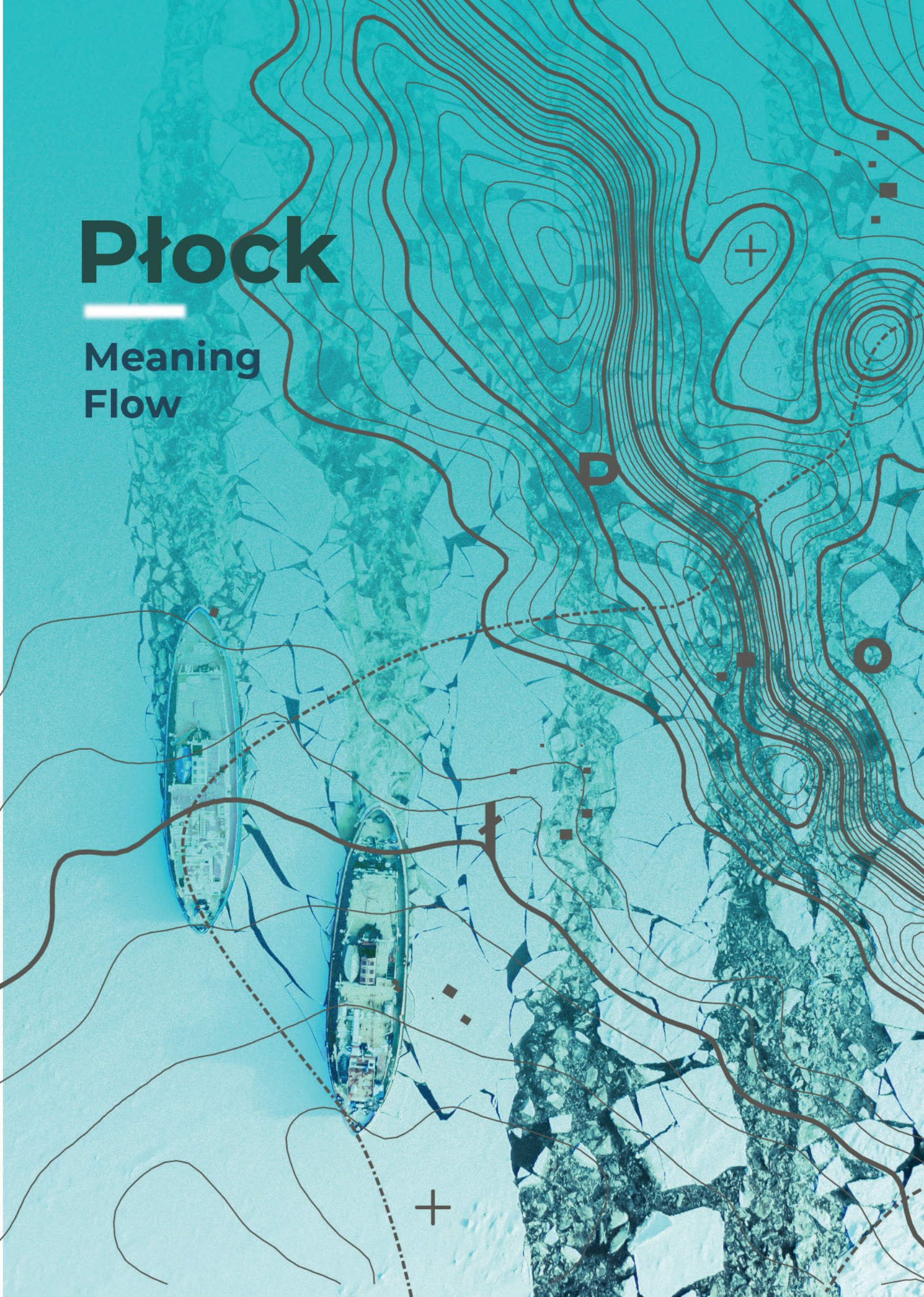


An aerial photograph of two icebreakers navigating through a dense field of sea ice. The image is overlaid with a topographic map in a reddish-brown color, featuring contour lines, a dashed line, and various symbols like a cross, a circle, and a square. The text 'Płock' is prominently displayed in the upper left, with a horizontal line and the words 'Meaning Flow' below it.

Płock

Meaning
Flow

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Płock. European Capital of Culture 2029

Andrzej Nowakowski

Mayor of Płock

Roman Siemiątkowski

Deputy Mayor of Płock for Social Policy

Team of the City of Płock:

Joanna Banasiak, Alina Boczkowska, Anna Bramska, Marzena Kapuścińska, Inga Kujawa-Zawadzka, Radosław Malinowski, Adam Mieczkowski, Alicja Wasilewska and staff of the Department for Culture and the Promotion of Social Initiatives

Concept:

Michał Bargielski, Wojciech Gorczyca, Edyta Ołdak, Karol Wittels

Preparation of the application:

Małgorzata Mostek

Programme cooperation:

Anna Galas-Kosil, Tomasz Gutkowski, Joanna Klass, Michał Rudnicki, Jan Wais

Layout and graphic design:

Edyta Ołdak

Coordination:

Monika Gołębiowska

Proofreading:

Alicja Szóstka

Translation:

Marcin Łakomski

<https://nowy.plock.eu/esk2029/>

Introduction

Why does your city wish to take part in the competition for the title of European Capital of Culture?

Płock, like any city, grows out of its history, natural and cultural legacy, commercial and industrial heritage, and current socio-economic opportunities. **Like other cities in Europe, Płock is grappling with a vast array of challenges:** adapting to climate change and reducing the negative impact on the environment, migration and the associated integration and disintegration of communities, as well as technological development and ways to tap the potential that lies in the combination of science and the creative sector.

The uniqueness of Płock is in seeing global phenomena through the prism of local challenges. Here, urban life is tangible and visible, and the residents of Płock are not an

anonymous statistic: their ambitions and successes are real, palpable, with a direct impact on shaping the common space.

At this time, Płock is facing a unique opportunity that will allow it not only to continue its development but also to make better use of its resources, strengthen its identity, and become more attractive to residents, tourists, and investors.

This opportunity is CULTURE – a universal tool that will directly support the implementation of the city's most important strategic objectives. Culture is a vehicle for history, community experience, economic potential and relevance; it reflects the different aspects of city life and gives a guarantee of cohesion, creating a unified and distinctive image of the city.



The strength of Płock lies in its residents. Their ideas and initiatives drive its development and create a unique climate. They are active and creative, bold and open-minded. Nothing is impossible for them, there is always a solution. They have their passions and lots of energy, which they are willing to share with the whole of Europe.

Andrzej Nowakowski, Mayor of Płock



It should be stressed that **the efforts to develop the cultural sector in Płock did not begin with our entry into the competition for the title of European Capital of Culture 2029.** Both institutions and non-governmental organisations, as well as individual artists, have been active in the cultural sector in our city for many years. Cultural investments are included in the Multiannual Financial Forecast until 2049, and the city supports the infrastructural needs of organisations by working closely with businesses and successfully leveraging the public-private partnership model. The city's long-term cultural policy has recently been drafted. The document was adopted by a Resolution of the Płock City Council at its session on 31 August 2023. **The development of culture to date, the activity of the artistic community, and the stable financial**

position of the cultural sector encourage Płock to aspire for more: for the title of European Capital of Culture 2029.



For Auxerre, a sovereign city for 800 years, your candidacy is also a reflection of our history. This is why our city's authorities also see our sisterhood as accompanying you on this journey. The ties that have been forged throughout the partnership of our cities bring a mutual commitment to sharing and exchanging experiences.

Crescent MARAULT, Mer Auxerre

Does your city plan to involve its surrounding area? Explain this choice.

Płock has been the centre of the region since its beginnings. Today's functional area includes the city and three districts (*powiats*) with a permanent population of 313,500¹. The local governments forming the area are already cooperating with Płock in a partnership supported with dedicated investment funds under the European Funds for Mazovia. One of the key measures in the preparation and implementation of the ECOC will be the integration of culture in the joint development projects planned under the territorial strategy. **The districts which are part of the Urban Functional Area will be offered a cooperation programme for joint creative and educational activities within the framework of the European Capital of Culture 2029.**

The municipalities around Płock are members of the Association of Municipalities of the Płock Region². Other towns of regional importance beyond the immediate vicinity include Włocławek, Ciechanów, Kutno, Gostynin, Sierpc; those some kilometres away are Sanniki and Żelazowa Wola. The region is home to such institutions as the Skansen – Museum of the Mazovian Countryside in Sierpc, the Open-Air museum

of the Vistula settlement in Wiączemin Polski, the Museum of the Middle Vistula and the Wyszogród Land – branches of the Mazovian Museum in Płock. The nearby town of Grzybów is home to the Organic Folk High School whose mission is organic farming in a global, regional, and local context. This institution plays a significant role in activities building social relations through the development of links with nature. These localities will be offered an open-call programme of partnership projects. **The city will launch a special initiative to establish a grant programme at the level of the Mazovian Voivodship for the implementation of joint projects within the framework of the European Capital of Culture 2029.**

The region features many resorts located around Płock. Some of them boast unique architecture, while others have an interesting history of industrial change. Some locations, such as the roundhouses in Miałków, are attracting interest of artists and curators who aspire to turn them into modern institutions for culture and cultural education. The title of European Capital of Culture 2029 for Płock may help it apply for funds to restore these spaces for tourism (including cultural tourism) under regional and EU funds.

¹ Local Data Bank, Statistics Poland (GUS) [accessed on 18.08.2023 r.]

² These include: Bielsk, Bodzanów, Brudzeń Duży, Bulkowo, Czerwińsk, Drobin, Gąbin, Łąck, Mała Wieś, Nowy Duninów, Radzanowo, Słupno, Stara Biała, Staroźreby, Wyszogród, gmina Gostynin, Pacyna, Szczawin Kościelny, and Płock.

The strategic partner for Płock in the context of the European Capital of Culture will be Warsaw with its communication, tourism, and cultural potential. **The cooperation is expected to include a joint information campaign and close cooperation between cultural institutions and non-governmental organisations on projects (especially projects for audience engagement and development and strengthening the competencies of cultural staff).**

Another natural point of reference for Płock as European Capital of Culture will be provided by

all the cities on the Vistula. **As such, we envisage a mutual presentation of the cultural offer with all the major urban centres on the Vistula.** The organisational ambitions of Toruń and Bydgoszcz currently make us competitors for the title, but they show that cooperation in cultural initiatives unites the cities on the Vistula more than ever before. Regardless of the final outcome of the competition, Płock will strive to strengthen cultural cooperation with its neighbours on the Vistula.

Explain briefly the overall cultural profile of your city.

Compared to other sub-regional capitals in the Mazovian Voivodeship (with the obvious exception of Warsaw), as well as other large district capitals in Poland, Płock stands out for its high rate of participation in culture.

There are five municipal cultural institutions in Płock:

- the Franciszka and Stefan Themerson Płock Centre for Culture and Arts, which also includes, among others, the Mira Zimińska-Sygietyńska Amphitheatre,
- the Władysław Broniewski Płock Library, including the eMka multimedia library and its branches,
- the Witold Lutosławski Płock Symphony Orchestra,
- the Płock Art Gallery,
- the Pueri et Puellae Cantores Plocenses Choir

The Mazovian Voivodeship manages the following institutions:

- the Mazovian Museum with its branches, including the Museum of Mazovian Jews, whose activities are co-financed from the city budget,
- the Jerzy Szaniawski Theatre.

The city also has a Diocesan Museum; the Zieliński Scientific Library, which is part of the Płock Scientific Society; as well as the Library of the Higher Theological Seminary and the Pedagogical Library.

As regards cultural education, the city's out-of-school educational institutions include: the

King Matt the First Youth Cultural Centre, and the "Children of Płock" Scouts' Song and Dance Ensemble. Educational institutions are an important part of Płock culture, including the Karol Szymanowski State Music School of the First and Second Degree, and the Władysław Drapiewski First Private Secondary School of Fine Arts.

Key cultural activities engaging the local residents are offered by the Co-operative Cultural Centre and housing estate clubs, as well as many non-governmental organisations active in the Płock community, implementing not only occasional but also cyclical projects, which are permanent landmarks of the city's cultural scene. These institutions and the third sector operate in a close network of relationships, which opens space for the flow of potential of cultural staff, exchange of ideas and experiences, and in particular broad and lasting cooperation.

It should be noted that the efforts of non-governmental organisations to make culture accessible are unique on a national or even European scale. The OTO JA Association holds one of the largest collections of Art Brut in Europe and has established a methodology of working with artists with intellectual disabilities. The Mazovian Association of Work for the Disabled "De Facto" makes visual culture accessible through, among others, the Festival of Culture and Art for the Blind.

Culture in Płock is a diverse and dynamically developing area of social life. The cultural milieu

in Płock is not limited to a single sector but combines various forms of expression, from the visual arts and music to theatre and literature. With an enormous long-term and personal commitment, an impressive amount of work and effort is put into cultural initiatives. These

interdisciplinary and diverse activities testify to creativity, passion, and determination, and are the driving force behind culture in Płock. The wide range of activities not only enrich the cultural life of the city but also build its identity and prestige.

Explain the concept of the programme that would be launched if the city is designated as European Capital of Culture.

Płock, with its location and history, is an example of the archetypal city. The city is situated on the Vistula, Poland's largest river which was a key transport and trade route, on a defensive hill, the Tumskie Hill, which was the seat of the first rulers at the beginning of Polish statehood. "Since time immemorial", the Vistula has been a part of the city's natural and cultural heritage, an important element of identity of the residents.

That is why river, water, flow – symbols of change, experience, life, and relationships – are the leitmotif of the ECOC programme.

A river begins its course without a clear direction. It meanders, traces unique patterns and paths, explores its surroundings, adapts and learns. A river's path is created by continuous flow and interaction with nature, while animals and people follow different routes to reach it. Cities have formed and developed in the same way: in a process of choices and transformations, encounters with other people and with nature, always as close as possible to the life-giving water.

In Płock, as everywhere in the world, one seeks one's own **trail**: the leitmotif of existence that imbues it with **meaning**. The riverside connects the paths along which the life of the city has flowed and continues to **flow**: social and economic life, related to the ecosystem of the natural environment and human activity. To explore those paths is to discover the traces of

nature, history, and culture. It is an attempt to understand their **meanings**, and to understand that we leave our own traces and experiences on the trail.

That is why the concept of the European Capital of Culture 2029 programme for Płock is captured by a dialogue between two concepts: TRAIL and FLOW.

During the preparations and in the year of the title, the participants of the ECOC activities will follow three trails: the trail of discoveries, the trail of transformations, and the trail of relations (the detailed description is presented in the following sections of the application). In this way, the Vistula will become a source of stories which, through the shared experience of participation in a living contemporary culture, will settle into local and European identity like layers of sand. All events, activities, and processes will be carried out in line with the concept of flow: flow of resources, flow of time, flow of meanings. As a result, the programme makes direct reference to the sources of European culture, whose origin lies in "dialogue". According to its root, the Greek phrase *dia logos*, the term means "movement between words", and therefore conversation. However, the meaning goes deeper, leading to a moment when those engaged in dialogue suspend their sense of self and open up to another perspective, in other words: when there is a "flow of meanings".

Contribution to the long-term strategy

Describe the cultural strategy that is in place in your city at the time of the application, including the plans for sustaining the cultural activities beyond the year of the title?

The development of the Cultural Policy of Płock until 2030 was finalised on 31 August 2023. On that day, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 974/LVI/2023 approving the document, one of the strategic documents included in the City of Płock Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030 ("SZRMP"). The key pillars of the document include:

- developing **ENTREPRENEURSHIP** in culture
- impacting the **SPATIAL** and social order
- promoting **OPENNESS** to new art forms
- awakening historical and creative **CURIOSITY**
- **MAKING** the city attractive through the organisation of unique cultural events.

According to its cultural policy, Płock wants to become even more of a city of a culturally vibrant, creative, and open-minded community, which

values its identity and history and invests in close relations with its surroundings that provide an impulse for strength, change, and innovation. Płock wants to develop as a dynamic centre of creativity, culture, and innovation, attracting residents, tourists, and investors as a unique phenomenon.

This application is consistent with the key directions of action set out in the cultural policy of Płock, primarily in view of activities such as the development and integration of the cultural sector, strengthening social capital through the promotion of dialogue and awareness of interdependence, conducting effective communication at local and supra-local levels. The concept of European Capital of Culture 2029 is fully in line with the programmes described in the city's cultural policy:



When I was a little girl, I thought all rivers were as amazing as the Vistula in Płock. I was very surprised later on.

Miss Dorys, street artist



programmes to support cultural operators

- a tailor-made training programme,
- networking and resource sharing,
- research programmes and support for partnerships abroad;

cultural education programmes

- development of future-oriented competences, long-term and sustainable cooperation between educational institutions and cultural institutions,
- youth activity programmes,
- cultural education programmes and artistic/cultural/social activities focusing on the natural and urban heritage,
- artist-in-residence schemes;

programmes for making culture accessible

- supporting the creativity and artistic practice of residents,
- digital accessibility,
- making culture accessible to people with disabilities.

The cultural policy document was developed by an expert team based on the strategic objectives of the city and the region, an analysis of the current condition of culture in the city, and a survey of the cultural needs of residents. As a result, the cultural policy supports the implementation of long-term municipal and regional programmes in social, economic, and spatial dimensions. As such, both the cultural policy of Płock and, consequently, this programme cover participation, social integration, education, the use of tradition and the city's history to strengthen economic processes. It should be emphasised that both strategies (city development strategy and cultural policy) have a time horizon until 2030. This means that the implementation of the ECOC in 2029 will make a key impact on strategic planning in the years beyond 2030.

It is an important strategic direction for Płock to transform public spaces, which is why cultural policy and the ECOC programme also refer to the Płock Revitalisation Programme. In this regard, cultural activities are a key part of the revitalisation of inner-city neighbourhoods and the city centre, and they help to counteract negative trends in areas less well connected by public transport to the centre of Płock.

It should be stressed that the Cultural Policy of Płock until 2030 refers to national and regional strategic documents:

- the National Strategy for Regional Development 2030,
- the Social Capital Development Strategy,
- the Strategy for Cultural Development in the Mazovian Voivodeship for 2023-27.

These strategic documents make reference to key challenges and trends that are relevant from the perspective of Płock, including demographic challenges and the need to address the industrial heritage, as well as the current profile of the city. That is why, in the following years, cultural institutions need to address developments unfolding in other sectors, in particular industrial and technological development and social changes, which have been identified as important strategic factors (changes in social structure, suburbanisation, cooperation with local governments of the functional area of the city, depopulation). Such actions are included in both the Cultural Policy of Płock and the ECOC 2029 programme.

Climate change and political processes will require updates of the strategy and continuous modification of the vision for the future of Płock. In this context, it is important to leverage cultural and artistic education in young people's creative activities (within the next decade) and in active engagement for the local community. The programme covers this component, as well.

The broad strategic context makes it clear that activities of the city of Płock in the cultural sector are in no way haphazard or short-lived, and that the ECOC programme concept directly relates to the cultural policy of the city and the development strategy of the city and the region.



Describe the city's plans to strengthen the capacity of the cultural and creative sectors, including through the development of long term links between these sectors and the economic and social sectors in your city.

The implementation of the Cultural Policy of Płock until 2030 is aimed at the socio-economic revival of the city and the building of social capital by supporting the implementation of strategic objectives related to the development of a knowledge-based economy, a pro-investment economic policy, and the building of a participatory civil society. Cultural policy is expected to contribute to the implementation of SZRMP Strategic Objective 2.3 ("Development of the knowledge economy") by means of:

- promoting culture as a creative and innovative sector: as a city with a rich history and extensive cultural heritage, Płock can become a hub of creativity and innovation. Supporting local artists, organising festivals, opening up spaces for creators (e.g., cultural centres, coworking spaces for artists) contribute to the development of the creative economy;
- supporting education and professional development: fostering cultural and creative education contributes to the development of skills and qualifications that are key to the contemporary economy.

Cultural policy is also intended to support SZRMP Strategic Objective 2.1 ("Innovative education") by promoting and integrating arts and culture into educational programmes. This may include promoting entrepreneurship through creative industries such as design, music, film, visual arts, etc.

Since the 1960s, Płock has been a favourite set for films and TV shows. Thanks to an open competition and a system of incentives for the film industry, it will be possible to promote the presence of the city on the screen. The same tools will be used to attract developers of computer and mobile games. Another area of focus is the city's historical and cultural heritage. The objective of efforts taken in this area is to creatively reinterpret the city's resources: to create design projects, for example, based on traces of Olęder culture, to use the digital resources of institutions, and to present them in new contexts.

Płock boasts a rich history as an economic powerhouse and, as such, offers unique conditions for exemplary collaboration in the implementation of interdisciplinary projects. For centuries, trade formed the economic foundations of the city (mainly due to its location on the Vistula). The breakthrough came in the middle of the 20th century, when the city became an important hub of the petrochemical industry. Ever since then, energy, logistics, and business have played a key role in Płock. This potential is also very promising for the cultural development of Płock.

In the development of this area, the city wants to create a venue for educational and cultural activities based on chemical sciences. It is worth noting that chemistry, according to its root word, is also (although on a different level) a science of dialogue: it is the study of the properties of substances and the observation of transformations among them. The venue would make use of the potential and resources of Płock, cooperating in the scientific dimension with the Warsaw University of Technology – Branch in Płock and the Mazovian Academy. As regards business, the key partners would include ORLEN SA with its Research and Development Centre, as well as the Płock Industrial and Technological Park.

The project would combine science, culture, and art with business in a long-lasting, systematic way. Crucial to the success of this concept would be its social and cultural profile, a unique combination of science and entertainment in the form of a new institution, such as an experience park, a place for the exchange of ideas, practices, and forms of expression between different age groups and representatives of many industries. From the perspective of artists, it would be interesting, for example, to work on new materials in art; on the other hand, from the perspective of science, it would be inspiring to launch creative processes that would support the development of technological innovation. In addition to setting up the cultural institution, the City of Płock would donate a building for its

operation. The investment could be implemented with the support of European funds for which this kind of activity is one of the directional priorities for the coming years. This action is also fully in line with the “Framework of support for the cultural and creative sectors in Poland” (Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, December 2022).

The benefits of such a project cannot be overestimated, both on an economic level (development of the local knowledge economy, innovation and new investment) and on a social level (increased interest in science, supporting residents' passions, centre of skills related to science, culture and arts). This project is therefore a strategic priority action.

How is the European Capital of Culture action included in this strategy?

The activities planned under the European Capital of Culture 2029 programme could be described as an “implementing act” for the Cultural Policy of Płock until 2030. The entry into the competition was directly inspired by an analysis of the condition of the cultural sector in Płock, an analysis of its strengths and weaknesses, and the identification of the city's prospects for further development. Applying for the title of European Capital of Culture has been included in the city's cultural policy as an opportunity to strengthen the cultural sector.

The ECOC programme follows from the cultural, historical, natural, and economic resources of the city. It directly relates to the geographical location of Płock and its implications, both past and present. Some of the projects are planned in the areas covered by the revitalisation plan as complementary to investments in the city's infrastructure. The programme draws fully on the city's multicultural heritage, on the potential, commitment, and ambitions of cultural and educational organisations, and on the experience and ideas of cultural creators and animators. The title of European Capital of Culture 2029 would be both a crowning and a stock-taking of ongoing processes.

In view of the strong presence of many festivals in the cultural space of the city, the ECOC 2029 programme does not provide for new “mega-events”; instead, it leverages the potential of the current cultural offer by increasing the creative, production, and promotional reach and by strengthening the competences of its organisers. For this reason, the proposed programme is dominated by activities of a process-oriented and long-term nature as a natural complement to festival events, while building the sector's capacity for the years after the ECOC.

At the heart of the programme are activities based on the cultural resources in Płock:

- the work of Franciszka and Stefan Themerson, avant-garde artists of world renown whose universal work was born in Płock,
- the heritage of the Olęder settlements: those newcomers from Friesland and the Netherlands in the 16th and 17th century established villages on the Vistula and its tributaries, worked in agriculture, animal husbandry, cereal and fruit growing, and practised crafts, especially weaving,
- museum collections of our institutions: the Mazovian Museum with its unique Art Nouveau and Art Deco collections, a gallery of Far Eastern art, artefacts related to the Themersons, and a section documenting the history of the Mazovian Jews; the Diocesan Museum with its collections of valuable medieval manuscripts and old prints, including the 12th century “Płock Bible”.

Residents of Płock are active participants in cultural events, as evidenced not only by observation but also the diagnostic section of the city's cultural policy, which is why the ECOC programme features many interactive and participatory activities, including access to culture for people with special needs. The Festival of Culture and Art for the Blind has been held in Płock for 13 years.

Initiatives to digitise cultural heritage (including the valuable collection of the Zieliński Scientific Library held by the Płock Scientific Society) are part of the activities in preparation for the ECOC to directly address the current needs of cultural sector institutions and organisations.

The identified needs for international networking of organisations and institutions are captured by the idea of combining the activities of the ECOC Office with the organisation responsible for the mentoring and training programme for Płock cultural staff (Płock Cultural Hub). The programme promotes and supports regional, supra-local, and international cooperation. As such, it is fully aligned with the objectives for the development of the cultural sector in Płock.



If your city is awarded the title of European Capital of Culture, what do you think would be the long-term cultural, social and economic impact on the city (including in terms of urban development)?

If Płock is awarded the title of European Capital of Culture, it will bring many benefits to the city, which will profoundly and sustainably strengthen and help to develop the city on the threshold of the fourth decade of the 21st century. It will be a catalyst for the development of the city in many dimensions, building cultural potential for generations to come.

Cultural impact:

- As the historical centre of the region, Płock will have the opportunity to strengthen its place on the cultural map of Europe: cultural cooperation with cities of the region and partner cities will support the creation of a sustainable network of cultural organisations at regional, national, and international levels.
- Implementation of the ECOC programme will contribute to strengthening local traditions and heritage while opening the city to new European inspirations, making the inhabitants of Płock and the region more aware of their participation in the European mosaic of cultures.
- Cooperation with partner cities and invited institutions and artists will provide an opportunity to exchange experiences and practices and develop new forms and tools. By combining traditional art forms with new, innovative forms of expression, the ECOC programme will contribute to the development of the resources and potential of cultural institutions, organisations and creators.

- The workshops, trainings and projects will help to develop the competencies of cultural staff, especially in running international projects, raising European funds for projects, and modern tools for cultural management. This capital will be used in the following years to further develop the sector.

Social impact:

- Płock will be a city where diversity and inclusion go hand in hand, which is why the planned projects support the participation and integration of different social groups.
- The programme builds on local heritage and resources to promote knowledge of the city, its past and future possibilities, and to make residents feel even more a sense of belonging to a city with such a rich history and culture.
- Thanks to the broad communication of European values, the residents of Płock and the region will feel more connected to Europe and its cultural heritage.
- Activities carried out under the programme will contribute to the revitalisation of the local community, increase its participation in culture and, through the implementation of projects of a social nature, strengthen bonds between residents.
- As a result of the programme, the residents of Płock and the region will gain access to a wider and more attractive range of educational programmes and workshops.

Economic impact:

- Holding the title of European Capital of Culture 2029, Płock will be an attractive destination for investors and tourists.
- Cooperation with key business and scientific partners (such as ORLEN SA) will contribute to the development of innovation and research, which will directly support economic growth of the city.
- Płock will further invest in the development of infrastructure, especially with cultural functions, transforming urban spaces into places for integration and meetings.

City development:

- The cross-sectoral cooperation proposed under this programme will drive the development of the competencies of the future. The city will become a place where science, culture, and business meet, creating synergies that strengthen the development of the city and the region.
- Thanks to initiatives such as the CIFAL Centre (training centre of the UN Institute

for Training and Research UNITAR), Płock is already focusing on transition while respecting social needs and traditions, caring for the environment and the well-being of its residents. As best proof of the local government's strategic focus on sustainable policies, the Deputy Mayor for Investment has become responsible for this UN-affiliated institution. Thus, through further sustainable development, Płock will become a model for other cities in pursuit of responsible urban practices.

- Cooperation with Warsaw and other cities on the Vistula will contribute to the establishment of strategic partnerships with a positive impact on the development of Płock. We expect that the cities to be named European Capitals of Culture in the following years (2024-2028) will collaborate with Płock, ensuring long-term systemic development of relations and the implementation of joint cultural, social, and economic projects in the coming years.

Outline briefly the plans for monitoring and evaluation.

An important part of Płock's application is to reflect on and review the effects of the actions taken. Once the title is awarded, quantitative and qualitative indicators will be defined for the success of the project and the fulfilment of its objectives. The indicators will be developed by an expert team and will be subject to periodic review and modification.

During the preparations and in the ECOC year, the qualitative indicators directly from the programme and the city's cultural policy will be monitored, including the accessibility of the cultural offer, the degree of networking and cooperation, and the interdisciplinary nature of projects and activities. Evaluation will be facilitated by the inclusion of the ECOC programme in competitions for non-governmental organisations and in reporting by cultural institutions. The participation of residents and visitors from outside Płock in cultural and educational events will be monitored, both quantitatively (participation statistics) and qualitatively (surveys

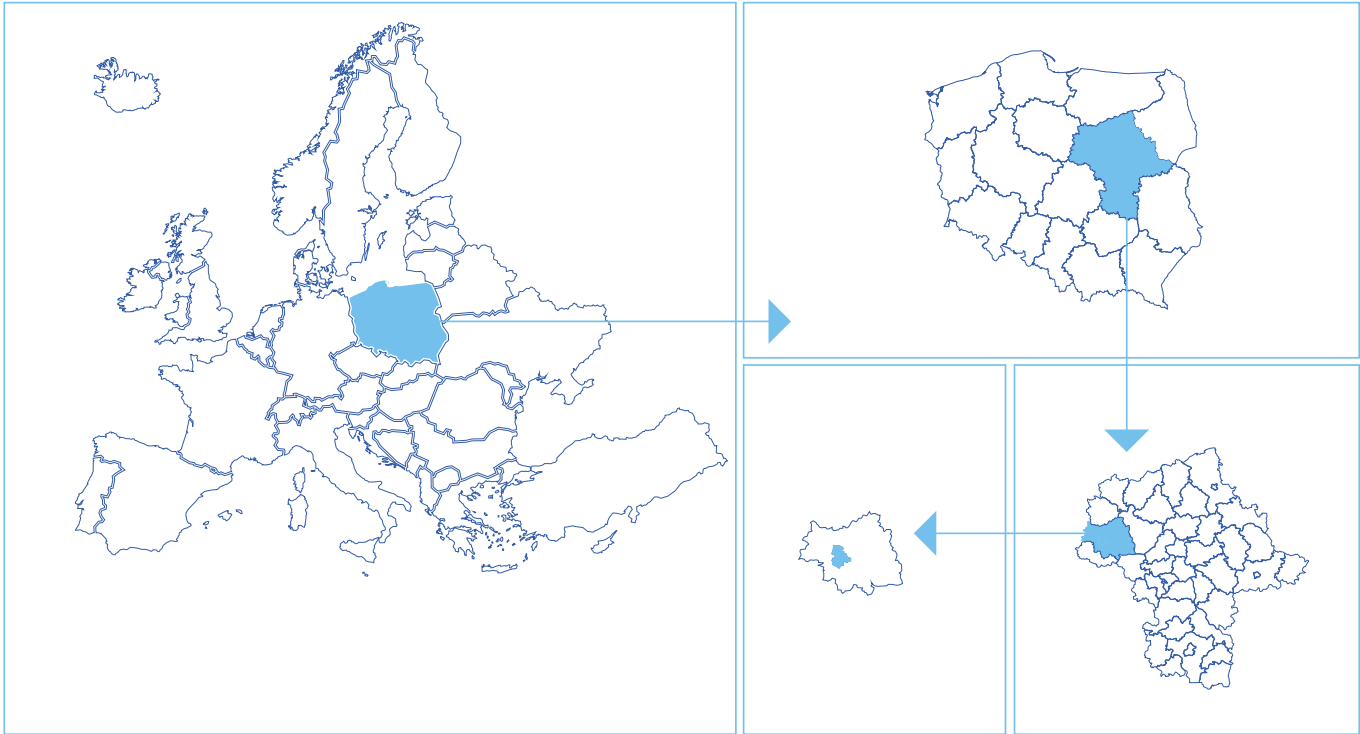
to assess the accessibility and quality of the offer). To encourage residents and tourists to take part in the surveys, they will be combined with cultural events and competitions with prizes related to the culture of Płock. Regular media monitoring and analysis of the different communication channels will be ensured.

Comprehensive surveys on the change in attitudes regarding the evaluation of the condition of culture in the city, the brand of Płock as a city of culture, and the needs and expectations of the residents and the cultural community will be carried out on three occasions: at the time of the title award, in the ECOC year, and three years after the end of the project. This timing will ensure an assessment of the long-term impact of the project. The survey will be carried out by means of questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus groups, supplemented by an analysis of media communications. An additional tool will be an online census of Płock culture: a self-report survey open to anyone who feels part

of the cultural sector. This will provide a picture of the changes in the community achieved through the implementation of the ECOC. As the development and implementation of the programme provides a unique opportunity to gauge the long-term change and impact of culture on the region's residents, the monitoring will be supplemented by biographical research to examine how the ECOC efforts and

implementation in Płock have impacted the lives of selected groups of residents. The participatory dimension of the work will be complemented by a citizen survey panel, which will meet annually with the same group of residents, representative for the demographic profile of the city. Together they will assess the condition, needs, and impact of Płock's culture on the quality of life in the city.

Stage/activity	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
definition and verification of indicators	x		x		x				
analysis of the degree of programme implementation and participation based on reports	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
analysis of the degree of budget execution	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
surveys on the cultural offer	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
media monitoring PL	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
media monitoring EUR					x	x	x		
analysis of the different communication channels	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
comprehensive survey on attitude changes	x					x			x
citizen survey panel	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
evaluation report			x		x		x		x



Cultural and artistic content

What is the artistic vision and strategy for the cultural programme of the year?

The application for the title of European Capital of Culture is not considered a one-off event but rather the culmination of many years of processes that have been ongoing in Płock for many years.

Płock is a place with a unique identity and, at the same time, a universal metaphor for the city, embodied in a dialogue of two notions: **TRAIL** and **FLOW**. Situated almost in the geographical centre of Poland, on Poland's largest river, Płock has for centuries been a centre of settlement and trade, science and culture, a seat of state and religious authority, and an industrial powerhouse; a territory of migration of living beings and flows of goods, money, and ideas.

As a symbol of these two concepts, the river is the companion of change, experience, life paths, and relationships. The river is water necessary for the life of every being on this planet, a living organism, a "sister river"³. It is the natural element of **flow**: flow of relationships and of direct, authentic contact with the environment. It is also a route that is constantly searching for a way to

uniquely express itself: creating, losing or finding its own **trail**. The river contains the knowledge and science of how the relationships of nature, environment, and life are formed. It is their companion.

In this story about Płock, water – whose potential and subjectivity are manifested primarily in the form of the Vistula River flowing through the city – becomes the starting point and the first link of the programme. It is an element of natural and cultural heritage, and an important element of identity emphasised by the residents. In the programme, the river becomes the beginning of a new narrative in which humans give priority to nature in telling the future of the European city. The trails and flows become new experiences that shape European identity and lead through a story about the need to shape a new nature-human relationship that takes into account both the heritage of the city and its surroundings, the presence of new inhabitants and non-human beings who equally contribute to the urban living space.



[Płock] is the unjustly bypassed capital of Poland, the seat of rulers, Władysław Herman and Bolesław Krzywousty, of pre-Christian tribes, a museum of Art Nouveau, and the Vistula, the widest in its course.

Ireneusz Czop, actor



³ "Sisters Rivers" is an art project by Cecilia Malik, an artist who gives subjectivity to rivers, rallies the community around them, and fights for their rights.

In her book *Wychylone w przyszłość. Jak zmieniać świat na lepsze*, the researcher and activist Joanna Erbel argues that our future will be born in smaller cities. Płock has all the assets necessary to become a venue for a new model of relationships, a laboratory in which nature, with all its human and non-human inhabitants, plays a leading role. It is here that the good life begins thanks to the possibility of entering into close relationships with nature, thanks to the slower pace of life; it is here that it can truly serve local communities and be co-created by them.

Reflection on the meaning of the city and its appropriate form relevant to the needs of its residents, has been present in the region for a long time. For example, the Museum of the Mazovian Countryside in Sierpc has a branch dedicated to the study of the history and nature of settlement, culture, and the flow of meanings: the Museum of the Small Town in Biezuń. The experience of this institution inspires broad reflection about the combination of local and global meanings. The Museum has for many years hosted regular meetings and presentations with ambassadors and diplomats from all continents. In this way, the local experience of western Mazovia could be confronted with ideas brought from all parts of the world, all this in the historic spaces of a town of barely two thousand inhabitants. This experience provides the inspiration to combine local and international (or even intercontinental) reflection, to establish and develop in Płock a forum of new ideas: the Laboratory of the City (working name).

According to this concept, the perspectives of “green” and “blue” become equal protagonists of the European Capital of Culture, just as the river has been the protagonist of the city and the driving force behind the changes in social life over the centuries. In the days when there was no town of Płock yet on the escarpment, Roman merchants transporting amber from the Baltic to southern Europe crossed the Vistula here. It was on the banks of the Vistula, in the vicinity of Płock, that Olęder settlers from the Netherlands, fleeing religious persecution in the 16th and 17th centuries, found freedom, security, and openness. From their practices of daily life emerged a remarkable cultural model, a system of coexistence between nature and humans. Their advanced agriculture, land reclamation

skills, and craftsmanship were also linked to the river trail and flows. They knew how to cooperate with nature, inviting water and animals to co-create their living space.

Owing to its location on the banks of the important transport route, the Vistula, Płock became a centre of trade and industry (including, in the course of time, the petrochemical industry), as well as an important inland port and shipyard around which new human settlements were organised. The Vistula was used by rafters to float timber and other goods necessary for the whole world, especially grain; their journeys to the Baltic provided an important link in the chain of the flow and intermingling of European cultures. From the great seaports they brought back stories, new designs, service models, incorporating Płock into the system of cooperation and exchange that today underpins the European Union, which seeks common traits of all of the continent's cultures. Today, wanderers once again come to Płock: economic migrants, contracted for an investment project of the petrochemical industry. They are newcomers from Asia, new residents of the city, to whom part of the programme is addressed, following the building of social relations based on the identification of needs, expectations, and potential.

With the burgeoning petrochemical industry, Płock secured for itself a vital place in the modern world. Fuels, plastics, and other products derived from oil offered humanity a bright future and the hope of solving age-old problems. This promise was also a pitfall. Overexploitation of natural resources has changed the economic model, affected social life, and oil derivatives and the effects of oil combustion have brought humanity to the brink of climate catastrophe. Once again, Płock has found itself at the centre of a changing world, and the city's experience of the change can make an important contribution to the European and global discussion about the future, new technologies, new social relations, and humans' place in the environment. The city's location on the banks of the Vistula, on Tumskie Hill which forms a natural amphitheatre, has for years been used to host Płock's biggest festivals.

Over the next few years, until 2029, Płock located on a picturesque Vistula escarpment will be home to sustainable long-term actions based on

democratic building of relations of cooperation, participation, collaboration. The Vistula will provide a reference point for democratising human attitudes towards nature, impacting other relations in the city. Intersectionality will be redefined based on the points of contact

between science and art. The legacy and long tradition of making culture accessible to people with disabilities will be the basis for building a new model for including their creative work in current and official art flow.

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.

The proposal for the cultural programme of the European Capital of Culture Płock 2029 combines events and processes, existing cultural activities and new proposals. In addition to the project proposals described below, competitions are planned for non-governmental organisations operating in the city, as well as open calls for institutions, organisations, and artists wishing to realise their ideas in Płock (both in the ECOC year and during the preparations). Programmatic and artistic consistency will be overseen by a curatorial team established within the ECOC Office structure.

The programme will meet four **PRINCIPLES**:

The principle of **STAYING UP-TO-DATE**

An important assumption in the ECOC 2029 programming is an in-depth analysis of the trends taking place in the world in the social, technological, and cultural space. Therefore, the programme will have to be updated depending on developments and events that take place in the following years. Another key concept will be the use of new technologies (including artificial intelligence, VR, AR, photogrammetry, 360 visualisation, video games) in culture and arts.

The principle of **DIVERSITY**

Through a variety of formats, the programme addresses a wide range of audiences and presents various ways of practising culture. Alongside large-scale events with a traditional format (such as performances, concerts, exhibitions), the programme will include activities based on grassroots social initiatives, showing urban activism as a manifestation of human creativity. Equally important are forms of active participation, including workshop activities carried out in cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary teams. Such models will allow creative potential to be unlocked, providing an opportunity to

develop new formats, not achievable through the presentation of ready-made artistic initiatives.

The principle of **INCLUSIVENESS**

All the proposed events have been reviewed to ensure that different audiences can be included, with particular attention to age and cultural differences and their specificities of cultural participation. An important aspect of the programme is to dedicate some of the activities to people with special needs and to try to integrate Art Brut into the official art circuit. The engagement process will address groups with different social status and cultural capital. The programme includes reflection on various forms of spending time, methods of forming social relations and presenting them in a way that is accessible to all.

The principle of **UNIVERSALITY**

The status of European Capital of Culture is a unique opportunity to talk about culture and the values associated with it in a broad and international way. This does not mean that there will be no place for what is local in the programme. On the contrary, social integration around a particular identity is one of the core European values.



Trail of Discoveries										
		The Lyrical Dimension of the Photo Frame	Płock TechLab	Free the Design	A Home with Tradition for Everyone	The Sound of Płock – The Sound of Europe	Around the Systems and Elements of the Vistula River	Płock XR. Digital art activities	On the Vistula about the Vistula. Theatrical and performative action	The Power of Illustration – an international exhibition for the young and the old
		I.1	I.2	I.3	I.4	I.5	I.6	I.7	I.8	I.9
time	2024		x					x		x
	2025		x					x		x
	2026		x					x		x
	2027	x	x				x	x		x
	2028	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	2029	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	2030		x	x	x			x		x
profile	flagship project	x						x	x	
	project / event	x					x			x
	process	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
dimension	European dimension	x		x	x	x	x	x		x
	supra-European dimension	x								
	local cultural initiatives, festivals, events	x					x		x	
theme	natural heritage		x					x	x	
	historical heritage			x	x	x	x	x	x	
	Olęder heritage			x	x			x		
	multicultural / intercultural Płock			x	x			x		
	Themersons	x		x		x				
	science and arts	x	x				x	x		
	new technology	x	x			x	x	x		
	inclusion			x	x			x		
	social projects	x	x	x	x		x			
	cultural education					x	x	x		
	cultural staff									
	changing the city fabric						x			

Trail of Transformations

		Art Brut. Development of ideas, presentation of collections	Small grants for community-based local actions	The Backyard Festival	New Neighbours – Stories of New Residents	Mentoring residencies for cultural operators	Summer Cooperation Camp	Futures Literacy Lab. Education support programme	Cultural education development programme	Wanderings of the New Circus	The Plock Fiddle: Reactivation	National Interdisciplinary Art Workshops
		II.1	II.2	II.3	II.4	II.5	II.6	II.7	II.8	II.9	II.10	II.11
time	2024		x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x
	2025		x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x
	2026		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
	2027		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	2028		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	2029	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	2030		x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x
profile	flagship project	x										
	project / event						x					x
	process		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	
dimension	European dimension	x			x		x	x			x	
	supra-European dimension				x			x			x	
	local cultural initiatives, festivals, events	x	x	x	x							
theme	natural heritage		x									
	historical heritage	x	x		x						x	
	Olęder heritage											
	multicultural / intercultural Plock		x		x		x			x		
	Themersons			x								
	science and arts	x				x		x	x			
	new technology							x	x		x	
	inclusion	x	x	x	x				x	x		x
	social projects	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		
	cultural education	x		x	x	x		x	x	x		x
	cultural staff		x			x	x	x	x		x	x
	changing the city fabric		x	x								

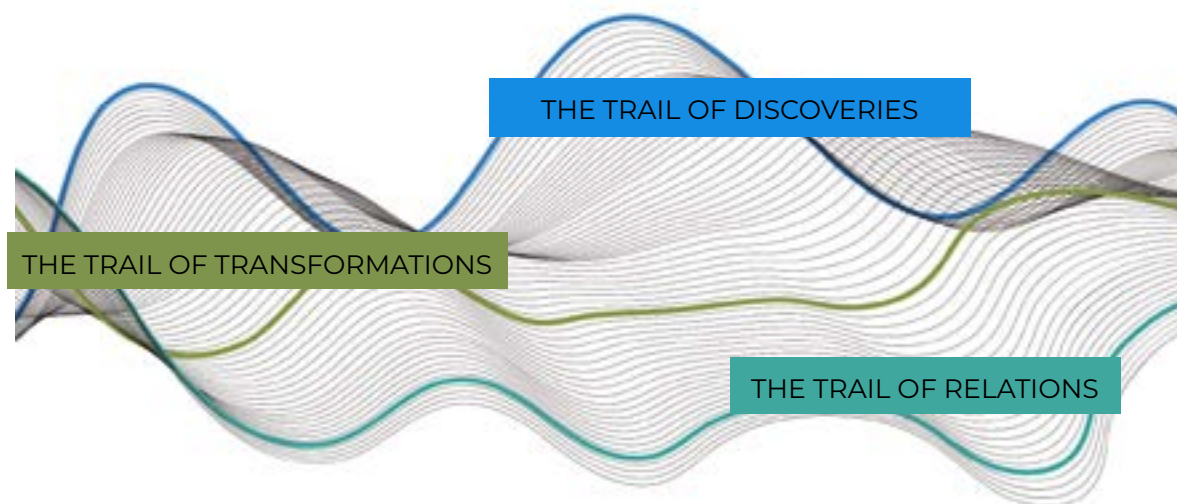
Trail of Relations										
			City of Positive Energy	In a World of Connections between Human and Non-human Worlds	Plant and fungi concerts	Plock – Connections. Small-Big, Old-Young Town	Forum for New Ideas – Laboratory of the City	How to Govern the Capital (of Culture)?	ReFine Plock. City improvement workshop	Open Museums
			III.1	III.2	III.3	III.4	III.5	III.6	III.7	III.8
time	2024		x	x						
	2025		x	x						
	2026		x	x						
	2027		x	x			x		x	
	2028		x	x					x	
	2029		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	2030		x	x						
profile	flagship project		x				x			
	project / event				x	x		x		
	process		x	x			x		x	x
dimension	European dimension		x			x	x			
	supra-European dimension						x			
	local cultural initiatives, festivals, events		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
theme	natural heritage			x	x	x			x	
	historical heritage			x		x			x	x
	Olęder heritage			x		x			x	
	multicultural / intercultural Płock					x				x
	Themersons		x		x		x			x
	science and arts				x	x	x	x	x	
	new technology				x		x		x	x
	inclusion			x		x			x	x
	social projects			x		x	x	x	x	
	cultural education			x			x	x		x
	cultural staff						x	x		
	changing the city fabric		x					x	x	

PROGRAMME

The art programme is based on the motif of river, water, and flow – symbols of change, experience, life paths, and relationships. In Płock, on the river, as everywhere else in the world, one searches for one's own trail – the leitmotif of life that imbues it with meaning. The riverside connects the paths along which the city's life flowed and continues to flow: social, economic, or simply human life. To explore them is to learn about the

traces of nature, history, and culture. It is also an attempt to understand their meanings – and to understand that we leave our own traces and experiences on the trail.

This is why the strategy of the cultural programme of the ECOC year in Płock is based on a dialogue of two concepts: TRAIL and FLOW, whose framework is formed by the following guiding threads: the trail of DISCOVERIES, TRANSFORMATIONS and RELATIONS.



I. THE TRAIL OF DISCOVERIES

The river itself is a trail. It carries and protects life, including people with their needs, affairs, and goods. The river carries information and meanings. The river's trail is created by the constant flow and interaction with nature, with animals and people taking different routes to find it. Both the path taken by river and the path leading to it represent choice, discovery, and learning. The flow of the river is not uniform and constant; it is complex and dynamic, just as the meaning of life's experiences varies depending on stage, situation, and perspective. On this trail, Płock's relationship with the river is a lesson in how activity and creative action help to adapt to the constant changeability of the world.

The trail of discoveries thus involves cultural education, understood as an area for shaping social competencies and finding tools for reading the future, an area for finding solutions in moments of crisis or unexpected change. This trail includes the literary and visual legacy

of the Themersons, who are associated with the city and whose legacy stemming from wide-ranging animation and social activity encourages international research based on the intermedia and artistic experimentation. In 2029, a new model for the production and distribution of crafts will be developed in Płock. Based on free licence and the relationship that the user of objects establishes with their maker, the local craftsman, it will offer a solution to the needs arising from global trends.

Key projects:

I.1. The Lyrical Dimension of the Photo Frame. The Themersons

Stefan Themerson was born in Płock. His parents were well-known Płock social activists. The Płock roots of the Themersons are commemorated by, among others, the Płock Centre for Culture and Art, which bears their name and popularises their work in the form of a festival, projects, and a mural in the city space. This programme can be financed by national and European grant

programmes (e.g., the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage programme “Visual Arts”, Creative Europe programme).

The motif of the Themersons encourages international exploration: in addition to initiatives carried out in collaboration with artists from other countries, the Themersons edited a tri-lingual magazine *f.a* published in Polish, French and English, dedicated to art film. Their work is not only a milestone in Polish cinematography⁴ but, above all, a field for formal experiments on the borderline between art and engineering of the era. The following are planned as part of the programme building on the Themersons’ oeuvre:

I.1.a. Cross-sectional exhibition of the Themersons

A presentation of a variety of strands of the Themersons’ work, highlighting the nature of the relationship between their work and that of the first avant-garde (Jankel Adler, Kurt Schwitters, Enrico Prampolini). The exhibition will include a screening of surviving films, among them the recently found “Europe”, as well as collages and photograms by Stefan Themerson related to filmmaking. There will be a presentation of Franciszka Themerson’s extensive illustration output, particularly from the period of her work on “bestlookers”, or best books to look at. Their joint work will be presented with the publishing house they established, Gobebocchus Press: the witty illustrator’s tricks that initiated a series of books not only for children. Collaboration will be established with the Marionette Theatre in Stockholm, where Franciszka created an extraordinary set for *King Ubu* in 1963-1964, showcasing masks, UBU comic book excerpts, collages, photographs, and theatre posters. The works on display will come from the collections of the Mazovian Museum in Płock, the National Museum in Warsaw, European and non-European cultural institutions listed in the table.

Institutions involved in the implementation of the programme	Mazovian Museum in Płock, Płock Centre for Culture and Arts, Płock Art Gallery, Władysław Broniewski Płock Library
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Proposed international partners

Sprengel Museum in Hannover (Germany), Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris (France), Themerson Archive in London (UK), Ubu Gallery in New York (USA), Israeli Museum in Jerusalem (Israel), Marionetteatern in Stockholm (Sweden), Kulturhuset Stadsteatern (Sweden), European ArtEast Foundation – London (UK)

I.1.b. From Dadaism to the Post-Internet (exhibition and research)

With reference to the Themersons’ experiments in the field of film, an exhibition is planned which will trace film experimentation from the first avant-garde (Luis Buñuel, Alberto Cavalcanti) through the second post-war period of experimental film (May Deren, Gregory Markopoulos, Kenneth Anger, Stan Brakhage, Willard Maas, Hans Richter) to the structural film of the 1960s (Andy Warhol, Peter Kubelka), Fluxus, and Expanded cinema. It will look at intermedia experiments, and present flagship examples of video art and “dirty realism” of the 1980s. The project will also include research attempting to define film experimentation after 2000. Questions about the limits of experimental film in the post-internet era will be explored through theoretical work and research with the involvement of foreign partners (Fundazione Bonotto).

Institutions involved in the implementation of the programme

Płock Centre for Culture and Arts, Płock Art Gallery, NOBISCUM Foundation, OTO JA Association, De Facto Association, Mazovian Museum in Płock

Proposed international partners

Fundazione Bonotto (Italy), The Emily Harvey Foundation (Italy), The Fluxus Heidelberg Center (Netherlands), Museum Vostell Malpartida (Spain), FLUXUS Museum – Potsdam (Germany), Archivio Maurizio Spatola (Italy), Edinburgh College of Art (UK)

⁴ “Europe” was found by the Pilecki Institute in the Berlin Bundesarchiv in 2019. A public showing took place at the Tate Modern in April 2020.

I.1.c. Residencies around the ideas of the first avant-garde in Central and Eastern Europe

An artist residency project for young artists from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe around the legacy of the Themersons and the creators of the first avant-garde in the region. The participants in the residency will attempt to present their own contemporary interpretations of the ideas developed by the artists of the period in art. The project can be funded by the Culture Moves Europe programme or the Creative Europe programme.

I.1.d. New Europe

What other, new Europe is possible in 2029? The avant-garde has always been driven by energy, activity, innovation, intransigence. These qualities are present in young people, which is why their voice will be so important in the reflection and dialogue about the new Europe they will shape. As part of the ECOC programme, a forum will be organised for the exchange of knowledge, competencies, and working methods among young people from different parts of Europe. The project will culminate in a several-day-long congress during the ECOC year, but the programme is a long-term, minimum three-year activity, including an online platform, seminars, exchanges of groups of young activists from Europe, and joint debates about the future. The action can be funded through the Erasmus+ programme.

Institutions involved in the implementation of the programme	Płock Centre for Culture and Arts, Youth Cultural Centre in Płock, Mazovian Local Government Teacher Training Centre – Branch in Płock, Mazovian Forum of Cultural Animators, Evens Foundation – Branch in Poland
Proposed international partners	European Youth Forum (Belgium), European Youth Foundation (France), Evens Foundation (Belgium)

I.1.e. Intermedia and Meta-worlds (artist residencies)

A residency programme for artists from different disciplines (musicians, visual artists, poets, writers) and different European countries. An open call for the programme will be addressed to artists working in various artistic media.

Ultimately, interdisciplinary teams will be formed to produce works around a broad thematic concept (Word | Image | Space). The output will be presented in the form of exhibitions, screenings, and online presentations. The project can be funded by Culture Moves Europe or the Creative Europe programme.

Institutions involved in the implementation of the programme	Płock Centre for Culture and Arts, Płock Art Gallery, NOBISCUM Foundation, Theatre in Płock
Proposed international partners	Goethe Institut (branches in different countries), Frans Masereel Centre (Belgium), Gasworks (United Kingdom), Camargo Foundation (France), Künstlerhaus Bethanien (Germany)

I.2. Płock TechLab

The programme is in large part dedicated to cross-sectoral partnerships and interdisciplinary activities combining different fields of science and art. Expanding the field of culture implies an artistic exploration of other fields, and an exchange between different disciplines. We will propose activities and active cooperation between scientific centres, especially those related to energy transition and green energy, and artists who engage in a dialogue with the heritage and output of the sciences. These activities can be funded, for example, by EU research programmes such as Horizon Europe.

I.2.a Energy Creative Lab

The project will establish a technology, research, and education space, where artists and researchers will be invited to lead an interdisciplinary workshop programme in thematic blocks: data activism, distributed network infrastructure, ecological ways of storing digital data, e.g., more sustainable databases that generate a much smaller carbon footprint than traditional data centres, as well as art and technology projects for storing data in plant DNA.

Much attention will be paid to the use of technology in supporting new nature-human relationships, including digitally advanced projects that are already exploring ways of giving voice to non-human beings or entire

ecosystems. Existing prototypes will be used, such as Decentralised Autonomous Organisations (DAOs) based on blockchain networks (such as the terra0 collective) and alternative currencies for cities (such as GreenCoin, a blue-and-green infrastructure co-decision model developed by a consortium of Polish and Scandinavian universities). The development of an alternative currency will involve a partnership with the city of Bristol, which is pursuing a vision of a city of environmentally and socially conscious people and has implemented its own payment method “Bristol Pay” (an additional option for Bristolians in building a green and just economy for the city). Artists and research and art collectives from Poland and Europe will be invited to implement projects around these ideas.

Institutions involved in the implementation of the programme	Nobiscum Foundation, Warsaw University of Technology – Branch in Płock, Mazovian Museum in Płock, Płock Industrial and Technological Park, ORLEN SA Research and Development Centre
Proposed international partners	Grow Your Own Cloud collective (France), terra0 collective (Germany)

I.2.b. Chemistry Creative Lab

Activities similar to those focusing on energy will be carried out in the field of chemical sciences. The Lab will operate as a meeting place for scientists, researchers, creatives, residents, young people, and children around the study of materials, the search for innovative solutions, and the development of ways to make ecological use of available resources. The activity will still start in 2024/25 as a pilot project and will develop into a cultural institution in the following years, described above as a science centre for chemistry.

Institutions involved in the implementation of the programme	Warsaw University of Technology – Branch in Płock, Mazovian Museum in Płock, Płock Industrial and Technological Park, ORLEN SA Research and Development Centre
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I.3. Free the Design. A new production and distribution model based on craftsmanship and free licence

This wide-ranging programme will unlock the local potential of artisans and establish a production and distribution method that can also be applied in other parts of Europe. The project will involve designing new utilitarian objects in teams of a designer and an artisan and making them available under a Creative Commons free licence. In this model, any interested user can download the manufacturing documentation and order the product from a local manufacturer. The project addresses contemporary trends that move away from global systems to localisation, hyper-personalisation, and models that produce as many objects as there is demand for. The project can be financed by grant competitions of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (e.g., Folk Culture) or from the programmes of the CRPK Centre for the Development of Creative Industries.

Institutions involved in the implementation of the programme	Open-air Museum of the Vistula Settlement in Wiączemin Polski, Mazovian Museum in Płock, Guild of Crafts in Płock
Proposed international partners	Michelangelo Foundation For Creativity & Craftsmanship (Switzerland), School of Crafts in Kosiv (Ukraine), Kunstbanken Centre for Contemporary Art in Hamar (Norway)

I.4. Home with Tradition for Everyone. Architectural and social action

The project involves interdisciplinary work by representatives of the architectural, ethnographic, and engineering communities. The aim is to apply the tradition of Olęder settlements in a contemporary design of a single-family house, which will be made available under a Creative Commons free licence for download and use by the region’s residents. The initiative addresses the need to capture the specificity of the region and to systematise the architectural space and rural planning of the Płock region. The project can be financed as part of the grant competitions of the Ministry of Culture and

National Heritage (e.g., Folk Culture) or from the programmes of the CRPK Centre for the Development of Creative Industries.

Institutions involved in the implementation of the programme	Open-air Museum of the Vistula Settlement in Wiączemin Polski, Warsaw University of Technology – Branch in Płock, Mazovian Museum in Płock
Proposed international partners	University of Liege (Belgium), Aalto University (Finland), Riga Technical University (Latvia), Bergen School of Architecture (Norway)

I.5. The Sound of Płock – The Sound of Europe. Ethnographic and research activity, mobile application

The Płock fiddle (*fidel plocka*) is a stringed instrument, which probably dates back to the 16th century. Its first reconstruction was made on the basis of an instrument unearthed in 1985 in the Old Town of Płock during archaeological research. A few years after the Płock fiddle was reconstructed for the museum's collection, more specimens began to be made for utilitarian purposes. The project will search for similar European instruments (lap fiddle and other folk stringed instruments) and record their entire sound range. The initiative will create a sound bank, which will ultimately be used for two activities:

- the development of a mobile phone app to play the instrument of your choice;
- a bank of recordings available to electronic music composers so that it can be used, for example, on midi controllers and other control devices.

Institutions involved in the implementation of the programme	Mazovian Museum in Płock, Płock Centre for Culture and Arts, Płock Symphony Orchestra
Proposed international partners	Museum of Musical Instruments of Leipzig University (Germany), Museum of Musical Instruments (Germany)

I.6. Around the Systems and Elements of the Vistula River (biomimetic-inspired actions in the space of Płock and its surroundings)

The project is a presentation of the phenomenon of biomimetics⁵ in art (biodesign and bioart). It includes the implementation of site-specific projects related to the Vistula River and its immediate surroundings, as well as exhibitions in diverse public spaces (city, countryside, natural areas). The activities will produce mobile sculptures at the border of science, visual arts and design, wandering along the Vistula. The installations will be created on the basis of technologies inspired by nature, especially biomimicry. The project will be carried out in collaboration with various scientific, technical, and art centres in several European countries. Experts selected by the centres (artists, designers, scientists) will be part of interdisciplinary teams. Work on the solutions will begin two years before the ECOC year; the solutions will be presented in 2029.

Institutions involved in the implementation of the programme	Płock Art Gallery, NOBISCUM Foundation, Mazovian Museum in Płock, ORLEN SA, Warsaw University of Technology – Branch in Płock
Proposed international partners	MUŻA – Museum of Fine Arts (Malta), Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.) (Belgium)

I.7. Płock XR. Digital art activities

The following projects can be funded by European programmes, e.g., Creative Europe – Media component, or by national programmes, e.g., grant programmes of the CRPK Centre for the Development of Creative Industries.

I.7.a. Płock Game

One important objective is to reach out to the young audience, for whom the virtual world is a natural environment. It is with them in mind that an immersive adventure game will be designed, combining entertainment with education. With its centuries-old history, surprising topography and numerous monuments, Płock will be an ideal “virtual game board” for

⁵ Biomimetics (or bionics) was discovered in the mid-20th century and is recognised as one of the most important and fastest-growing interdisciplinary fields of science. It studies and observes the structure and principles of nature – living organisms, nature, natural phenomena – using their solutions, behaviours, and processes, transferring them to modern technical solutions.

players to discover mysteries and experience adventures. An additional impact will be reaching out with knowledge of Płock's history and monuments to people who, for various reasons, have little chance of visiting the city.

I.7.b. Digitalisation of the City

Another activity includes urban artistic interventions involving advanced digital technologies (VR/AR, 360 visualisations, photogrammetry). The point of reference for artistic explorations will be provided by the history and heritage of Płock, both material (monuments, natural heritage) and immaterial (customs, methods of building relations). Cooperation will be established in the call for artist residencies with artists for whom digital art is an environment of creative expression. The invited artists will work for a period of one to two years prior to the ECOC year, when their work will be presented.

I.7.c. Rare Books in VR

The library of the Płock Scientific Society is one of those historical book collections in Poland which, being located outside the main cities, tend to be ignored by most researchers and bibliophiles. Consequently, its collections have never been sufficiently recognised and popularised, which has put them on the margins of awareness of the general public. In fact, however, the institution boasts an extremely rich collection of historic books and other artefacts, many of which deserve to be called pearls on Polish and global scale.

The ECOC programme will take action to popularise these collections using modern technology. At least two works that have already been digitised could serve as the basis for a film or application in VR: *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* by Copernicus and *Prodromus Astronomiæ* by Johannes Hevelius. By wandering through the pages of the books and the impressive engravings contained therein, the audience can take a journey through the Cosmos as it was known to Europeans in the 16th and 17th centuries.

I.7.d. Hackathon City Coders Płock

The regular Hackathon City Coders Płock will support the activities around the preparation

for the European Capital of Culture 2029, among others, by designing a mobile application for Płock and searching for software solutions to the current issues faced by the city and its residents.

I.8. On the Vistula about the Vistula. Theatrical and performative action

The activity will consist of two elements:

a) A competition for theatre makers to write a script for a play set on the Vistula and around the theme of the river. The theme of the initiative will be broad, focusing on near and distant history and on nature in its micro and macro dimensions. The aim is to "give voice" to the river, listen to its stories about the past and the future. Inspiration for theatre directors or playwrights will be provided by a series of meetings with scientists who will take up the subject of the Vistula. The meetings, conversations, and lectures will be available as audio recordings (podcasts) on an online platform in order to reach a wider audience. Artists from Poland and Europe will be invited to take part in the competition. The three finalists will have the chance to implement their projects.

b) Theatrical productions on the Vistula, respecting the integrity of nature, among others by addressing the problem of light and sound pollution. At least three selected projects will be realised in cooperation with the artistic community of Płock. The events will be produced in cooperation with the Szaniawski Theatre in Płock.

I.9. The Power of Illustration – an international exhibition for the young and the old

A cyclical event in the form of an international exhibition, organised in cooperation with the Estonian Embassy in Warsaw, featuring European artists from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, as well as the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, Austria, Italy, Slovenia, Finland, Turkey, and Israel. The exhibition presents new phenomena in book illustration. Polish literature is given a chance to be translated to other languages, accompanied by new works by foreign illustrators.

II. THE TRAIL OF TRANSFORMATIONS

The trails followed by humans and animals are fraught with trials and obstacles. Overcoming them requires courage and determination. Just as a river must overcome waterfalls and rocks, the trails of life teach a lesson in how to grow through experience, how to transform challenges into opportunities. On this trail, one can see that the Vistula has taught its “citizens” how to create new forms of activity, new technologies, and customs. Płock as European Capital of Culture 2029 will provide an opportunity to reflect on transformations, their shapes and significance for the existence of life.

As part of the programme, a conversation will be initiated in the city about a new, equitable model for including the creative work of people with disabilities in the current official art circuit. The track record of Płock-based accessibility organisations will provide the foundation for these efforts.

On the trail of transformations, programmes are proposed where various community groups, grassroots initiatives, and topics of cultural importance will have a chance to take part while building social capital. This section of the programme will create centres of local activity, incubators of creativity, venues for creative potential to be released. Embedded in Płock’s experiences, but universal for other cities, they will allow people coming from all over Europe and the world to join in a discussion on the role of the individual in the changes taking place around the globe. In this regard, it will be crucial for the city to explore the needs and potential of a new group of economic migrants from Asia, who are present in Płock thanks to the new investment project of the petrochemical industry. The programme offers inclusive activities, tapping into the cultural potential of people from different backgrounds and cultural circles, ultimately structuring the cultural offer as a result of social diagnosis.

II.1. Art Brut. Development of ideas, presentation of collections

Presentation of achievements and comprehensive documentation related to the methodology

of working with people with intellectual disabilities. The track record of two Płock organisations working on accessibility will be leveraged. The OTO JA Association in Płock is a pioneer in building Art Brut collections. At this time, it is one of the largest collections in Europe. Not only the collection will be presented, but also films, interviews, pedagogical work (based on cooperation with foreign partners working in a similar field). The project will propose a new, equitable model for the inclusion of the creative work of people with disabilities in the current official art circuit. This will be an unprecedented action on a Polish scale, and Płock will become a laboratory for testing such a solution, as the moment has come to erase definitions that classify this type of creative expression as, for example, non-professional art. The art of people with disabilities should function in the official circulation of art without being labelled, as a full-fledged part of the contemporary art production.

One component of this programme will be an exhibition featuring work from the Art Brut collection and artists whose art corresponds with Art Brut stylistically and formally. It will be extremely valuable to bring paintings by Jean Dubuffet, Adolf Wölfi, Tapié, and renowned primitivists such as Stanisław Zagajewski⁶. The narrative concept of the exhibition is under development, and it will take up historical themes (taking into account geopolitical realities – French and Czech Art Brut), philosophical and psychological themes (with elements of the theory of the psychology of creativity and the theory of seeing), as well as economic themes (the art market, remuneration for artists). As part of the preparations for the European Capital of Culture 2029, the cooperation of the OTO JA Association and the Association l’Aracine from France will be strengthened. It should be noted that a conference entitled “L’art brut. Est-il le même partout? Does it mean the same thing everywhere?” was held by OTO JA and Professor Alain Bouillet in Płock in 2009 (it was through his efforts that the first Museum of Modern, Contemporary and Outsider Art in France was created). In 2029, two decades after that meeting, a similar event has been planned

⁶ One of the most outstanding Polish representatives of Art Brut, associated with the nearby city of Włocławek (where he lived and worked), which will be a partner city in the ECOC organisation and year.

with an extended group of guests, including Czech and Swiss participants.

Institutions involved in the implementation of the programme	OTO JA Association, Mazovian Association of Work for the Disabled “De Facto”, Mazovian Institute of Culture, Museum of Kujawy and Dobrzyń Land in Włocławek
Proposed international partners	Museum of Modern, Contemporary and Outsider Art in Lille (France), Art Brut Praha (Czech Republic), PRO FUTURO Association (Czech Republic), Collection de l’Art Brut Lausanne (Switzerland)

II.2. Small grants for community-based local actions

Testing new organisational models, supporting local residents and interdisciplinary teams in implementing activities with neighbourhood teams in backyard spaces, schools or kindergartens through a system of small grants. The project focuses on empowering all groups who want to engage in social animation activities. In addition to a funding system, a network of support for grassroots initiatives will be created including training, inspirational meetings, and a resource exchange model to support activists in organising events. Such an exchange model will operate in the form of a Cultural Cooperative, a virtual place where Płock operators can post announcements of material resources and services that they can lend to other operators. The programme may additionally be financially supported by the European Funds for Social Development.

II.3. The Backyard Festival

Between 2000 and 2008, Płock hosted the Backyard Festival, which primarily involved young people from housing estate backyards in the city. The European Capital of Culture 2029 will be an opportunity to reactivate the festival in a new version, including the development of a permanent workshop curriculum for Płock’s backyards, neighbourhood clubs, and community

centres. In continuation of the street-working programme, which has been carried out in Płock for many years, the activities will cover groups of children and young people at risk of social exclusion. The main axis of the programme will be cultural and educational activities, such as backyard animations, summer cinema, various workshops, neighbourhood exchanges, talks, small concerts, and New Circus initiatives. The project fits in with the objectives of the grant programmes on accessibility and cultural education.

II.4. New Neighbours – Stories of New Residents of Płock. Participatory research – research by encounter

A participatory research project with the aim of collecting stories in the form of interviews, photos, and accounts by new residents of Płock. A series of events will be organised based on mutual cultural learning, especially in the area of everyday life, as expressed in food, communication, ways of relating to the environment, etc. The goal of these activities is to discover ordinary and extraordinary stories of the new residents of the city. The results of the project will be presented at a dedicated open-air exhibition.

II.5. Mentoring residencies for cultural operators

When implementing cultural events and projects, a great deal of energy is focused on creating the best possible conditions for artists’ creative work. Meanwhile, the operators of cultural projects also need support. As a European Capital of Culture, Płock will offer residencies aimed precisely at this group of employees. They will have the opportunity to work with mentors, take a closer look at their work, and get appropriate support. As today’s competence landscape is diverse, employees of cultural institutions are repeatedly found to have reached a high level of expertise while their needs are very different, which is why the mentoring programme will be personalised. The project can be financed, for example, with a “Cultural Education” grant from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage under the cultural staff development priority.

II.6. Summer Cooperation Camp – international summer camp for cultural workers

A two-week mentoring camp for cultural workers from Poland and Europe will be held in Płock annually for three years (2027-2029). It will be a very intensive course with the support of experienced mentors. An important part of the programme will be the focus on the development of cultural workers' competencies and career paths in international cooperation.

Proposed international partners	On The Move (Belgium), IETM (Réseau international pour les arts du spectacle contemporains) (Belgium)
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II.7. Futures Literacy Lab. Education support programme

An important element of the European Capital of Culture Płock 2029 programme is the establishment of the Futures Literacy Lab⁷ and its networking with other institutions of this type in Europe and around the world. Key components will include the development of an educational methodology and cooperation with schools to ensure the development of the idea as part of general education. Futures Literacy is a capacity that allows people to better understand the role of the future in what they see and do. Awareness of the challenges ahead strengthens the imagination and increases competencies necessary to develop solutions as change occurs. Futures Literacy Labs around the world run in cooperation with local educators and animators offer a unique opportunity for Płock to become part of the Global Futures Literacy Network. The project will involve collaboration with the Polish branch of UNESCO.

Institutions involved in the implementation of the programme	The King Matt the First Youth Cultural Centre, Mazovian Local Government Teacher Training Centre – Branch in Płock, Płock Library, Mazovian Forum for Cultural Animators, Obserwatorium Foundation
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Proposed international partners	UNESCO, Futures Literacy (Norway), Futures Literacy Paris (France)
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II.8. Cultural education development programme

A broad programme of cooperation between educational institutions and cultural institutions, including the introduction of innovative solutions in the field of cultural education such as, for example, Scandinavian or German models, aimed at an in-depth, year-long cooperation between one institution and one school. The cooperation would be cyclical, process-based rather than focusing on one-off output, planned through cooperation and active partnership, giving space to students in a model of experimentation and direct experience. Another element of the programme is the continuation of an existing initiative by the Mazovian Local Government Teacher Training Centre entitled “STEAM Classes”, i.e., how to run them, how to motivate students, help them discover their potential and prepare them for the professions of the future.

Institutions involved in the implementation of the programme	Youth Cultural Centre, Mazovian Local Government Teacher Training Centre – Branch in Płock, Mazovian Museum in Płock, the Jerzy Szaniawski Theatre in Płock, Mazovian Centre for Neuropsychiatry
Proposed international partners	ASSITEJ International – Hesse (Germany), NIFU Nordic Institute for Studies of innovation, research and education

II.9. Wanderings of the New Circus. Performances and educational activities

Given the theme of the trail, it would be difficult to ignore the tradition of itinerant artistic groups, particularly circus groups, travelling from town to town with entertainment, jokes, and magic tricks. The New Circus is a phenomenon that emerged from the transformation of traditional circus; a modern formula underpinned by the transformation of classical circus art that took place in France in the 1970s. The name was

⁷ On 8-12 December 2020, UNESCO organised a High-Level Summit on Futures Literacy, understood as the ability to anticipate and design the future, thus solving the problems we face and living up to the challenges yet to come for humanity as a result of the 2020 crisis and the failure of our pre-conceived notions of what the future might look like.

coined to emphasise the metamorphosis of not only the art of circus performance but also the audience's relationship with the artist or the message: often symbolic, linked to emotions and overarching values. The New Circus has extremely valuable educational and pedagogical potential, often used in work with young people and groups at particular risk of social exclusion. The programme could be funded from national sources (e.g., the "Cultural Education" programme of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage) or European sources (e.g., European Funds for Social Development).

A number of long-term activities have been planned as part of the preparations for and during the ECOC year:

- mentoring and training residencies will be launched for Płock-based artists who work in this area (both in Poland and abroad);
- a space for New Circus practices will be organised;
- the animation activities of the New Circus will be integrated into prevention and educational work, particularly with young people at risk of exclusion;
- during the ECOC year, public performances of New Circus will be organised, both for bigger and smaller audiences (backyard actions).

Institutions involved in the implementation of the programme	The King Matt the First Youth Cultural Centre, Płock Centre for Culture and Arts, the Jerzy Szaniawski Theatre in Płock, the Władysław Broniewski Płock Library, the Mazovian Centre for Neuropsychiatry, the Rampa Theatre in Targówek, the State School of Circus Arts in Julinek
Proposed international partners	Barely Methodical Troupe (UK), Be Flat (Belgium), Circus I Love You (Sweden, Finland, France), GLiMT (Denmark)

II.10. The Płock Fiddle: Reactivation

The Płock fiddle, the aforementioned stringed instrument with strong ties to the city (discovered during excavations in Płock's Old Town and

reconstructed), will become the starting point for extensive educational and training activities. At present, its future is in question. There are few (to be specific, two) luthiers in Poland who can faithfully recreate the instrument, and a relatively small number of performers who can play it. This implies a strong need to work around the reactivation of the Płock fiddle. In preparation for the ECOC, this will include the following:

- the process of building the instrument will be defined in an instruction and manual format and made available under a Creative Commons free licence;
- a series of training courses and masterclasses will be offered where contemporary luthiers can learn the ins-and-outs of working on the restoration of this instrument;
- educational courses and training rounds will be offered to teachers of music schools of all levels and educators who are involved in music education. This component will provide training for future Płock fiddle instructors;
- instruments will be funded (Mazovian music schools, Płock Centre for Culture and Arts) and children and young people will learn to play the fiddle.

The project will pursue the idea of recreating and building more than just the instrument itself. The work will centre around the master-student relationship and the reactivation of luthier techniques in a way that draws on tradition while giving it a contemporary formula.

The sound of the Płock fiddle may become a source of inspiration in other projects which will seek intermedia forms together with artists from different disciplines. At the same time, the flow of ideas and concepts of stringed instruments played by pressing down the strings with fingernails brings together instruments that are unique to different cultures. Different readings of similar techniques from Western Slavic countries to the Baltics to Central and Far Eastern Asia will enable the search for a universal language when artists from different continents and countries meet. The project can be financed under the "Folk Culture" programme of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.

II.11. National Interdisciplinary Art Workshops “Master and Student”

This major artistic project is organised by the King Matt the First Youth Cultural Centre in Płock. During the event, a variety of workshops are held each day, where young people and teachers create together. It is an opportunity for all participants to deepen their passions and develop their interests. At the same time, it is a time for free creation and fun, giving everyone the opportunity to demonstrate their skills. In addition, working together in a group of participants from all over Poland sharpens interaction skills and creates opportunities to develop social skills.

III. THE TRAIL OF RELATIONS

The river is not only a path but also a place where other paths cross. Animals, people, and all parts of the ecosystem meet, influencing each other; these encounters, in turn, create a network of interdependence and interaction. The river trail is thus not only a road but also a place for dialogue. Płock and the Vistula represent a story of such a meeting and cooperation. The European Capital of Culture 2029 programme in Płock shows how encounters and interactions between people and the environment make it possible to adapt, jointly respond to challenges, and develop and build a true European identity that embraces the interdependence of ecosystems, cities, countries and people.

In 2029, Płock will become a place to test new models of coexistence between human and non-human worlds, to produce connections between different species; a contemporary laboratory of diversity and biodiversity. The Trail of Relations is the trail which will permanently transform the city into a greener and bluer place, healthier, more resilient, and better for living. Access to these two landscapes and two colours is crucial for the mental health and well-being of residents. Water will become an inspiration for seeking solutions at the intersection of science and art, architecture and social life, for collaborative artistic activities in the spirit of empathetic pedagogy. Based on the natural resources of the city and the region, ecosystem-safe models of

interdependence will be created by transforming city spaces into, for example, community gardens and urban farms. The activities will use urban wastelands and they will design places of refuge for non-human communities. Socially excluded and marginalised groups will be invited to co-create them. On the other hand, we will be interested in initiatives that extend nature-human interdependence with new technological solutions, such as hydroponic farms or vertical plant cultivation.

Płock and the Vistula tell a story of encounter and collaboration. On the Trail of Relations, we propose new cross-sectoral connections, where the relations of the flow of meanings of science and art become the starting point for interdisciplinary activities and interprofessional partnerships. The trail will be complemented by venturing into the entire functional area of the city: a land of lakes and forests, where inhabitants of the region have found space for recreation. Today, some of the leisure facilities are once again being taken over by nature, while others, after a change of owner, have witnessed social relations being built anew.

The region's potential also lies in the flows and interdependencies between urban and rural areas, including a unique spot on the map of Europe: the European Folk High School in Grzybów, a centre of education in the spirit of agroecology and permaculture, a science of the interconnectedness of nature and human, whose invisible structures form a sustainable whole.

III.1. City of Positive Energy. Symbiosis of Płock Festivals – A New Model of Cooperation

Płock is home to many remarkable festivals that have been invigorating the city for years. The preparations for the European Capital of Culture 2029 will establish an area of cooperation among the organisers of all festivals, where common goals will be redefined. At this time, one of the key challenges for the cultural sector is to integrate events into a year-round cycle, not just in season. Therefore, a new internationalised formula for the following festivals will be proposed in preparation for the ECOC 2029:

III.1.a. European Picnic

The event aims to popularise the idea of European integration among Płock's residents. The date of the event is linked to 9 May, i.e., Europe Day. During the event, the city hosts international delegations from Darmstadt (Germany), Zhytomyr (Ukraine), Fort Wayne (USA), Bălți (Moldova), Mažeikiai (Lithuania), Auxerre (France), Pleven (Bulgaria), Rustavi (Georgia), Bayanzurkh (Mongolia), Veszprém (Hungary), Sines (Portugal). Each year, the initiative focuses on a different theme, such as the functioning of cultural institutions in crisis.

III.1.b. Festival of Monophonic Music

The Festival of Monophonic Music presents the oldest works of Christian musical culture reverently preserved in the privacy of monastery libraries in various parts of Europe. Alongside Gregorian chant, the main and oldest musical form of the Roman liturgy, the evening meetings in Płock Cathedral feature music from the Eastern churches.

III.1.c. Themerson Festival

For the past 12 years, the Płock Centre for Culture and Arts has been promoting the work of this outstanding pair of artists and their relationship with the city. Various activities are featured as part of the festival, including workshops on a trick-table designed by Stefan Themerson; the premiere of a film based on his poetry; presentations of art inspired by his graphic and literary work; concerts and literary workshops for young people.

III.1.d. Festival of Culture and Arts for the Blind

The aim of the festival is inclusivity and equality of access to culture. The project's key features include its appeal to multiple senses and inspiring the audience to try something new, something that is not (fully) available. The festival is an encounter between one human being and another, viewer and viewer, viewer and creator, enabling a mutual exchange of experiences and tapping into the potential of diversity. The festival is tailored to the needs and abilities of visually impaired people (those who have not been able to see since birth and those who have lost

their sight during their lives). Participants in the audience are united by a fascination for culture, a love of cinema, music and literature.

III.1.e. Audioriver

Audioriver is a festival with a 16-year tradition. Its main section takes place on the picturesque Vistula beach, simultaneously hosting several zones with concerts by Polish and foreign artists. The culmination of the festival is Sun/Day, which takes place in the park between Mostowa and Rybaki Streets. On the Sunday afternoon closing the festival, this space becomes a Garden of Eden full of colour, warm sounds, and dance music.

III.1.f. Vistula Folk Festival

The Vistula Folk Festival is the oldest folklore festival in the country, reactivated in 2012. The event features folklore ensembles from all over the world. The presentations are complemented by a number of workshops and, more recently, the Vistula Folk Voice competition aimed at children and young people. This is a chance to audition for the competition in a professional hall and then work with experts in voice emission and stage presentation.

III.1.g. Polish Hip-Hop Festival

This is Poland's leading hip-hop music festival, held in Płock since 2013. In 2023, the festival was accompanied by a Gala where the best artists of the past year were awarded in as many as 18 categories. Another festival highlight is the Płock Freestyle Battle, in which freestylers battle it out with styles of expression and emotion.

III.1.h. Festival of Performing Arts

An international festival hosting 50 international artists in 2023. The festival features extraordinary events, such as art installations, an open off-scene for young people, film screenings, discussions, art sessions, meetings with artists, presentations, and workshops. The festival is an encounter with different varieties of performance art, music, choreography, film, poetry, installations, theatre, new media art. The festival engages and questions audiences, builds a platform for interdisciplinary understanding, and creates a network for national and international exchange.

III.1.i. Big Festivalowski (Positive Art Festival)

A festival that allows you to immerse yourself in the summer atmosphere of Płock, laugh together at a stand-up gala, and explore the exhibition of the Museum of Memes (the world's second museum of memes, after faraway Hong Kong). BiG Festivalowski spans three days in August filled with films, meetings with artists, workshops, stand-ups, special events, a bathrobe gala and memes, all with a wink.

III.1.j. Summer Fall Festival

Rock music is not a homogeneous genre, although all styles of rock are characterised by a sound based on guitar and drums, with clearly defined rhythm and singing, derived from blues and free jazz improvisation. This is exactly what Summer Fall Festival is about, presenting diverse and wide-ranging rock music.

III.1.k. Aurora Borealis Festival

The Aurora Borealis Festival, organised by the TRAKT Association and the Płock Zoo, aims among others to popularise the traditions and cultural heritage of the peoples living beyond the polar circle, awakening sensitivity and respect for their cultural diversity. Many Płock institutions and organisations are involved in the Festival, including the Tony Halik Travel Club, Darmstadt House, and the Płock Centre for Culture and Arts.

III.1.l. Book Festival

An important initiative whose formula is under development, particularly relevant in the context of the literary output of great figures connected with Płock (the Themersons, Władysław Broniewski, Barbara Klicka). The initiative will include meetings with book authors, performative readings, improvised theatre performances. The festival may be an opportunity to bring together foreigners around books: German-speakers (there is a public German-language library with a reading room in the Darmstadt House), English-speakers, newcomers from Asia, invited to cooperate in the event. The festival will enable cooperation between Płock libraries and publishing houses; in the case of the

unique collection of rare books at the Zieliński Library of the Płock Scientific Society, this is a potential source of many projects and mutual inspiration for the community.

III.2. In a World of Connections between Human and Non-human Worlds. Educational programme

The project is centred around natural heritage and aims to build social relations by developing ties with nature, the cooperation of residents in community gardens (ROD⁸), and meetings with new residents of Płock – economic migrants from Asia (if the identification of needs and the potentials results in this recommendation). The programme will include:

- lectures and hands-on workshops,
- thematic excursions in Płock and its surroundings (Grzybów, Olęder Open-Air Museum, the Open-Air Museum of the Mazovian Countryside in Sierpc, the unique forest ecosystem of the Włocławek-Gostynin Lake District Landscape Park – starting at the border of Płock, the forests cover an area of almost 400,000 km²),
- workshop activities for leaders and coordinators of activities in the city's biodiverse spaces to develop their competencies and support them in acquiring new tools for their work.

The project will also launch an artist residency programme around biodiversity in the city and around the phenomenon of Family Allotment Gardens. The project can be funded, for example, by Culture Moves Europe or the Creative Europe Programme.

Institutions involved in the implementation of the programme	European Folk High School in Grzybów, Mazovian Museum, Family Allotment Gardens already operating in Płock, municipal gardens, housing estate clubs, Jordan Garden in Płock, Płock Cultural and Art Centre
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⁸ Family Allotment Garden (ROD) – under the Polish Act on Family Allotment Gardens of 13 December 2013, it is a separate area(s) designated for the purposes of family allotment gardens (ROD), consisting of plots of land and common land, for common use by allotment holders, equipped with garden infrastructure.

Proposed international partners	La Bolina Association (Spain), Bees and Refugees - London (UK), 12 Permaculture Design Principles, Permaculture Association (UK), AGRIPARC DU MAS NOUGUIER (France)
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III.3. Plant and fungi concerts

The projects aiming to deepen the relationship between the human and non-human worlds will include unique concerts, made possible by cutting-edge technology that reads plant frequencies and generates sound from them. For this purpose, electrodes are attached to the leaves, which activate sounds in combination with a console. Mushrooms can be used in a similar way. This will not only be a sensory activity but also an educational one. It will showcase the existing sound archive of the Nobiscum Foundation of Płock, which over the years has collected sound maps of the natural areas of the city and its surroundings.

III.4. Płock – Connections. Small-Big, Old-Young Town

The project is an attempt to find a formula for connecting the historically and urbanistically diverse parts of the City through tree planting and new murals. Płock has in place many such implementations. For the European Capital of Culture 2029, it is planned to develop art in the public space, among others, through artist residencies and by inviting artists and designers from Europe. The unveiling of the thematic murals will be accompanied by integrating events with a range of activities: craft demonstrations, culinary presentations, providing space to develop passions and interests.

Institutions involved in the implementation of the programme	Płock Centre for Culture and Arts, Płock Art Gallery, NOBISCUM Association
Proposed international partners	Street Art for Mankind (SAM) Association

III.5. Forum for New Ideas – Laboratory of the City

The Forum for New Ideas is a meeting place for many scientific disciplines and many areas of human activity, to be attended by experts in the economy, technology, medical, natural and exact sciences. Throughout the events, presentations, panels, meetings with the audience, the main theme will be the possibility of seeking solutions and connections in the world of challenges, global trends, crises, but also opportunities and possibilities for contemporary cities. It will be a place for cross-fertilisation, cross-local and cross-national inspiration. We are particularly keen to broaden the perspective beyond Europe and to lead the reflection on urbanity on the basis of an “intercontinental consultation”: a discussion on the perception and significance of city-making phenomena in the cultures of other continents. To this end, Płock will use active cooperation channels with partner cities in the USA and China and seek to invite representatives from other parts of the globe. The Forum will be held twice: in 2027 and 2029. In the years between and two years before the first event, we will undertake a range of preparatory and networking activities, including the establishment of a standing interdisciplinary City Lab team. The programme can be funded, for example, through Horizon Europe.

III.6. How to Govern the Capital (of Culture)?

Social and civic competency workshops for children and young people, whose participants will gain knowledge of the processes that take place in the city, methods of governance and problem-solving. As part of this process, young people will also be given the opportunity to carry out their own projects thanks to financial support (under the auspices of the Youth Cultural Centre). This will be a practical lesson in self-organisation and the practical application of knowledge.

Institutions involved in the implementation of the programme	The King Matt the First Youth Cultural Centre, Youth City Council, Student Councils of Płock schools, Student Councils of Płock universities
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III.7. ReFine Płock. City improvement workshop

An interdisciplinary, cyclical, cross-sectoral and international workshop for university students with the theme of designing a kind and friendly city in the spirit of the Soft City, where technology is possible but not necessary (unlike in the Smart City). A Soft City is filled with greenery and concrete answers to the problems of the contemporary resident. The workshop will be focused on Future Thinking solution design and the most promising ideas will be developed into visualisations and forward-looking recommendations with a chance of implementation. It will be a cyclical event: the first edition will take place between 2026 and 2027, the second between 2028 and 2029. Some of the projects from the first edition may be

featured as concrete implementations in the year of the European Capital of Culture 2029.

III.8. Open Museums

Museums are not only centres for the storage and study of memory but, above all, places for seeking new meanings and reinterpretations of the past in accordance with current knowledge. Płock has an excellent museum collection, which will be reworked in a series of artistic interventions in the form of a residency. The invited artists and curators, together with their hosts (curators), will go against prevailing narratives, using the museums' collections and ways of presenting them in order to tell stories in the spirit of the post-humanist turn⁹, decolonisation¹⁰, new statuses of social groups¹¹, etc.

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

The cultural legacy of Płock spans Olęder traditions, archaeological discoveries, brick Gothic, testimonies of the era of the first rulers of Poland, work of famous artists associated with the city, natural heritage, and the whole history, both more recent and more distant past. All this will become the inspiration for many activities, including those expressed via digital means, to open a dialogue and reflection (and sometimes polemics) with the city's heritage.

New technologies support the programme activities described in this application in different ways. Above all, what is crucial is how technological tools can support the expansion of the nature-human relationship. This is why the programme includes experimental ways of practising sustainable urban gardening which can be tested in smaller and vacant spaces as alternatives for urban food self-sufficiency:

- hydroponic installations to grow organic food crops in a closed water cycle,
- vertical farms where the cultivation of plants, herbs, and mushrooms involves the creation of multi-level vertical structures in enclosed spaces under special air conditions (no external pollution).

Artists, collectives, and consortia that use new technologies as tools to explore the relationship between humans and non-human beings in their artistic practices and social experiments will be invited to collaborate in the programme. For example, the collective terraO: its artistic practice tests and prototypes Decentralised Autonomous Organisations (DAO) based on the Ethereum blockchain network to expand ecosystems and empower nature. In this way, whole ecosystems such as a forest or a river can become an autonomous economic entity. Based

⁹ A broad concept whose main goal is to develop the principles of a practical new ethics, encompassing not only humans but also other beings: animals, robots, insects, bacteria, and viruses.

¹⁰ Any project that involves a critical reflection on the processes and practices present in museum institutions. The decolonisation of museums is part of the discussion about their democratisation, access and public participation in the functioning of the institution. The aforementioned decolonisation is not limited to the return of artefacts formerly exported from colonised areas or the reorganisation and new description of collections. Postcolonial criticism and the framing of the museum as a colonial institution allows for a change in the way the institution of museum is perceived. There is no consensus on a single definition of this process.

¹¹ New social divisions go beyond the traditional ones, e.g., class or religion. Nowadays, there are divisive trends whose decisive factor is, for example, the problem of the climate crisis or the globalisation process.

on established rules, they can be given a voice in the discussion about the climate crisis. Could a Płock community garden or city park become shared data storage as a common asset for the local community? What inspires hope that new technologies can be a tool to foster nature-human relationships and dependencies is a project based on the futuristic vision of storing digital data in the DNA of plants or fungi, tested as an art and research project by the Grow Your Own Cloud collective. Technological and biotechnological tools are used to create ecological ways of storing data.

One important part of the programme is a series of activities embedded in digital art. Renowned digital artists will be invited to Płock to interact with the city: its architecture, nature, community. One of the activities will include the transfer of digitised unique rare books into virtual reality. An immersive adventure game combining entertainment and education based on the city's history will be developed with young people in mind. One of the challenges in the years leading up to the ECOC 2029 in the programming marathon Hackathon City Coders Płock, held in Płock for several years, will be to develop a mobile application for the ECOC year, aggregating all programme events and dedicated to all participants and those potentially interested in the events. In addition to

a static webcast of the events, the application will support dynamic structuring of the user's own programme, recruitment for ongoing projects, registration for participation, participation in the structuring of certain events, and their evaluation. The application will be developed in line with the UX Design and UI Design approach or other approaches current at the time of its development.

The Internet and the Creative Commons free licence will provide means of showcasing and sharing culture and art. In the preparations for the European Capital of Culture 2029, digital documentation of objects will be made available, including the design of a house inspired by Olęder traditions, as well as banks of sounds of various lap fiddles (including the Płock fiddle) and a series of podcasts about the Vistula.



How has the city involved, or how does it plan to involve, local artists and cultural organisations in the conception and implementation of the cultural programme?

In the preparation of the ECOC application, consultation meetings were held with representatives of the broad cultural sector. The meetings were attended by representatives of cultural institutions, NGOs, city officials, local leaders, and activists. This process was complemented by two surveys where representatives of the cultural sector (managers and rank-and-file employees) presented their existing activities and proposals for new activities in 2029.

The process of consultations and meetings with representatives of the Płock cultural sector revealed a great long-term personal commitment, an impressive amount of work

and effort put into cultural initiatives. The community of people in Płock involved in culture and art is aware of the challenges faced by our civilisation as well as of its own resources. A conversation about trends observed in the social, technological, and economic fields outlined plans for building cultural programmes based on the awareness of social crises, such as low social resistance to change and the need for care and attention in the activities of cultural institutions in the face of the growing sense of loneliness of the individual in society. Płock's cultural operators emphasise projects based on a study of the needs of the community, eliminating barriers of all kinds (barriers to

participation, generational barriers, barriers resulting from disabilities), meeting the needs of the present day, such as the need to integrate cultural education with nature education and to treat natural heritage as an important element of culture. All these aspects are reflected in the programme presented above.

The following mechanisms to involve organisations, artists, and residents in the ECOC programme are planned in the following years:

- 1 inclusion of the ECOC in the NGO grant programme as one of the directional priorities for the next years;
- 2 the establishment of an ECOC Programme Board, including representatives of the cultural community, as an advisory body;
- 3 targeted grants to cultural institutions for the preparation of ECOC projects;
- 4 the possibility of submitting projects via the programme website (action mainly aimed at residents and individual artists);
- 5 the establishment of art and research scholarships in preparation for the ECOC year; the scholarships will be mainly aimed at incubating ideas related to the ECOC programme;
- 6 the introduction of an open call system, including institutions and organisations from outside the city (based on the ideas currently used by other ECOC cities to increase involvement in the region);
- 7 cooperation with the Marshal's Office of the Mazovian Voivodeship regarding the potential inclusion of the ECOC preparations in the regional grant programmes as one of the components of the implementation of the Cultural Development Strategy of the Mazovian Voivodeship;
- 8 strengthening the competencies of cultural workers in networking and leading international projects, which is an important element in preparing for the ECOC;
- 9 the appointment of posts in the ECOC 2029 Office responsible for cooperation with the local community.



There is no doubt that Płock with its diverse history, culture, traditions and monuments has a real chance of becoming a European Capital of Culture. I firmly believe that you will make every effort to achieve this important goal!

**Georg Spartanski,
Mayor of Pleven**



European dimension

As evidenced by its history, Płock has always been a place where cultural diversity has been part of everyday life. Migrations and settlements of newcomers from different parts of Europe have left indelible traces in the structure and substance of the city and the region. At this time, a particular challenge for the city is posed by labour migration, resulting both from the open EU market and directly from the activity of the largest employer in the region, ORLEN S.A. (in the next few years, the plans are to employ several thousand people from abroad, not only from countries culturally close to Poland).

The city is committed to promoting European values with considerable resources, attention, and great determination. Płock maintains active cooperation with 12 partner cities, including several European cities, resulting in many projects, such as the annual European Picnic (which promotes the values of the European Union) showcasing the cultural legacy of the partners, and the participation of young musicians from Płock in the International Youth Orchestra Darmstadt. Student exchanges, language workshops, folklore festivals, and international

school games are just some of the initiatives that demonstrate Płock's deep commitment to promoting intercultural dialogue and European values.

However, Płock does not limit itself to cultural activities alone. Its active promotion of European values is also evident in sustainable development. Since 2004, Płock has been home to the CIFAL Centre, the first affiliated training centre of the UN Institute in Europe, which provides innovative tools in the field of sustainable development. This highlights Płock's role as a leader in this field, not only locally but also internationally.

In recognition of these efforts, Płock has been awarded internationally on several occasions. Płock has received a European Diploma, a Flag of Honour and a Plaque of Honour, demonstrating its ongoing commitment to promoting European values. These distinctions confirm Płock's determination to pursue and develop international cooperation. The city's bid for the title of European Capital of Culture 2029 is yet another manifestation of this commitment.



I think of Płock as a mature person who knows that things can turn out differently and there is nothing to get excited about, but can also appreciate the pleasures of life.

Barbara Klicka, poet and writer



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

In its bid for the title of European Capital of Culture, Płock will draw on the richness, diversity, and cultural and political experience of the European community. While Płock will accentuate its unique identity, it will do so in a way that emphasises its place in the European cultural mosaic. The programme is designed among others to strengthen awareness of the universality of the European experience, shape the cultural heritage of Płock, present artists from many countries and cultural circles, and emphasise the value of cultural diversity. The idea of the trail – a route for the flow of people, goods, and ideas – is not only intended to showcase the cultural richness of Płock, but also to promote dialogue, transnational cooperation, and understanding between European citizens.

The three proposed areas reflect the cultural diversity, history, and identity of the city, while making reference to broad European values. The trail of discoveries focuses on cultural education, taking inspiration from the Themersons' literary and visual legacy; this helps to emphasise the importance of intercultural dialogue in the cultural field. The trail of transformations promotes integration and diversity, incorporating among others an exploration of the needs of a new group of economic migrants and inclusive

activities based on tapping into their cultural potential. The trail of relations, with the Vistula River as a central theme, emphasises the importance of biodiversity and the creation of sustainable ecosystems in response to global environmental challenges.

Intercultural dialogue will be strengthened through the organisation of international events presenting the most interesting cultural phenomena from many regions of Europe and promoting cultural exchange on the level of everyday life: linguistic, culinary, entertainment, etc. The artistic explorations described in the ECOC programme will creatively combine the specificity and heritage of Płock with other European regions (in particular, the ECOC cities and the partner cities of Płock) and seek ways to effectively transfer the impact of the project to other parts of the continent. Detailed proposals regarding international partners can be found in the description of the programme.

Płock plans to strengthen the capacity of the cultural sector in creating sustainable international partnerships and leveraging the financial opportunities of European programmes through a series of training courses and programmes dedicated to cultural staff.

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

Płock shares the understanding of culture as a tool for building bridges between nations and shaping European identity through lively interaction. The ECOC 2029 programme relates directly to current European themes. Firstly, environmental issues will not only be the subject of some of the artistic and educational events but also a way of implementing the programme in the most sustainable way possible. The second thematic area is social change: migration (labour migration, climate migration, migration related to armed conflicts), community integration, countering negative trends. The third issue is the synergy between science and the arts, the need to develop innovation in the European economy, and the digitisation of further areas of society.

Much space in the programme is dedicated to the themes of education and youth. Activities are already underway in this area. Student exchange programmes with universities from different European countries, workshops and courses for young people focusing on European heritage, history and culture, and competitions and festivals for young artists from all over Europe are planned during the preparations and in the ECOC year.

Within the framework of the ECOC programme, Płock raises to the challenge of translating European values, such as human dignity, justice, equality, human rights, and democracy, into the local context. Through a variety of events,

discussions, and artistic initiatives, the city will seek to highlight the importance of these values in building social cohesion in Europe. Particularly

in the face of global challenges, such as the crisis of faith in democracy, Płock is committed to a broad social dialogue on these key issues.

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

International cooperation will be based on cooperation with other ECOC cities and candidates and Płock's partner cities. Based on its existing relationships with partner cities, Płock will seek to expand this network of cooperation. The Płock City Council at its last session in August 2023 adopted a resolution to sign a partnership agreement in the fields of culture, science, education, sport, health, social welfare, economy and local government activities between the Municipality of Płock in the Republic of Poland and the City of Sines in Portugal. This location makes direct reference to the concepts of trail and flow. Sines is the birthplace of Vasco da Gama, the first to sail the route from Europe to India, improving trade with South Asia for European merchants. By building its potential on the supranational level, Płock will strive to develop a system, such as a grant competition or an own contribution fund for the local non-

governmental sector and Płock's cultural institutions in order to strengthen their aspirations and potential in implementing international activities.

In addition, some of the projects will be implemented as an open call, enabling various organisations and institutions from the region, Poland, and Europe to participate in the European Capital of Culture 2029 programme.

A key issue is the process-oriented nature of the proposed projects: a large part of them are based on long-term collaboration, joint diagnosis of needs and challenges, and a resulting search for solutions. Structured in this way, the programme will contribute to building lasting relationships both between institutions and at the level of personal contacts in the international creative community.

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

The presented concept of the programme meets all the criteria necessary to attract the interest of a broad European and international public.

Firstly, it is based on a coherent narrative, which combines the universality of experience with the uniqueness of a particular place and its history. By addressing topics that concern Europeans today (such as climate, migration, technology), the programme offers an opportunity to look at them in new creative ways. As a laboratory of a contemporary city where various paths and trails intersect, Płock can provide an interesting cultural, educational, and research offer to people from many different places in the world.

Secondly, a key advantage is a comprehensive, long-term programme of artistic events geared to lasting change, inviting people with different skills and professional profiles to participate. The flagship events on each trail are those most

strongly associated with Płock: the Themersons' legacy, Art Brut, and many festivals. At the same time, the programme includes innovative forms, making use of current and future knowledge and technological possibilities. Such an encounter of different perspectives will give rise to new ideas as to how culture and art can become a fixed feature of the everyday life of Europeans, and how they can serve as a catalyst for social, if not economic, change. The artistic programme is complemented by educational, research, and experimental activities.

Thirdly, the way to reach the public on an international level is not through large and expensive marketing campaigns but rather by building lasting personal relations and positive experiences through a programme of journalist and media residencies in Płock (described in detail in the section on promotional activities).

To what extent do you plan to develop links between your cultural programme and the cultural programme of other cities holding the European Capital of Culture title?

As early as the ECOC 2029 programming stage, cooperation was established with the current European Capital of Culture 2023, Veszprém. Although it is not a partner city of Płock, both cities have a track record of relations in sports. This cooperation will soon be strengthened through exchange of best practice, knowledge sharing, joint projects. A programme of cultural exchange between the cities is being built as part of future bilateral study visits, while cultural workers from Płock will have the opportunity to observe the process of organising European Capital of Culture events.

Płock has established cooperation with Uppsala, another candidate for the European Capital of Culture 2029 in Sweden, which has confirmed its willingness to cooperate and implement a joint project. It should be noted that the cities established cooperation over twenty years ago in the framework of joint projects between the Paweł Włodkowic University College in Płock and the Uppsala University. During the ECOC year, a dedicated space will be provided for the Swedish partner city (depending on the partner's preference, it will be a space at the Amphitheatre or, in the framework of Płock's public-private partnership, in one of the shopping malls, or yet

a different space depending on the Swedish city's concept). This would be a space for meetings, workshops, and joint activities. At the same time, a counterpart space for the presentation of the programme would be run by Płock in the partner city in Sweden.

This idea can also be extended to cities that hold the ECOC title starting in 2024:

- 2024: Tartu (Estonia), Bad Ischl (Austria), Bodø (Norway)
- 2025: Nova Gorica (Slovenia), Chemnitz (Germany)
- 2026: Trenčín (Slovakia), Oulu (Finland)
- 2027: Liepāja (Latvia), Évora (Portugal)
- 2028: Czech Republic, France, and a city in an EU candidate country (Budva or Skopje)

During the ECOC 2029 title year, a medium-sized cities forum will be organised in Płock (as part of the activities of the Forum for New Ideas – Laboratory of the City) with the participation of capitals of culture from previous years and the ECOC city in Sweden. The themes of the forum will focus on the role of culture in facing the challenges of the future and current global trends.



We believe that Płock is poised to take advantage of this opportunity given its rich traditions, cultural heritage and picturesque landscape conducive to tourism and recreation. With a history deeply connected to Europe, Płock has proved its cultural significance by winning the title of Cultural Capital of Mazovia last year.

Mayor of the City of Mažeikiai Rūta Matulaitienė

Outreach

Explain 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.

The principles of full transparency and participation have been followed since the very beginning of work on the framework programme for the European Capital of Culture 2029. The underlying method of both diagnostics and programming is ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development), i.e., community development based on local resources, including in particular cultural resources.

In parallel, the drafting of the cultural policy of Płock until 2030 included the following initiatives:

- a series of workshops were held with representatives of the cultural sector, which among others defined the programme framework until 2030, including in the context of the ECOC,
- a survey of Płock residents was carried out to diagnose the current cultural activity of the Płock residents and analyse their needs and expectations regarding the development of the cultural offer in the following years,

- one-on-one consultations were completed with various cultural establishments, officials, social bodies (such as the Youth City Council), school headmasters, and directors of educational institutions.

The following actions will be taken in the course of preparations for 2029:

- 1 a social survey will be carried out to precisely identify the expectations of residents in the field of culture, their interests and needs (workshops and meetings with different social groups: artists, NGOs, youth, seniors, aiming to collect ideas and opinions);
- 2 a civic research panel will be established where a standing group of residents will discuss, throughout the preparation period, in the ECOC year and beyond, the significance of the actions taken (and the general condition of culture in the city) for the quality of life of the residents of Płock. The panel mix will correspond to the demographic profile of the city;



The cool thing about Płock is that it offers a lot of opportunities and is open to people and events.

Szymon Marciniak, international football referee



- 3 a curatorial team will be appointed, responsible for developing a detailed concept of the ECOC programme;
- 4 an online form will be made available for representatives of Płock's cultural sector and residents to suggest projects and activities on an ongoing basis;
- 5 a competition will be opened for local artists and cultural institutions for the most

interesting cultural initiatives to be included in the official ECOC programme;

- 6 a system will be developed, e.g., a grant competition or a contribution fund for the local non-governmental sector and Płock cultural institutions in order to strengthen their aspirations and potential in implementing international activities.

Explain how you intend to create opportunities for participation of marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

Research and experience show that the most effective way to include marginalised and disadvantaged groups is to recognise and leverage their potential. This approach is based on the assumption that every community creates culture because people with their customs, lifestyles, and ways of being all are immersed in culture. This is a manifesto that does not divide people into those who are “better” and “worse” or prejudge their cultural potential; on the contrary, diversity is assumed to be a natural form of social expression.

There are several groups that can be considered disadvantaged in Płock at this time:

- 1 people with low material status,
- 2 people with disabilities,
- 3 the Deaf as a cultural and linguistic minority,
- 4 economic migrants from Asia who have been contracted during an investment project of the petrochemical industry.

Working with any social group, including marginalised groups, will start by exploring not only their needs but, above all, their potential. Invention, DIY, rod-fishing, handicrafts, hobbies, the way social relationships are established, beliefs, culinary culture will provide a point of entry for the recognition, participation, and inclusion of these groups in the current flow of cultural activities in Płock. The following activities will be used for this purpose:

- free offer, free resources to use,
- research into needs and expectations (interviews, conversations),
- inclusion of the creative work of people with disabilities in the current art circuit,
- providing space for meetings and recreation,
- culinary activities – a shared kitchen,
- common gardening spaces, community gardens, Backyard Festival, and broad social and animation activities in the space of Płock backyards,
- Festival of Culture and Arts for the Blind, which has been held in Płock for many years.



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

Płock wants to be a leader in effective, modern cultural education, combining cultural competences with reading the future and designing solutions.

With regard to children and young people, priority will be given to implementing one of the key competences defined in the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning: the cultural awareness and expression competence.

The audience development plan provides for activities other than large formats, such as exhibitions, performances, concerts, and festivals. Initiatives aiming to involve residents will include a number of projects in the city space, mainly in housing estates. The formats will be appropriate to the housing estate spaces: artist residencies in housing estates, backyard actions, small events at the borderline of the arts.

Spots of local activity will be created in cooperation with the Neighbourhood Councils, cafés and club cafés. These will be venues of creative activity for residents to develop their passions and interests.

The Cultural Policy of Płock until 2030 provides a framework of the cultural education programme, focusing on sustainable long-term cooperation between educational institutions and cultural institutions. This is based on the assumption that a deep, full-year partnership between institutions and schools will trigger a lasting change: improvement of social competencies of children and young people.

Partnerships will be established with Finnish libraries to create media education programmes in libraries. This is part of a broader process: using cultural education (in the model of cooperation between education and culture) to build the competencies of the future. Experts are calling for educational programmes aimed at, among others, developing critical and analytical thinking, complex problem solving, creativity, innovation and initiative, building and developing relationships.

As a city-experiment, Płock will become the first Future Literacy Laboratory in Poland. Over a period of four years, a “Reading the Future” programme will be developed, based on the Futures Literacy methodology and tools and in cooperation with other European laboratories.

The audience development programme will establish a training programme for cultural operators, geared among others towards implementing methods and tools aimed at researching the needs of audiences, developing their interests and involving them in various activities of institutions. The overarching principle is a participatory model of cooperation. All training activities will be based on the assumption that good relations with audiences require a multi-faceted cooperation, where the recipients of the institution's activities are active participants in the events and ambassadors of the institution to the outside world.



Management

a) Finance

City budget for culture:

What has been the annual budget for culture in the city over the last 5 years (excluding expenditure for the present European Capital of Culture application)?

Year	Annual budget for culture in the city (in euros)	Annual budget for culture in the city (in % of total annual budget for the city)
2019	€ 8 250 460	3.57%
2020	€ 7 294 260	3.13%
2021	€ 5 731 984	2.38%
2022	€ 6 662 717	2.62%
2023 (as at 31.07.2023)	€ 7 685 220	2.79%

The euro exchange rate used for the calculation is PLN 4.70.

Expenditure includes operating and capital expenditure. The differences from year to year are mainly due to differences in investment funds,

which are allocated to culture according to current infrastructure needs. Apart from a decrease in 2020 due to limited activities of cultural institutions caused, among others, by the pandemic, the operating budget for culture in Płock has been steadily increasing.



[Płock] is where I discovered what I want to do in life and what my calling is.

Magdalena Carter, fashion designer



year	operating budget PLN	operating budget EUR	year-on-year change
2019	PLN 26 732 512	€ 5 687 769	
2020	PLN 25 307 854	€ 5 384 650	-5.33%
2021	PLN 25 895 070	€ 5 509 589	2.32%
2022	PLN 29 098 176	€ 6 191 101	12.37%
2023	PLN 31 795 309	€ 6 764 959	9.27%
average			4.66%

In case the city is planning to use funds from its annual budget for culture to finance the European Capital of Culture project, please indicate this amount starting from the year of submission of the bid until the European Capital of Culture year.

Expenditure estimate 2024-2029

year	planned budget for culture (excluding investment expenditure)	percentage of the budget for culture additionally allocated to the ECOC	additional budget for the ECOC	additional budget for the ECOC in EUR	total budget for culture in EUR
2024	PLN 33 276 146	1%	PLN 350 000	€ 74 468	€ 7 154 499
2025	PLN 34 825 951	1.5%	PLN 522 389	€ 111 147	€ 7 520 923
2026	PLN 36 447 936	2%	PLN 728 959	€ 155 098	€ 7 909 978
2027	PLN 38 145 464	3%	PLN 1 144 364	€ 243 482	€ 8 359 538
2028	PLN 39 922 053	4%	PLN 1 596 882	€ 339 762	€ 8 833 816
2029	PLN 41 781 385	5%	PLN 2 089 069	€ 444 483	€ 9 334 139
ECOC budget for 2024-2028			4 342 594	€ 923 956	
ECOC budget for 2024-2029			6 431 663	€ 1 368 439	

The city expects a regular increase in current expenditure for culture by 5% per year (the average increase in expenditure for culture was 4.66% between 2019 and 2023). In addition, the city plans to systematically increase the budget

for ECOC preparation activities each year, ranging from 1% of the culture budget in 2024 to 5% in 2029. The euro exchange rate used for the calculations is PLN 4.70.

Which amount of the overall annual budget does the city intend to spend for culture after the European Capital of Culture year (in euros and in % of the overall annual budget)?

The city expects a steady 5% increase in the budget for culture in 2030 and an additional 2.5% for activities one year after the ECOC. The European Capital of Culture award will also be used for cultural, educational, and research activities and for preserving the sustainability of the ECOC results in 2030:

- estimated budget 2030 for culture in the city: PLN 43 727 313
- estimated budget 2030 additional for ECOC: PLN 1 093 183
- estimated budget 2030 additional from EU: PLN 7 050 000 (exchange rate 4.70)

It is assumed that the total budget for culture and post-ECOC activities in 2030 would be around 3.5% of the budget of the city.

The funds will be used in 2030 for dissemination of results and activities related to the sustainability of the results achieved in the ECOC year 2029 and in the preceding period (2024-2028).

Operating budget for the title year

Income to cover operating expenditure:

Please explain the overall operating budget (i.e. funds that are specifically set aside to cover operational expenditure). The budget shall cover the preparation phase, the year of the title, the evaluation and provisions for the legacy activities. Please also fill in the table below.

Total income to cover operating expenditure (in euros)	From the public sector (in euros)	From the public sector (in %)	From the private sector (in euros)	From the private sector (in %)
€ 31 000 000	€ 27 835 000	89.80%	€ 3 000 000	10.20%

Income from the public sector:

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

Income from the public sector to cover operating expenditure	in euros	w %
National Government	€ 10 000 000	35.94%
City	€ 9 335 000	33.54%
Region	€ 6 000 000	21.56%
EU (with exception of the Melina Mercouri Prize)	€ 2 500 000	8.98%
Total:	€ 27 835 000	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?

City. The budget presented above includes grants for cultural institutions (similar to the budget for culture in previous years) and additional funds for ECOC activities. The budget planned for the preparatory period (2024-2028) includes amounts which do not require extraordinary approval procedures and will be approved as part of the current budget. In the course of work on the ECOC budget, the finance team developed a methodology used to calculate

the amount of possible commitment of funds in the preparations for the European Capital of Culture 2029.

Region. Currently, 5.68% of the total budget for culture in the Mazovian Voivodeship is allocated to the operation of local government cultural organisations and institutions in Płock. We expect that this level will be maintained in future years. In addition, the region is planning to allocate EUR 6 million for activities.

State. Based on information provided by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the planned budget to support the ECOC has not yet been approved. The proposed amount is

based on an analysis of the budgets of the European Capitals of Culture cities in 2023-2028. This forecast is based on the median central government funding resulting from that analysis.

Income from the private sector:

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

Private sector support for the European Capital of Culture 2029 in Płock has been assumed at around 10% of the estimated budget for the event. This is a realistic level given the current involvement of business in the cultural sector in Płock and estimating the communication and media reach of the project.

It is expected that it would be possible both to finance directly the activities of the ECOC Office (cash transfers to the account of the

institution) and to provide financial support for individual events and programmes carried out by institutions and NGOs in the city.

In order to improve cooperation with business, the ECOC Office will hire a person in charge of sponsor relations, in the first place responsible for preparing profiled sponsorship offers and then for building relationships, defining common goals, and managing relations with sponsors and patrons.

Operating expenditure:

Please provide a breakdown of operational expenditure by completing the table below.

Programme expenditure (in euros)	Programme expenditure (in %)	Promotion and marketing (in euros)	Promotion and marketing (%)	Wages, overheads and administration (in euros)	Wages, overheads and administration (in %)	Other (please specify) (in euros)	Other (please specify) (in %)	Total of the operating expenditure
€20 150 000	65%	€ 3 720 00	12%	€ 5 580 00	18%	€ 1 550 000	5%	€ 31 000 000

Budget for capital expenditure:

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:

Income from the public sector to cover capital expenditure	in euros	w %
National Government	€ 3 191 489	6.68%
City	€ 12 202 128	25.52%

Region	€ 9 448 936	19.76%
EU (with exception of the Melina Mercouri Prize)	€ 22 965 957	48.04%
Total	€ 47 808 511	100%

The capital expenditure budget includes the construction of a concert hall (investment planned for 2024-2028) and the refurbishment of a building for the Youth Cultural Centre. An architectural competition is also planned for connecting the waterfront to the Old Town, which would also make the sites more accessible to people with special needs.

In addition, the total estimated cost of the planned projects resulting from the draft Supralocal Development Strategy of the Partnership “Functional Area of the City of Płock” which may have an indirect impact on the development of culture amounts to PLN 1 418 218 200.00.

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?

Investments in cultural infrastructure are planned in part in the Multiannual Financial Forecast (the cost of building a concert hall, the

Youth Cultural Centre, and adapting some public spaces – green spaces – to new social functions).

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

The coming years are the perfect time to implement investment projects with EU support: operational programmes were launched in 2023, and the highest frequency of grant calls is planned for 2024-2025. Płock will apply to the Regional Operational Programme and the European Funds for Eastern Poland. Revitalisation, green transition, and sustainability measures will be proposed in applications to the European Funds for Infrastructure, Climate and Environment. In addition, the city will actively seek opportunities of international cooperation in

order to apply for funds under programmes such as Interreg Central Europe and Interreg Baltic.

Under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, it is possible to apply for funding for the Płock Centre for Culture and Arts and the Płock Library (under the programme “Strengthening the energy efficiency of local social activity facilities”).

Another important element will be raising the competencies of cultural workers in obtaining European funds for investments or for operational activities that also include investments.

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.

No new investments for cultural infrastructure are foreseen in the title year, all activities are planned until the end of 2028.



b) Organisational structure

Please give an outline of the intended governance and delivery structure for the implementation of the European Capital of Culture year

Concept of the Płock “Cultural Hub” (2024-2030)

The Płock Cultural Hub is a team of experts employed in one of the city’s cultural institutions, responsible for supporting the cultural sector in various areas of activity through intensive cooperation, knowledge exchange, cultural worker development activities, and overseeing the implementation of the city’s cultural policy. The Hub will act as a bridge between the cultural sector in Płock and other areas of the local government’s operations. The Hub’s activities will include identifying and implementing best practice and an advisory function in cultural management. In addition, the Hub will act as an information and competence centre, ensuring continuous communication between the various cultural establishments in the city and region.

The establishment of the Cultural Hub before the establishment of the ECOC Office is deliberate: it is intended to prepare the cultural sector for the challenges ahead, to strengthen cooperation, and to support the internationalisation of cultural activities in Płock. Moreover, the Hub will remain within the structures of one of the city’s cultural institutions even after the ECOC year and will continue to provide support.

ECOC 2029 Office (2027-2029)

The structure and resources of the Płock Cultural Hub will be used to prepare and organise the European Capital of Culture 2029 in Płock. As the official ECOC 2029 Office, the Hub will become the central point for the coordination, programming, production, and management of the title year. Its structure will be expanded to include a Production Department, an Animation, Education and Training Department, and a Promotion Department.

Key areas of action for the ECOC 2029 Office:

- 1** preparation and implementation of the cultural programme of the title year;
- 2** building community engagement;
- 3** relationship management at local, regional, and international level;
- 4** title year communication and marketing.

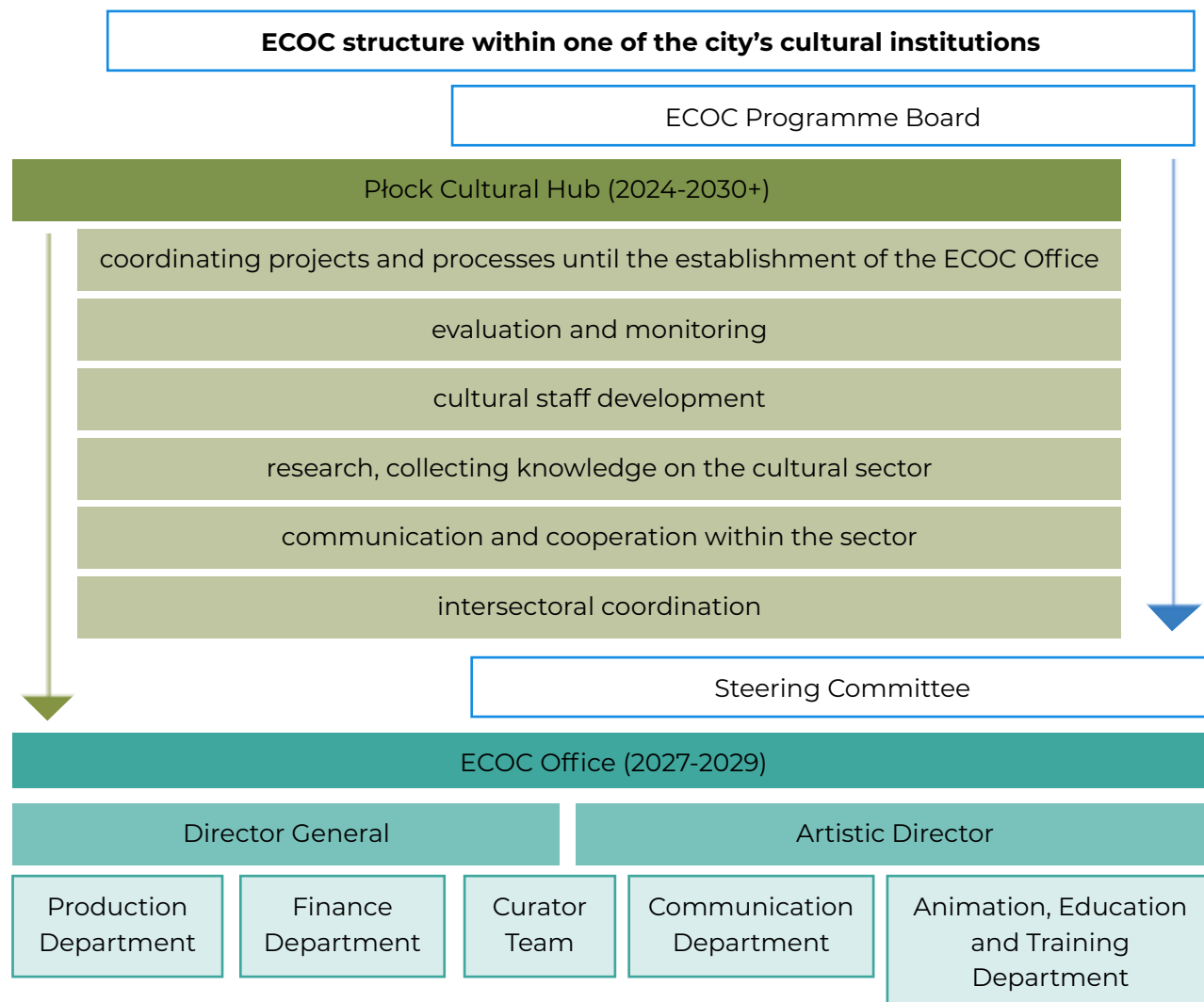
Key Roles in the Office:

- ECOC Artistic Director together with the Curatorial Team, responsible for defining the artistic programme and ensuring that the initiatives are consistent with the programme axes.
- ECOC Director General overseeing the overall implementation of the project, including the management of the team, the budget (in cooperation with the institution’s Finance Department), and the schedule.
- Curatorial Team – a team of experts responsible for the selection of projects in line with art disciplines and themes of the programme.

Programme Board (2024-2027) / Steering Committee (2027-2029)

In the first phase of work on the ECOC programme, a Programme Board will be established to provide advice, support the Hub in the implementation of the programme, and monitor compliance with the directions outlined in the programme. In 2027, as appropriate, the Board will either be transformed into a Steering Committee or a Steering Committee will emerge from the Board (in this case, the Board will remain as an advisory body).

The Steering Committee will exercise oversight over the ECOC Office, approve major strategic decisions and the budget, and oversee programme implementation. It will be an operational rather than an advisory body. The Committee will be composed of representatives of the City Hall, the cultural sector, the local community, and external experts.



RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEPARTMENT

Production Department	
Position	Responsibilities
Producers	producing events, including organisational, formal and logistical functions
Partnership Coordinators	running projects in cooperation with institutions and NGOs in the region
International Coordinators	- building and developing relationships with foreign partners - supporting the international promotion of Płock.
Animation, Education and Training Department	
Position	Responsibilities
Community Coordinators	- running process-based projects - cultural education - organising workshops and meetings - supporting revitalisation processes
Accessibility Coordinators	ensuring the inclusion of diverse audiences, including people with special needs

Communication Coordinators

- media communication
- external communication (website, social media)
- photo and video services
- media reports

Business Relations Coordinators

- establishing relations with businesses
- preparation of sponsorship offers
- negotiating
- maintaining relations with sponsors and patrons

c) Contingency planning

What are the main strengths and weaknesses of your project? How are you planning to overcome weaknesses identified?

Strengths of the project:

- ECOC programme embedded in the strategic documents of the city and the region, developed on the basis of a diagnosis of the needs and expectations of the cultural community and the residents of Płock;
- a comprehensive concept for artistic and educational events, combining various forms and targeting diverse audiences;
- the programme is based on long-term, systemic processes aimed at sustainable change;
- drawing on the cultural, historical, natural and social resources of Płock, recognising unique collections, and making use of existing developments;
- significant and visible involvement of various actors in culture, from cultural institutions to NGOs to individual creators;
- the programme is based on a wide offering of cultural institutions and non-governmental organisations;
- use of existing successful festival events;
- globally unique Art Brut collections, together with a methodology for working with people at risk of social exclusion and a social archive;
- methodological track record of the Festival of Culture and Arts for the Blind;
- proposing events and activities of an interdisciplinary nature, including combining science and art, industry and business, nature and technology;
- inclusion of groups with different reception needs and cultural competences;
- a broad cultural education programme based on long-term cooperation between cultural institutions and educational establishments;
- the programme is largely based on an existing well-developed cultural infrastructure;
- using the private-public-social partnership mechanism already in place and running in Płock;
- strengthening the competences, knowledge, and skills not only of audiences but also of cultural staff;
- developing and strengthening existing cultural funding arrangements, e.g., a grant competition and the Citizens Budget;
- a cultural programme integrated into the revitalisation programme, implemented in a sustainable manner in accordance with the Climate Change Adaptation Plan for the City of Płock up to 2030;

- active and genuine involvement of the city in sustainable development policies and objectives; relatively high expenditure and a steady increase in the budget for culture;
- stable financing of the ECOC programme from the very beginning of the preparations;
- central location of Płock, almost in the geographical centre of Poland, making it easy to reach from different directions;
- developing existing international partnerships and initiating further sustainable forms of cooperation with ECOC cities.

Weaknesses of the project:	Solutions:
Płock's location between two major urban centres: Łódź and Warsaw (strong competition)	leveraging the capital city's advantages and involving Warsaw in the promotion of events
seasonality of the existing cultural offer: much is happening in spring and summer	development of a year-round offer, without much focus on the spring-summer period
the problem of social and economic exclusion of certain groups of residents	new methods of social/educational/animation work (reactivation of the Backyard Festival, New Circus activities), new mechanisms for involving these audiences
insufficient knowledge and competence among Płock institutions and organisations to undertake large-scale international projects	• mentoring, tutoring, and training programme • using existing international partnerships to launch cooperation with other organisations • developing cooperation with partner cities on joint projects
insufficient accommodation during major festival events	exploiting the potential of the surrounding area, in particular the accommodation facilities located (and currently being developed) in the attractive natural surroundings of the city
existing centralisation of the cultural and educational offer	support for urban revitalisation processes and thus the revival of Płock's backyards and housing estates, creation of spots for local activity, going into the housing estates with a cultural offer
lack of international recognition and visibility of the city	• implementation of the programme together with a promotional campaign will change the perception of Płock • communication activities based on individual relations (journalist and media residencies) provide opportunities for wide promotion of the city and its culture • an attractive concept of a city-laboratory, where challenges that are universal to other cities will find solutions that can be adopted by others

insufficiently developed strategy for cooperation between the city and the region	as part of the in-depth work on the application in the second stage of the competition, a process is planned for developing a strategy for cooperation between the city and the region and for developing possible ways of financing joint activities
low engagement of the city's new residents, Asian labour migrants, in the development of the cultural offer	an exploratory process to identify and then engage new residents in active participation in the city
relatively small programme offer for seniors, lack of sufficient inclusive methods	at a further stage, a series of consultation and workshop activities are planned with the Płock Senior Citizens' Council and organisations associated with the Płock Senior Activity Centre
lack of non-European project partnerships, insufficient ideas to broaden perspectives, especially in the context of the contemporary phenomenon of migration and multiculturalism	at a later stage, it is planned to carry out an identification of the needs and possibilities of Płock institutions for building such partnerships, as well as a series of expert consultations concerning this idea

d) Marketing and communication

Please provide with an outline of the city's intended marketing and communication strategy for the European Capital of Culture year.

The communication and promotion plan provides for the deployment and use of all available communication channels and tools so as to provide the residents of Płock, Mazovia, Poland, and Europe with the widest possible access to information on the cultural and educational offer during the ECOC 2029.

The city's standard communication activities include:

- the establishment of a Promotion Department within the ECOC Office responsible for the production and distribution of information and promotional materials, contacts with journalists, ongoing documentation of events, and preparation of media reports on activities;
- all cultural events organised in the city will be branded ECOC 2029 and EU;
- the communication channels will include (according to current technological knowledge): website and social media profiles (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, optionally TikTok depending on the legal situation of the platform);

- the website www.plock2029.eu will feature all information about the ECOC 2029, available in Polish, English, and Swedish;
- information about ECOC activities will be published in a printed city magazine with a total circulation of 15,000 copies, published eight times a year;
- continuous relations with journalists from regional and national media, organisation of special media events (press conferences, briefings), media partnerships and patronage;
- advertising in public space: monitors placed in means of public transport, large-format advertisements;
- promotional materials: calendars, ecological gadgets, pins;
- the Plockarta application will be used to handle communication with the residents of Płock.

One of the challenges in the years leading up to the ECOC 2029 in the annual programming marathon Hackathon City Coders Płock will be to develop a mobile application for the ECOC year, aggregating all programme events and

dedicated to all participants and those potentially interested in the events.

Ambassadors for Płock will be appointed – people connected with the city who will promote and support the city's ECOC activities. At least five people will be invited to hold this function in the second stage of the competition; the target is to have the support of more than a dozen people from various fields of culture and art.

In cooperation with partner cities, information about the ECOC 2029 events will be presented through communication and promotion channels available in each city. It is also planned to install occasional signposts, both in Płock and in other cities in Poland, and at characteristic locations of Poland (e.g., Giewont, Hel, Śnieżka).

An important idea for promoting the European Capital of Culture in Płock on an international scale is a long-term programme of journalist and media residencies. The residencies will cover representatives of traditional media (press or radio) and new media, including the internet and social media, as well as students of various faculties (the Mazovian Academy in Płock runs a course in New Media). The programme will target not only professional journalists but also bloggers and instagrammers. There will also be residencies for secondary school students or graduates who would like to spend a week or a month in Płock and report on cultural life and activities in the city (these actions may be additionally supported with funds from the Erasmus+ programme). Some of the residencies will be held in the form of a permanent call, others in the form of thematic open calls. These activities will ensure wide communication coverage in diverse media.

As regards communication, a strategic partnership with the City of Warsaw is planned. From the perspective of the programme's communication, it is important that people visiting Warsaw as tourists or on business know that the European Capital of Culture is only an hour's drive away. Citylights, advertising poles,

displays in metro cars, public space advertising, and City Hall communication channels will be used for this purpose. A similar partnership is also planned with the Mazovian Railways to intensify communication aimed at people living in and visiting the Mazovian region.

The Płock and Mazovian Tourist Organisation will be involved in the communication and promotion process and will present Płock's ECOC 2029 offer at meetings, fairs, and other tourism-related events at home and abroad.

Promotion will also be carried out with the support of business partners through patronage and sponsorship. It is expected that in cooperation between the city and its largest business partner, ORLEN SA, it will be possible to manage communication at ORLEN network distribution points both in Poland and Europe. The detailed scope of cooperation will be discussed in subsequent years between the city and ORLEN SA.

It is also planned to exploit the communication potential of Chopin Airport and Modlin Airport (the latter is only an hour's drive from Płock). The current network of connections includes many European cities which can be reached with information on the European Capital of Culture 2029 thanks to on-board advertising. In addition, people who travel by airline to Modlin or Warsaw Airports, similar to users of the ORLEN distribution network, could receive, for example, badges of Płock ECOC 2029 Ambassadors.

An ECOC 2029 communication programme will be developed for people with special needs (in cooperation with the Accessibility Coordinator and the Ombudsperson for People with Disabilities, the Płock Senior Citizens' Council, the Mazovian Association of Work for the Disabled "De Facto", the Vocational Activity Centre, etc.) and for people at risk of social exclusion (through NGOs that deal with social assistance and in cooperation with the City Centre for Social Assistance MOPS).

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

All actions taken as part of the ECOC 2029 and in the preparations will communicate in promotional materials that it is an EU activity. The project website will feature full information, including a description of the history and relevance of the ECOC for contemporary Europe, as the core of the city's communication message will be to embed the European dimension throughout the programme of the title year and the preparations.

Płock's history, its present day, and any foreseeable future scenarios all point to the need for the city's development to be closely linked to public policy at the European level. This is why the development of the artistic programme has been accompanied by constant reflection on the framework of horizontal policies of the European Union:

- activities related to the natural dimension, the relationship between people and the natural environment, the importance of the river and other water bodies are linked to reflection on a “more environmentally friendly Europe”;
- reflection on a clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investments, adaptation to climate change (but also broad reflection on adaptation and individual and collective risk management) stems from planned programme activities and fits in with the environmental agenda at European level;
- the planned modus operandi of the ECOC, the governance model, as well as research on the impact of the ECOC on residents are embedded in the strategic policy objective of “Bringing Europe closer to its citizens”;
- the programme has been thoughtfully designed to support the achievement of the goal “Towards a stronger and more inclusive Europe”. In this respect, activities have been proposed that build on the existing track record of Płock institutions, including the inclusion and recognition of the value of the creative work of people with special needs. At the same time, the programme proposes to undertake work and reflection on diverse models of the functioning of culture in a society where the number of people with

special needs will increase (not least because of their age or diverse social situation);

- an important component of the activities is the engagement of NGOs, many of which are also Social Economy Entities. There will be special training support for employees of the cultural and crafts sectors. As a result, the “European Pillar of Social Rights” will be included in the ECOC programme;
- both on the level of content (through participatory involvement of various stakeholders) and on a formal level (the territorial partnership of the Płock Municipal Functional Area), the city uses the territorial approach to pursue its development policy, which is an important point of reference for activities in the region,
- the final aspect of European policy to which the Płock ECOC bid is closely related is the idea of a more competitive and smarter Europe. The industrial heritage of Płock and the present-day activities of large-scale industry are a perfect place to reflect on and use the tools offered by cultural, social, and artistic activities in order to rethink and propose innovative, fair, environmentally responsible but economically efficient solutions, including the realisation of the idea of reindustrialisation of Europe while taking care of the well-being of its residents. For the industries of the future, regardless of the sector, it is essential to create the conditions for the development of interdisciplinary talents, a good quality of life in a sustainable environment and, above all, a fair and inclusive society.



Capacity to deliver

Please confirm and supply evidence that you have broad and strong political support and a sustainable commitment from the relevant local, regional and national public authorities.

Płock has mobilised considerable sustainable support and commitment for its ambitions. The city's own activities in the area of culture are not just ad hoc initiatives but rather an integral part of the city's broad and strategically understood development policy.

Local support. As the centre of a functional area consisting of the city of Płock and the three surrounding districts (*powiats*) of Płock, Sierpc, and Gostynin, the city of Płock benefits from advanced cooperation with neighbouring local governments. We plan to include the neighbouring districts in the ECOC 2029 activities. The city authorities have already extended an invitation to all municipalities in the area to cooperate. Declarations of cooperation have been issued by the municipalities of Słupno, Rościszewo, and Staroźreby.

Regional coalitions. Płock cooperates with the municipalities that are part of the Association of Municipalities of the Płock Region and with other key towns of regional importance, such as Włocławek and Sierpc. This cooperation will be strengthened through a programme of partnership projects.

Support of the capital city. As a key partner for Płock, Warsaw will provide not only communication and tourism support, but above all cultural support. The proof of cooperation is the support of our initiative by the Mayor of the capital city of Warsaw, Rafał Trzaskowski.

Support of the Mazovian Voivodship regional government. The personal involvement of the Marshal of the Mazovian Voivodeship Adam Struzik is further evidence of strong political support for Płock's aspirations. Mr Struzik's support, as expressed in the declaration of significant financial support, underlines the importance of Płock in the regional and national context.

In addition, Płock has received support from the mayors of the following cities in Poland: Łódź, Gdańsk, Sopot. Invitations to joint projects in the ECOC 2029 were welcomed by Płock's partner cities. Letters of support were issued by Mažeikiai (Lithuania), Darmstadt (Germany), Auxerre (France), Pleven (Bulgaria) and Uppsala – a candidate city for the title of ECoC 2029 in Sweden.



We love our city for its mysterious courtyards with their hidden stories.

Inko i Gnito, artyści, którzy chcą pozostać incognito



Explain briefly how the European Capital of Culture will make use of and develop the city's cultural infrastructure.

The European Capital of Culture will impact the city's cultural infrastructure in at least three ways. First and foremost, by involving the whole community, the programme activities will lead to active revitalisation of the spaces and facilities covered by the Revitalisation Programme. Cultural institutions hitherto lacking premises or adequate conditions will be provided with the necessary facilities to develop their activities. Last but not least, the city's retail and service infrastructure will be revitalised around active cultural operators and in due to increased tourist traffic.

Płock has already started to implement these processes, and the preparations for the ECOC will be a continuation and expansion of these efforts. Some of the activities to date and the most important plans include the following:

- The key cultural animator, the Franciszka and Stefan Themerson Płock Centre for Culture and Arts, has recently obtained a new seat. The project involved adapting a former primary school building to the needs of a cultural institution. As a result, a modern interior was created: the former gymnasium was transformed into the Centre's concert hall, and the former playing fields provide space for outdoor events. It should be noted that this is an innovative measure on a national scale.
- The Centre manages the Mira Zimińska-Sygietyńska Amphitheatre in Płock, located picturesquely at the foot of the Vistula escarpment. During its recent modernisation, new artistic facilities were added, as well as a roof, so now concerts, art, cabaret and folk performances can be enjoyed in full comfort even during rainy weather. The amphitheatre premises could be used as the headquarters of the ECOC 2029 Office. The amphitheatre requires modernisation work to improve the organisation of events and enhance the utility value of the facility. The building is accessible for people with disabilities from Rybaki Street, but there is no such access from the side of the city, at the crest of the Vistula escarpment. This non-accessibility is now under review with the goal of establishing better connections between the escarpment and the rest of the city, subject to an architectural competition planned in subsequent years.
- The entire space of the escarpment will be covered by measures aimed at improving accessibility for people with special needs.
- The Władysław Broniewski Płock Library operates more than a dozen facilities throughout the city, including the modern "eMka" multimedia library opened in 2020, and has its headquarters on Kościuszki Street, which is to become the city's landmark. It is necessary to include cultural infrastructure in the process of changes that raise the importance of public spaces.
- The Płock Art Gallery now has a permanent seat in Sienkiewicza Street. The local government bought the building from a private owner. This completed one of the measures under Strategic Objective 3.4: Making the cultural offer more attractive, under the Strategy for the City of Płock Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030 (SZRMP 2030). The representative profile of the building can be further raised by additional architectural and urban planning measures.
- In the framework of partnership-based cooperation, including corporate social responsibility, cultural institutions use space in Płock shopping malls. On the one hand, this helps to diversify those spaces and make them more attractive thanks to cultural and educational activities. On the other hand, it creates an opportunity to reach audiences who do not necessarily participate in culture on a daily basis. Such spaces could also be used for communication and animation activities of the European Capital of Culture 2029.

What are the city's assets in terms of accessibility (regional, national and international transport)?

Płock is located in the geographical centre of Poland but, for historical reasons, it remains somewhat on the sidelines of transport routes first established in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is situated just over 100 km from Warsaw, Łódź, and Toruń. The nearest A1 motorway is 40 minutes from Płock, while the A2 is about an hour's drive from the city.

The city is accessible by road, including regular bus services from most major Polish cities (buses leave regularly throughout the day from Warsaw).

The largest cities in the functional area of Płock are connected by a renovated railway line, which makes Kutno, located in the neighbouring region (almost 45,000 inhabitants), directly accessible to Płock residents. Further afield are the cities

important to residents of Płock, including Łódź and, above all, Warsaw. This offers great opportunities for the development and mutual complementarity of the cultural and tourist offer.

In the coming years (until 2030), Płock will be connected to the European motorway network via the S10 road and the planned A50 motorway. The city is also on the route of the planned high-speed railway linking Warsaw with the Tricity.

At this time, the closest airport is Modlin, 60 minutes away by bus, and Warsaw Okęcie, less than two hours away. In the future, Płock may become very well connected with the planned new international airport in Baranów near Warsaw. The planned CPK rail network runs through both Płock and the neighbouring municipalities.



↑ The map of motorways and expressways in Poland, including roads planned until 2029

← Map of flight connections from the Modlin airport

What is the city's absorption capacity in terms of tourists' accommodation?

There are currently 8 four-star and three-star hotels in Płock, with a total of 516 beds. Hotels of lower categories have an additional 151 beds. Facilities of all categories (including hostels and motels) had a total of 799 beds in 2022. In the Urban Functional Area (including the districts of Gostynin, Płock, and Sierpc), there are an additional 19 facilities of different categories, offering 929 beds. This gives a total of 38 facilities and 1,728 year-round beds.

Currently, there is a growing market of accommodation for rent in Płock while the investment conditions in the hotel industry are improving due to large industrial investment projects carried out over the coming years and the planned improvement in the city's transport accessibility (expressways, new railway lines). Some of the facilities will be available for use during the period of most intense ECOC activity.

The potential of Płock's accommodation base is demonstrated by the fact that it will host

spectators of an international sporting event co-organised by Poland and Sweden: the 2023 Men's Handball World Cup.

In addition, as part of the preparations, it is planned to use the potential of the surrounding towns, in particular the accommodation facilities located (and currently being developed) in the attractive natural surroundings of the city in the Włocławek-Gostynin Lake District and the surrounding landscape parks. We expect that the ECOC title for Płock will allow the surrounding resorts to flourish once again: thanks to regional and EU funds, they could be renovated and brought up to modern standards. Such investments would permanently change the tourism potential of the Płock region.

Additional alternative accommodation solutions include camping and the increasingly popular glamping, which combines staying in nature with hotel standards.

In terms of cultural, urban and tourism infrastructure what are the projects (including renovation projects) that your city plan to carry out in connection with the European Capital of Culture action between now and the year of the title?

The investment projects currently planned under the city's Multiannual Financial Forecast include the key project of **construction of a concert hall together with the development of New Market Square**. This will implement the measure under SZRMP 2030 Strategic Objective 3.4. The concert hall is to become a new showpiece of the city and the seat of two important cultural institutions: the Witold Lutosławski Płock Symphony Orchestra and the Pueri et Puellae Cantores Plocenses Choir. The concert hall has already been granted a building permit and the detailed documentation is in the final stages of acceptance. By virtue of its classification (public facility) and purpose (cultural facility), the concert hall has been designed to take into account the needs of equal participation of people with disabilities in cultural life in accordance with the recommendations under Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities made in New York on 13 December 2006. We have secured funding of almost PLN 80 million for this project until 2028.

Another facility covered by the city's investment plans is the **Youth Cultural Centre at 9a Tumaska Street**. By integrating the former premises of the Płock Centre for Culture and Arts, it would include a neighbouring tenement house on the side of Sienkiewicza Street. This investment project requires the development of technical documentation. The project includes the adaptation of the rooms in the building that were the seat of the Płock Centre for Culture and Arts and the flats on the top floor, as well as the partial reconstruction of the rooms currently held by the City Cultural Centre. The new functional and utility plan will adapt the operating conditions to current standards for public and cultural activities. In addition, the investment includes the construction of an external lift, accessible from the courtyard, in order to make the building accessible to people with disabilities or mobility constraints.

In addition, an **architectural competition is planned for connecting the Vistula waterfront with the Old Town**. The lower part of the city is currently difficult to access for people with special needs: there is a difference of about 40 metres in height from the waterfront level to the Old Town. Currently, the two levels are only connected by stairs and a bypass on the side of Mostowa Street. The competition would allow for a solution to be designed in a participatory way taking into account the needs of the community.

Once the European Capital of Culture title has been awarded, preparatory work will begin for the launch of the a **scientific centre** described above in section 1. The city has several initial concepts for the site where the project could be realised.

In addition, selected living spaces in new or renovated institutions and revitalised areas will be designated as **spaces dedicated to artist,**

research, and media residencies. This will ensure that the available housing resources are fully utilised while the institutions significantly expand their potential for collaboration with artists from Poland and the world. Selected commercial spaces will be used as **venues for local activities**. This activity is fully compatible with the revitalisation programme, where social and cultural activation is one of the key conditions for successful revitalisation. It should be stressed that for an ageing and increasingly multicultural society, venues of local activity are one of the few options for managing these processes safely. The potential launch of a **“Space for Culture”** competition is currently under review, allowing NGOs to rent spaces from the city at preferential rates on the condition that they carry out cultural and educational activities there. The spaces that will be available in the competition will be selected on the basis of a diagnosis and identification of the needs of the local community.



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