discover the city, and visitors will be able to share car rides through the Curiosity Trenčín mobile app (p. 93) for 2023.

The tram connection from Trenčianska Teplá to Trenčianske Teplice will be a green way to get from Trenčín to spas and cultural programmes. For 2026, Trenčín 2026 will also renew the rail connection to Lednické Rovne for **Matter of Glass** and other glassworks-related programmes.

## Public and private transport

Six agreements have been signed with all national and regional transport companies (Slovak Railways, coach

companies, airlines) to strengthen connections to Trenčín. CIT will publish an english-slovak phrasebook for taxi and bus drivers, as well as for key hospitality personnel. Four cooperation agreements have been signed with private bus and shuttle service companies to shuttle artists and visitors in and around Trenčín.

## Accommodation Capacity

|                                    |        |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| Number of accommodation facilities | 467    |
| Number of beds                     | 18,322 |
| Hotels                             | 76     |
| Penzions, apartments               | 186    |
| Tourist hostels, cottages          | 197    |
| Autocamps                          | 8      |

Trenčín 2026 is working to ensure sufficient accommodation to cover programme and visitor needs—such capacities are associated with transport infrastructure and the overall visitor-movement strategy to ensure region-wide benefits.

## To inform and advocate

The Trenčín team for urban development has mapped five run-down facilities in the city and region, and motivated local hoteliers to develop the prerequisite youth-oriented hostels as an affordable option for Europe's young people. The strategy has been presented and positively received, with B&B owners in Trenčín and Trenčianske Teplice expressing their intention to turn their premises into youth art hostels. These owners also aligned with the New European Bauhaus values, and are considering sustainability, creativity, and involving artists in elaborating concepts. A great benchmark is Trenčianske Teplice's Baske Villa—managed by a famous musician, this B&B is already thriving through great cultural programmes and a creative local artist-led approach to hosting. This strategy aims to meet the ECoC's demand for affordable accommodation. Some private and public accommodation investments are already planned with 160 beds slated for use by 2026.

## To include people

The Trenčín 2026 Volunteering Programme (p. 73) will organise a special programme for hosts emerging from the current couchsurfers community. They will provide training to set up B&Bs. Trenčín 2026 website and app will facilitate connections between visitors with Trenčín hosts to truly experience authentic hospitality. Agreements with accommodation owners and the city's support in expanding accommodation capacity (low-cost accommodation, creating new facilities) will ensure short-term accommodation for guests.

## To connect

To optimise the Trenčín Region's accommodation capacities, a regional cultural shuttles plan will be implemented for 2026—with ECoC 2026 branding and open calls for small cultural events and interventions during the ride. These fully-accessible vehicles will operate throughout 2026, following a bespoke schedule to connect the city with the region, bringing people from rural areas to inclusive city events, and vice versa—including facilitating tourist mobility.

Residential apartments and studios for artists will be built by the city in the Cultural Community Center Dlhé Hony, by the Trenčín Regional Government at the Gallery of M.A. Bazovský and supported by private residency studios at Vinyllab, Men at Sound Studio, and the glassworks in Lednické Rovne.

will become a role-model accessible venue that will provide opportunities for community events and quality time.

**Trenčín Castle**—The Regional Government agreed to invest in innovation of the exposition spaces to create capacities for contemporary formats using digital technologies and interactive tools.

Further specified strategic venues:

The City of Trenčín has agreed to create a **Hybrid Production Lab** at the studio spaces of a reconstructed Creative Centre Hviezda, equipped with audiovisual and live streaming technology as a shared studio for cultural producers to support the creation of hybrid and online event formats. Expert staff will be recruited to assist with production, post-production, and the use of new and immersive technologies such as augmented reality.

**Maker Space of Trenčín's University**—this newly created creative centre at the Faculty of Special Technology of the University of Trenčín will connect its creative-technological facilities, programmes and expertise to Trenčín 2026 cultural programmes with a focus to support cross-sectoral development cultural and creative industries. There will be long-term and sustainable creative workshops in the concept of an open technological FAB LAB, accessible to beginners.

Please detail the state of play of the foreseen infrastructure projects detailed at the pre-selection stage, including the planned timetable for the works. Please clarify the links with the European Capital of Culture project.

# 43

The following table shows planned infrastructure (2021-2026) for the ECoC programme. TRENČÍN si TY shows a clear future investment plan that will support the City of Trenčín's ECoC 2026 candidacy, and is a priority for the city's future development.

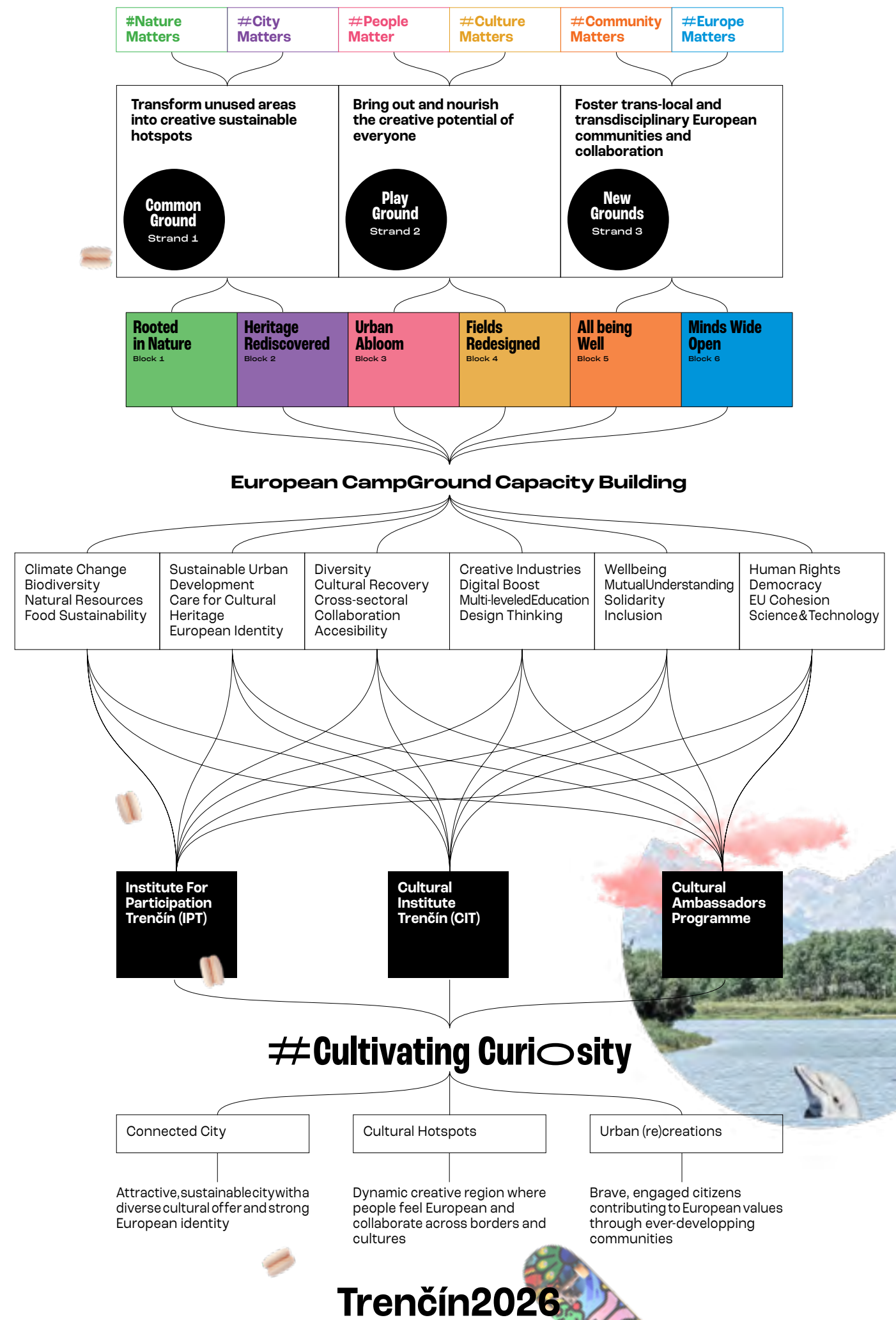
In recent months—in addition to the venues described in the pre-selection bid book—Trenčín Regional Government has planned further infrastructure projects to directly support the Trenčín 2026 programme:

**Trenčín Youth Library**—Trenčín Regional Government has agreed to a new building for Trenčín Youth Library, as the current one is not fit for repair. This contemporary building

| Category             | Item  | Estimated expenditure / Budget (€) | Time-table | Status      | Type of realisation  | Link to ECoC Programme  |
|----------------------|---|------------------------------------|------------|-------------|----------------------|---|
| Cultural hotspots    | Container Theatre                           | €420,000                           | 2022       | Authorised  | New                  | <a href="#">TAT, New Circus on the Block</a>                                |
| Cultural hotspots    | CC Hviezda*                                 | €6,505,859                         | 2022       | Authorised  | Reconstruction       | <a href="#">New New Music, New Generation of Creative Leaders</a>           |
| Urban (re) creations | Pedestrian zone Hviezdoslavova              | €4,980,000                         | 2024       | Authorised  | Revitalisation       | <a href="#">Sensitively on Brutalism, City Reimagined</a>                   |
| Urban (re) creations | Trenčín Si Ty—Riverbanks                    | €170,000                           | 2024       | In progress | Revitalisation       | <a href="#">Green Line, Aqua Vitae</a>                                      |
| Cultural hotspots    | Župný dom Museum building + new expositions | €6,850,000                         | 2025       | In progress | Reconstruction       | <a href="#">Underneath the Arches, Contemporary Castle</a>                  |
| Cultural hotspots    | Studio Hviezdodvor                          | €2,540,000                         | 2025       | In progress | New                  | <a href="#">World Music Fusions, Floating Communities, Within the Sound</a> |
| Cultural hotspots    | CC Dlhé Hony                                | €3,200,000                         | 2025       | In progress | New                  | <a href="#">Floating Communities, Generations Together</a>                  |
| Cultural hotspots    | CC Zlatovce                                 | €3,277,000                         | 2025       | In progress | Revitalisation       | <a href="#">Floating Communities, Festival of Illusions</a>                 |
| Urban (re) creations | Public space revitalisation—1. May Street   | €3,526,000                         | 2025       | In progress | Revitalisation       | <a href="#">Tuning the City, Public Escapades</a>                           |
| Connected city       | Old railway bridge                          | €4,500,000                         | 2023-2025  | In progress | New / Revitalisation | <a href="#">FiestaBridge, Sounds of Democracy</a>                           |
| Cultural hotspots    | 8 COs reconstruction in Trenčín             | €3,820,000                         | 2021-2025  | In progress | Reconstruction       | <a href="#">Floating Communities, Generations Together</a>                  |
| Cultural hotspots    | Capital expenditures connected to programme | €500,000                           | 2022-2026  | Planned     | New                  | 8 selected programmes   |
| Connected city       | Cycling infrastructure                      | €4,140,000                         | 2022-2024  | In progress | New                  | <a href="#">Green Line, Public Escapades</a>                                |



|                      |   |            |           |             |                                 |  |
|----------------------|---|------------|-----------|-------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Urban (re) creations | Public space Magnus                           | €541,000   | 2021      | Completed   | Revitalisation                  | Garage, Cool Interventions                                   |
| Urban (re) creations | Park and public space Úspech                  | €165,000   | 2021      | Completed   | Revitalisation                  | Chill Out Nooks, Dialogue Decoded Lab                        |
| Urban (re) creations | Rozkvet square                                | €520,000   | 2021      | Completed   | Revitalisation                  | Degustories, Tuning the City                                 |
| Urban (re) creations | Public space ul. Márie Turkovej               | €210,000   | 2022      | Authorised  | Revitalisation                  | Tuning the City, Every Part Counts                           |
| Urban (re) creations | Public space and playground Považská          | €270,000   | 2022      | Authorised  | Revitalisation                  | Tuning the City  |
| Urban (re) creations | Community public space and playground Pádivec | €800,000   | 2023      | In progress | Revitalisation                  | Every Part Counts, Generations Together                      |
| Urban (re) creations | Community public space and playground Opávia  | €420,000   | 2023      | In progress | Revitalisation                  | Every Part Counts, Generations Together                      |
| Urban (re) creations | Park CC Kubra                                 | €585,000   | 2024      | In progress | Revitalisation                  | Every Part Counts, Generations Together                      |
| Urban (re) creations | Park CC Zlatovce (ul. Na Kamenci)             | €370,000   | 2024      | In progress | Revitalisation                  | New Circus on the Block, Festival of Illusions               |
| Urban (re) creations | St. Anna square                               | €1,272,000 | 2025      | In progress | Revitalisation                  | Cool Interventions, City Reimagined                          |
| Connected city       | Regional cycling infrastructure               | €5,514,098 | 2023      | In progress | New                             | Green Line, Aqua Vitae                                       |
| Cultural hotspots    | Castle–TreBuChET                              | €2,993,969 | 2021      | Completed   | New / Revitalisation            | Contemporary Castle  |
| Cultural hotspots    | Trenčín Castle                                | €5,045,000 | 2022-2025 | Authorised  | Revitalisation / Reconstruction | Opening Ceremony, Contemporary Castle, Festival of Illusions |
| Cultural hotspots    | Gastro Centre                                 | €3,600,000 | 2022      | In progress | Reconstruction                  | Degustories, Modernism Revisited                             |
| Cultural hotspots    | Čachtice–Dražkovičov manor house / Museum     | 2 500 000  | 2023      | In progress | Reconstruction                  | Underneath the Arches, Contemporary Castle                   |
| Cultural hotspots    | Gallery of M.A. Bazovský                      | 4 630 000  | 2024      | In progress | Reconstruction                  | CAT, Modernism Revisited, City Reimagined                    |
| Cultural hotspots    | Public library of Michal Rešetka in Trenčín   | 5 180 000  | 2025      | In progress | Reconstruction                  | Seekers Formation, Trenčín Literature Fair                   |
| Cultural hotspots    | Synagogue                                     | 2 000 000  | 2023      | In progress | Reconstruction                  | Biennale of Contemporary Jewish Art                          |
| Cultural hotspots    | Maker Space of University of Trenčín          | 4 280 420  | 2023      | In progress | New                             | New Generation of Creative Leaders                           |
| Culture hotspots     | ODA   | 750 000    | 2024      | In progress | Revitalisation / Reconstruction | Sensitively on Brutalism, City Reimagined                    |





## The applicant:

Trenčín City Government, Trenčín Regional Government  
with 18 municipalities

## Municipalities

Richard Rybníček, Mayor of Trenčín  
Jaroslav Baška, President of the Self-Governing  
Region of Trenčín  
Radim Holíš, Governor of the Zlín region (CZ)



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**Trenčín 2026 bidbook is a  
collective effort of many  
collaborators who co-created the  
project together with our team  
and supported the preparations:**



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## Book Cover

We invited the citizens to shape the identity  
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