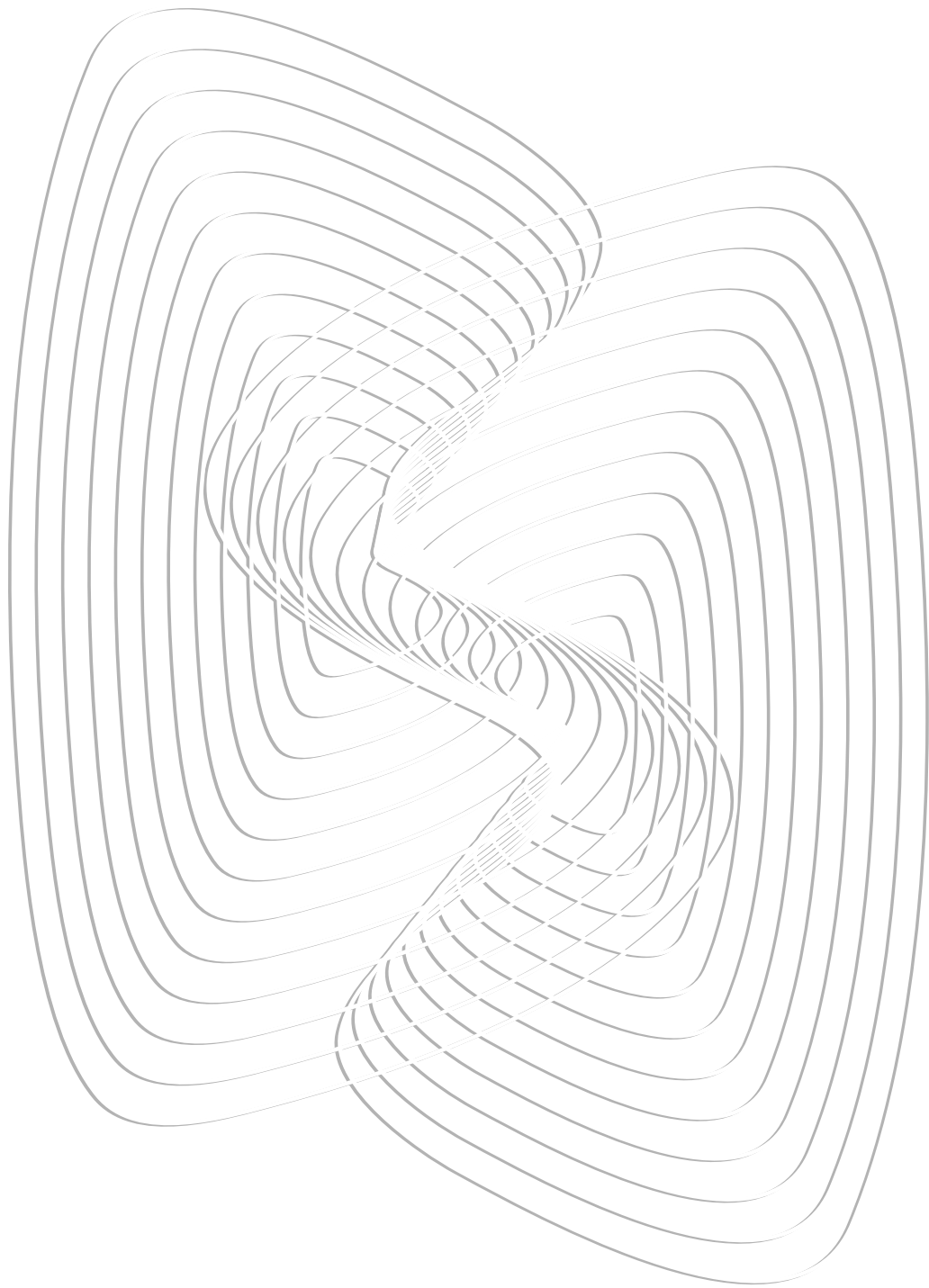


BB2029



W E A V E S

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# BB2029





An aerial night view of a city, likely Edinburgh, with buildings and streets outlined in vibrant, multi-colored neon lights (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple). The scene is overlaid with several wavy, glowing lines in various colors (pink, yellow, blue) that sweep across the image from the top right towards the bottom left. The overall atmosphere is dynamic and futuristic.

# WEAVES

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AWARENESS

SOCIETY

SURROUNDINGS

WELLBEING

KNOWLEDGE

SKILLS

IMAGINATION

IDENTITY

COMMUNITY

FREEDOM

NATURE

URBAN SPACE

DIGITAL SPACE



## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

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

Owing to its location at the crossroads of historical and cultural lands, Bielsko-Biała (BB) has been able to adapt to changes on many occasions. The openness and receptiveness of its inhabitants and socio-cultural diversity were conducive to pioneering solutions in the field of technology, science and living conditions. For centuries the rhythm and dynamics of our city were determined by the clatter of looms in its textile factories. **Successive generations have not only woven excellent fabrics famous across the globe, but they have primarily woven a city of their dreams and aspirations.** Further weaves have been created through this process and passed down as heritage for future generations. Today it is we who take up this challenge. Respecting the achievements of our ancestors, we are now bravely facing new present-day challenges, ones that our ancestors would not recognise. We are trying to shape our future. **We want to implement new solutions, learn together, share good practices and create the city of our aspirations.** This will be a city that inspires with its cultural heritage, that will provide comfortable spaces in which to live, and that will allow us to establish a relationship with nature and coexist and work together in harmony with our neighbours.

The challenges faced by BB today reflect, to a larger extent, the situation of our globalised world. We know that **in the coming decades the landscape and functions of towns and cities, and with them a whole spectrum of their requirements, will change radically.** The natural environment is degrading. The river traversing our city, which formerly played a role in its industry, will periodically disappear. It is possible that before long we will not be able to sit on its shores, listen to the sound of the water or cool off on a hot day. The ash tree (*Fraxinus*), so characteristic of our forests, will disappear and the remaining trees will become stunted in their growth. We are also no strangers to other challenges of the modern world: our youth seeking happiness in a digital world, excessive consumerism, a coarsening of social relations and a crisis in democracy. Bielsko-Biała is a microcosm of processes that are important to Europe. So it is for this reason that we seek answers to the questions posed by the future, remembering that we can draw on past experiences and the richness of our multicultural heritage. We will share our findings with Europe. History has proven many times that thanks to culture, dialogue, sensitivity and empathy, we can better comprehend, design and implement change. That is why **our WEAVES is primarily the voice of our residents who have told us about their dreams, problems and the need for change, the things that they worry about and that make them happy, that they would like to share with others, both with their neighbours across the street and also with their neighbours in Europe.** We will tell you about what we talked about during numerous meetings and social consultations. By implementing international collaboration, we will try to design a common future. This will be a new direction for the development of Bielsko-Biała - a city that will provide its inhabitants with social WELLBEING.

**Taking part in the competition for the title of the European Capital of Culture is a catalyst for change for us.** We feel it during every meeting, in every conversation, and in every communication. So far we have managed to integrate many communities, to increase their creativity, to break down prejudices, and to encourage common dreams. We have initiated new ventures and reinforced those that have functioned independently, thereby achieving a sense of synergy. We have improved the flow of information and increased the scope of collaboration. However, we are conscious of the fact that this is only the beginning of the communal weaving together of WELLBEING.

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

The translocal potential of our city being awarded the ECoC title has been recognised by other towns in the region, which is why we have received support and **the trust of**





**the entire Beskid Agglomeration, comprising forty-one local government bodies.**

The main events are planned to take place within the city, but many will also extend beyond its administrative boundaries. In this way we can include the unique natural surroundings of the city in our ECoC programme.

Thanks to the hospitality of surrounding towns, guests from all parts of Europe will be able to take advantage of the Beskid Agglomeration visitor accommodation. They will learn about the local folklore, traditional cuisine, and discover the richness of the countryside that surrounds us. Many of the people that work in our city and who actively participate in its culture live outside its administrative borders. Bielsko-Biała's identity is also formed by the culture of the *voivodeships* (provinces) of Silesia and Lesser Poland.

In addition, we also have Czechia and Slovakia as our close neighbours, with whom we have begun extensive cultural collaboration as part of the preparations for the Žilina Beskidy 2026 bid. It is our intention to continue and implement joint projects, some of which are already in operation, e.g. the Ethno Jazz Festival.

### **0.3** Explain briefly the overall cultural profile of your city.

**The history of the town of Bielsko begins in 1312.** The first mention of the town is in a document pertaining to the transfer of forests by Mieszko, Duke of Cieszyn, to the inhabitants of Bielsko. **By the 16th century, the city had become a prominent centre for the production of woollen fabrics.** The requisite raw materials, such as wool and water, were readily available owing to the numerous sheep grazing in the Beskid mountains and the location of Bielsko which was sited on a river. **Across the river - for centuries a border between countries - lay the hamlet of Biała, which received town rights in 1723.**

As a consequence of the industrial revolution, both towns developed rapidly, and after the second half of the 19th century they were viewed as being one single industrial centre. Forming a *deutsche sprachinsel* (German language island), **German Lutherans lived side by side with Catholic Poles and Jews**, creating a distinctive melting pot of nationalities and faiths. The intertwining history of Bielsko and Biała includes events from the past that were to determine the formation as well as the destruction of cultural continuity and had an impact on the shaping of local identity. The trigger for the first major social change was the Second World War and the Holocaust. As a consequence of these tragic events, the German and Jewish communities disappeared from the map of the city. The abandoned districts were then populated by inhabitants of the surrounding villages and newcomers from various parts of Poland. Many valuable elements of the region's multicultural heritage were lost in this process.

**In 1951 the two towns merged into one to become Bielsko-Biała.** It was a formal sanctioning of something that had existed for years. **One of the most important stimuli for the development of the city in the 1970s was the construction of the Compact Car Factory**, where an icon of the Polish automotive industry – the Fiat 126p – began to be produced. The expansion of the automotive industry resulted in further changes - the number of inhabitants increased, and the city grew rapidly. **Subsequent years brought more important economic change. The smoking chimneys of the textile factories disappeared from the city's landscape, and the automotive industry became the main branch of manufacturing.**

Despite all the social changes and historical turmoil, some things have remained the same. Just as it was centuries ago, so today **the lives of our inhabitants carry on in a close bond with nature.** This interweaving of culture and nature defines the distinctiveness of Bielsko-Biała, with **30% of the city being covered by forests.** Together with the surrounding mountains, they shape Bielsko-Biała's unique character and are some of its greatest touristic and natural assets. **We have eighteen peaks within our administrative borders, a ski slope, and a peak towering 600 m above the city (Mount Szyndzielnia - 1028 m above sea level), plus a network of mountain bike trails.**

## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

*Bielsko-Biała and the Beskid Agglomeration*





Culture has always played an important role in the development of the city and it teems with many grassroots initiatives. At the end of the 19th century, it was actually the local community that founded a theatre here, and in the early 2020s a BB resident built Cavatina Hall in our city, the first private concert hall in Central Europe, where concerts of symphonic music are held. The city has a rich network of cultural institutions (viz. p. 53). We also have the oldest operating Animated Film Studio in Poland. Every year several hundred cultural events are held in BB. These include the *International Festival of Puppetry Art*, the *Foto Art Festival*, *Arting*, two jazz festivals (*Autumn Jazz* and *Bielsko-Biała Jazz Blizzard*) and the *Sacrum in Musica* concerts. The organiser of the largest folklore festival in Poland, the *Beskidy Highlanders' Week of Culture*, is also based in Bielsko-Biała. International sports events, such as a stage of the *Tour de Pologne* and *Enduro* cycling competitions, are held in our city and region.



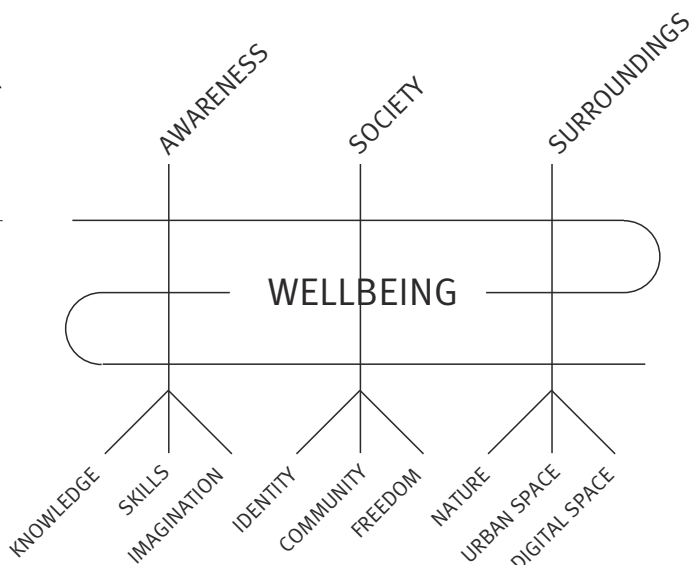
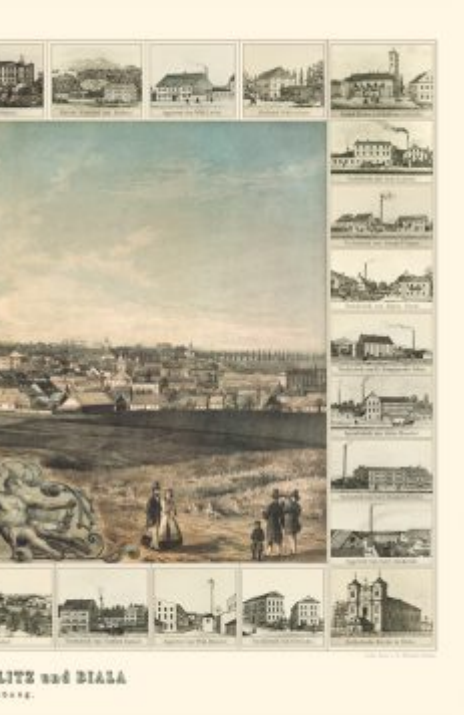
**0.4** Explain the concept of the programme that would be launched if the city is designated as European Capital of Culture.

The weaving industry and the distinctive nature of the borderland have had a huge impact on our city for centuries. Geopolitics, history and migrations (signs of the times) have repeatedly forced us to confront rapidly changing realities. Changes in administrative and state divisions, fluid affiliations and multiculturalism have constantly been a source of new challenges for our residents, towards which they have reacted proactively, adapting their lifestyles to the changes. Thanks to this, **the greatest resources of our community are initiative and creativity, the ability to learn and an openness to change.**

A borderland region, as a detector of upcoming changes, is always a multileveled and intriguing place. It is here in this microcosm that one can observe the outcomes of world politics, economic, social and cultural revolutions. Bielsko-Biała has been such a place for centuries - a twin city at the junction of cultures, countries, the world of nature and civilisation. **Our programme is actually founded on the city's borderland experiences and its textile heritage.** It comprises a unique interweaving of the living fabric of our city with multicultural tradition and contemporary experiences and the dreams of the inhabitants of our rapidly developing agglomeration.

We undoubtedly live in watershed times, the outcome of which will be changes on a scale as yet unknown to us, in a world that questions everything we thought was certain - the end of great epidemics, economic stability, unlimited economic development and individual freedom, universal tolerance and Europe as an island of abundance and peace.

Our primary aim is to create an agenda that will be a response to the post-pandemic world, weaving a **new, modern fabric for the city, whose durable and original weaves will allow residents to achieve WELLBEING - satisfaction in various areas of their lives.**



**The fabric is a metaphor for the wellbeing** that both we, the inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała, and the inhabitants of all Europe require. In order to weave it, **we need to guide the thread once more through the main warps - threads running the length of the entire fabric - of our world. We will discover new weaves, enter into a creative dialogue with tradition and make the best use of local resources to create a common European future.** Our programme weaves together the most important concepts and values such as community, freedom, identity, imagination, knowledge, skills, nature, urban space and digital space. It is also our attempt to respond to the New European Bauhaus, an attempt enriched by the unique experience of our place in Europe.





# 1. CONTRIBUTION TO THE LONG-TERM STRATEGY

**1.1** 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 coolest city in Poland"** – is how renowned Polish writer and specialist on urban themes, Filip Springer, described Bielsko-Biała.

Bielsko-Biała has been the cultural capital of the southern part of the Silesian Voivodeship (Polish provincial administration) for many years. Our key document outlining the directions of development in this area is the **Development Strategy for Bielsko-Biała until 2030, which was implemented in 2022**. The strategy adopts an innovative approach to what the city has to offer culturally, focusing on local resources such as cultural heritage, rich cultural offerings, thriving and networked cultural institutions, the city's powerful influence on the Beskid Agglomeration and the involvement of residents in the city's cultural life.

Having made the decision to apply for the title of European Capital of Culture in 2029, **the city began to formulate a new professional strategy for culture, valid until 2030, which will be implemented in 2024**.

The President of Bielsko-Biała appointed **two teams** to work on the ECoC programme. The first, **the ECoC Policy Council**, comprising thirty-two experts and specialists in various fields. The second team (**Tasking Team**), one that is firmly integrated with our residents, aims to reinforce the processes of democratisation and integration of the local community through consultation and collaboration with residents, artistic groups, youth, senior citizens, people with disabilities, foreigners living in the city, representatives of creative businesses, craftsmen and women and other professional and recreational groups.

In parallel with the Culture Development Strategy, the city is working on a **Community Revitalisation Programme until 2030**, which will invest in the city's material heritage and the restoration of social and economic functions in run-down urban areas.

One of the essential goals of these implemented initiatives is also to improve access to urban spaces and ensure full utilization of the cultural offer by various age groups, social groups, and individuals with disabilities.

*The largest secular stained glass window in Poland in the main façade of a former bank in the city centre, showing a panorama of the city, above which rises an allegorical figure of Plenty holding a cornucopia*





Table 1. List of framework documents related to development strategies

Main strategic documents related to development through cultural initiatives

**Development Strategy for BB until 2030***Priorities: Education for culture, access to culture, cultural heritage, strengthening creative communities.**Challenges: increasing the city's recognition in Europe, utilizing endo/exogenous resources, social integration, development of cognitive-cultural economy, developing a culture space management, strengthening knowledge capital about innovation and development directions among education and culture sector employees, and the sustainable inclusion of creative communities in developing programming process.***Strategy for the Development of Culture for BB until 2030***Priorities of the city: People. Life. Governance. Mobility. Environment and Economy.**Challenges - sustainable development, development of qualitatively new cultural offerings of the city using endogenous development resources.***Strategy for the Development of the Silesian Voivodeship "Silesia 2030" Silesian Greenery***Priorities: a cultural Silesia; the voivodeship to be a region regarded as friendly towards its inhabitants, and an efficiently managed region.**The challenge - reinforcing the culture sector and increasing the participation of residents in cultural events, as well as strengthening the identity and cultural identification of residents in the context of our region and country.***Strategy for Responsible Development until 2020 (with 2030 in mind)***Poland's priorities: sustainable economic growth based increasingly on knowledge, data and organisational excellence, socially sensitive and territorially balanced development, an efficient state and institutions.**Challenges: domain strengthening: human capital, social integration, digitisation, transport, energy, environment, National Security.***National Strategy for Regional Development 2030***Poland's priorities: territorial, socio-economic, environmental and spatial cohesion, reinforcing regional competitive advantages;**The challenge: improving the quality of management and implementation of territory-based policies.***Social Capital Development Strategy (cooperation, culture, creativity) 2030***Poland's priorities: increasing the quality of the social and cultural life of Polish citizens, increasing their involvement in public life, strengthening the role of culture in building identity and civic attitudes.**The challenge: increasing the use of cultural and creative potential for development. Promoting new technologies in the process of strengthening the creative potential in society.***Creative Europe - European Capitals of Culture Programme***EU priorities: protecting and promoting Europe's cultural diversity, enhancing citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural area, supporting the contribution of culture in respect of long-term development of cities.**Challenges: increasing the diversity and the European cultural dimension of cities, transnational cooperation, expanding accessibility and participation in what cities have to offer culturally, strengthening the potential of the city's cultural sector and its links with other sectors, strengthening the international profile of cities through culture.***Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030***EU priorities: European Green Deal; A Europe fit for the digital age; An economy that serves the people; A stronger status for Europe in the world; Promoting the European way of life; A new impetus for European democracy**Challenges: polycrises: economic, social, migration, climatic outcomes of the Covid-19 pandemic, war in Ukraine***UN - Agenda 2030***Priorities: Sustainable Development – the five 'P's: people, planet, prosperity, peace, partnership. Global challenges: striving to achieve sustainable development in the three dimensions of economy, society and environment*

The socio-cultural capital of Bielsko-Biała is founded on the historical adaptability of its inhabitants, in particular on their ability to adjust to circumstances in the face of changing conditions. In response to the arrival of new residents from various cultural backgrounds, Bielsko-Biała is transforming into a dynamic urban centre. The city's aspirations to apply for the title of European Capital of Culture (ECoC) in 2029 is driven by a desire to actively participate in international cultural, trade and inter-personal exchange. As part of this initiative, we are inviting representatives of various creative environments, including internationally renowned artists, to jointly create with us an economy that is based on knowledge and culture.

**1.2** *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.*

In **2021-2022 research was carried out on the role played by culture in shaping the socio-economic landscape of Bielsko-Biała**. A gap in support for the creative industries was identified, especially in the field of technology and international collaboration. Despite this, young entrepreneurs, especially in the IT industry, as well as the gaming industry, are developing rapidly, a testament to the innovativeness of the region.

With our objective being to support culture, **we are planning international collaboration** and the creation of an ECoC programme that focuses on **improving our abilities in the realms of digital technology**. We see a need to adapt our art education approaches to it at every level, as well as to **create a residency scheme for international artists**. We are placing emphasis on supporting young musical talent and craftsmen and women to preserve local heritage. There are plans to establish a school of arts and crafts and a school for game developers at the Animated Film Studio. We are inclined towards a need for 'fields of creativity' – areas that support learning, innovation and entrepreneurship, and aimed at keeping young talent in the city. We are supporting these initiatives through projects such as the **Youth Volunteer Centre** and collaborative work with the **Non-Formal Education Foundation**.

Local entrepreneurship is promoted and supported by the Regional Development Agency through the reinforcement of potential, modern innovative services, education and the use of available aid programmes funded domestically and from abroad, and in particular by the European Union. The Agency is concurrently implementing such projects **as the Beskid HUB – the Centre for Digital Innovation and Modern Technologies, along with local entrepreneurship incubators and support for start-up companies, and the Intergenerational Centre for Activity and Innovation**, a platform for social activities combining areas relating to learning, entrepreneurship and recreation for people of all ages. This activity also conveniently fits into one of our urban areas as it relates to the revitalisation of a mansion house located in the centre of Bielsko-Biała.

**Pursuit of the title of European Capital of Culture** is our main priority as we see it as an opportunity to integrate residents and strengthen the local identity and economic potential of the city, not least by halting younger residents from moving away from BB.

**1.3** *How is the European Capital of Culture action included in this strategy.*

**The Strategy for the Development of Culture of Bielsko-Biała until 2030 and the ECoC programme are intertwined**. They are being worked on by the same teams, comprising experienced people made up of experts, residents, and private and local government cultural institutions. The results of our work are being assessed together with our twinned cities and other cities who were fortunate enough to have been awarded the title of ECoC in the past. We are taking advantage of a further opportunity to make weaves of experiences, creative energy, dreams and the aspirations of older and younger generations to create socio-economic prosperity beyond the limits of what we are accustomed to.

As part of our activities, **we are improving the quality of urban spaces** so that they are accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. POINT 11, a dynamic cultural centre in the heart of the city, is a key feature in this process. This is a place that **reflects the essence of Bielsko-Biała - openness and commitment**.

We are simultaneously concentrating on innovation. We are working with street artists as part of





the Urban Art programme, as well as with cities around the world in the Dead Street Art network in **a quest for solutions to 'dead' urban areas**. We are striving to ensure that residents actively shape their own surroundings, for example by **setting up community gardens**.

As part of our preparations for **the ECoC programme, we are planning audits and consultations on the theme of a Dark Sky project**, so that our lighting policy meets the needs of residents, while promoting tourism and education at the same time.

Our activities are aimed primarily at **building bridges between tradition and modernity**, between different generations, as well as between culture and business. We wish Bielsko-Biała to become a model for other cities in the realms of cultural development.

**1.4** *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)?*

Awarding BB the title of ECoC would mean a series of long-term benefits in various spheres of city life, from culture, through society and infrastructure, to economy.

### 1. Cultural Impact:

- Socially engaged art: promoting respect for universal European values: human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights through artistic activities.
- Inspiring local artists to create bold, innovative works and participate in international projects. Enhancing the aesthetic skills of audiences thanks to the high standards of artistic events.
- Better cultural education for residents and visitors through various workshops, lectures, presentations, and even participation in various events.
- Strengthening the cultural profile of Bielsko-Biała, as a result of collaboration with international artists.

### 2. Social Impact:

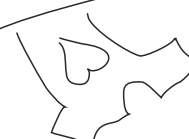
- Reinforcing European identity by raising awareness of the common values, and similar challenges that urban dwellers in Europe face today, through artistic projects involving both local and international artists, transcending traditional borders and identities.
- Building lasting relationships through international projects that will facilitate an exchange of experiences and mutual introduction of good practices in European cities.
- Increasing access to culture for all residents, visitors, migrants and refugees.
- Strengthening bonds and relationships in the city thanks to the integration of different communities.
- Strengthening the sense of shared responsibility for local heritage that relates to both culture and nature.
- Increasing the sense of belonging to a community. ECoC is an intergenerational experience involving many different communities.

### 3. Impact on the city's infrastructure:

- Taking better care of the river and green spaces in our city, intensifying social campaigns through an awareness of the need to take action to protect the natural environment.
- Implementation of educational projects and sustainable ecological solutions in the city, e.g. electronic dissemination of documents in cultural institutions, and best practices when organising events.
- Revitalising abandoned spaces in the city through art and modern technology, thereby providing them with a new social function.
- Intensifying artistic interventions in urban spaces.
- Increasing the friendliness and attractiveness of the city for children (*That's Another Story* project) and young people. Instilling in them a sense of responsibility for the city and reinforcing the sense of agency in shaping it.
- Creating places for meetings and dialogue, so that everyone feels safe, that a community is formed, and that they can have an impact on the development of the city.
- Better accessibility of public spaces for everyone, including people with special needs.
- Accelerating the development of infrastructure - cultural facilities, transport and urban greenery. A positive impact on WELLBEING by improving public spaces.



fot. R. Hryciów



#### 4. Economic impact:

- Attracting new audiences using what the city and the region have to offer in terms of tourism, food and commerce.
- Increasing investment leading to job creation, especially in cultural sectors.
- Support for various artistic sectors, including the audiovisual arts, music and arts and crafts.
- Creation of new interdisciplinary and international startups in the creative sector.
- Provision of specialist learning and training for a new generation of craftsmen and women who are becoming scarce in the market and who cannot be replaced by artificial intelligence.

Were it to be awarded the title of the European Capital of Culture, Bielsko-Biała would have the opportunity to become an even more open, modern and friendly city for its inhabitants and visitors from around the world.

#### 1.5 Outline briefly the plans for monitoring and evaluation.

Bielsko-Biała, a vibrant city full of initiatives, is focusing on the implementation of a long-term vision of its development. Predicated on the results of continuous monitoring and a systematic review of the Development Strategy until 2030, the local authorities are striving to provide residents with the highest quality of cultural and social life.

Various data sources, such as the **State of the City Report**, the **BB Barometer** and **satisfaction surveys** are available to residents in repositories accessible to all. A transparent approach allows for a better understanding of the needs and expectations of the community, something that is crucial for effective development planning.

However, our programme also requires data collection for its monitoring and evaluation.

**We intend to collect data by using various research methods, both quantitative and qualitative.** The issues covered by our research will relate to the sense of belonging to a community, the question of local identity and the sense of freedom. An important topic of our research will be the level of cultural abilities across various age groups and social groups and the quality of cultural education provided by various city bodies. The third area of the study will be an assessment of our natural, urban and digital surroundings.

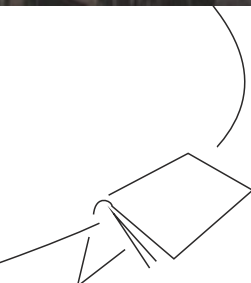
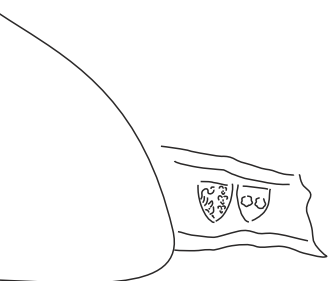
We intend to complete these studies by the end of September 2024. They will be conducted in a variety of communities, amongst various age groups at different stages of education from nursery to university, and amongst those in work, the unemployed and retired people. Of course, these studies will also cover groups that are at risk of exclusion or are already excluded.

Other aspects to be analysed will be the extent to which there is international collaboration between institutions and artists, e.g. by belonging to networks or platforms, the diversity of what they offer etc.

**Our monitoring and evaluation system will operate on many levels.** It will involve **collaboration with the University of Bielsko-Biała** and private companies that handle monitoring services. One such company is Belfast-based startup **Polyloop**. Their system uses artificial intelligence and quick data analysis. It also helps to collect information from participants of cultural events, their staff, organisers and other parties. This company will also help us set suitable key performance indicators (KPIs) and align them not only with our Bidbook objectives, but also with other strategic BB and European documents, including the sustainable development aims as presented in the 2030 Agenda.

**We are also working on the possibility of cross-monitoring and evaluation with the Swedish city which will be the other ECoC 2029 title winner.**

We intend to use hackathons to create IT solutions that will also help collect other data such as that for a light pollution map or a map of architectural accessibility. Secondary schools and private companies will be involved with us in these planned hackathons.







## 2. CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC CONTENT

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

**Our objective is WELLBEING, our strategy is made up of WEAVES.**

WELLBEING embodies the harmony between our resources and mental, physical and social challenges. But this is such a difficult balance to achieve today. The pandemic, war, long-term climate crisis and a crisis of faith in values have all shaken the framework on which our relationship with the world was anchored. Perhaps it was to be. Perhaps the threads we were using were poorly selected, with the result being that our fabric tore easily.

**The weaving process continues.**

**Let's imagine our city as a loom with warps into which we want to introduce new wefts which constitute our calculated actions and an artistic programme that will intertwine into our desired aspiration of WELLBEING.**

The warp provides structure to the fabric and gives it durability and form.

Our city consists of three different warps – one which is cognitive that we shall call AWARENESS, one that is SOCIETY, the sum of our relationships with other residents, and another that is physical and termed SURROUNDINGS. Our role is to choose the right wefts, which will connect these individual warps in such a way as to end up with a fabric that does not fray or wear through.

The final look of the fabric will be contingent upon our needs, our knowledge and our vision. In the second half of the 20th century Bielsko-Biała was called the 'City of a hundred industries and a thousand opportunities'. The first and most important of these was the textile industry.

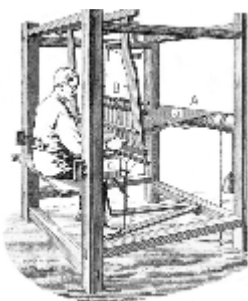
Bielsko and Biała, two towns on opposite banks of the River Biała, systematically weaved their stories to the rhythm of the looms. The common, multi-coloured fabric which is what our city is today, is a record of the life, work and vision of successive generations. You can see in it the expertise of craftspeople and craft masters from both towns. We can see evolution and lovely patterns, but also mistakes, imperfections and grime. Each generation had its own vision of the fabric. Regardless of the differences in respect of technological developments, trends and needs, **everyone wanted to create the perfect fabric for their times:** comfortable, functional, beautiful and durable.

A fabric in which one felt secure, confident and snug. And so it is with our city. We need an agenda in accordance with which we will weave a WELLBEING that is tailored to our needs. We have fabric samples at our disposal left behind by our predecessors. This is our heritage. We can draw from them, extrapolate conclusions and reinterpret them. We also have creativity, agency and expertise, and now, thanks to the technological possibilities available to us, also unlimited access to knowledge from around the world. Owing to our historical and cultural conditioning and our relationship with nature, as symbolised by the mountains that surround the city, we can regard BB to be a model that **allows us to test weaves that could be seen as being useful not only in our own microworld, but also on a more macro scale.** The issues selected by us represent trends and narratives relevant to the whole of the modern world, including the European Union. They comprise knowledge, imagination, skills, community, freedom and identity, nature, urban fabric and digital space. Our fabric must correspond to the multithreading and dynamics of the modern world.

### 2.2 *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 events planned for the ECoC year will be spread across the whole of 2029, with slightly more planned for the summer months when most of the outdoor events will take place. We will not abandon the cyclical events that make up the city's cultural scene, but they will also correspond with the keynotes of the Weaves programme.

The year will commence with an inaugural ceremony in January. The title will be symbolically passed over to us from our friends in Rouen, with whom we are in discussions about future collaboration, or from an alternative winning city. Artistic events throughout the city will accompany the official part of the event, attended by



*Loom - a mechanical or manual device for weaving fabric.*

*Wefts - threads that co-create the fabric, by running transversely to the warp threads.*

*Warps - threads running the length of the fabric into which the weft threads are woven crosswise. The warps determine the length of the fabric.*

*The weave - the manner in which the warp and weft threads are interlaced to create a fabric.*



representatives of EU bodies. These events will include one at BB's highest point – the summit of Mount Szyndzielnia (1028 m above sea level), where a symbolic light will be lit on the lookout tower. This will be the Lantern of Culture, an emanation of our joy, pride and sense of responsibility in being awarded the title of ECoC. Projection mapping and other multimedia events are planned in the city, so everyone knows that, along with our friends in Sweden, we have officially begun celebrating the year of the European Capital of Culture. We intend to collaborate with the organisers of the final concert of the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity, an event which brings crowds of residents and guests into BB, united by their support for the largest of the Polish fundraising charity events, to enjoy the European Capital of Culture together.

We will also hold the closing ceremony with our friends from Northern Europe and representatives from Larnaca as our successors, assuming they win the title, or with whosoever has been awarded it for 2030.

The programme for the year has been built around WELLBEING: society, awareness and environment. It includes events that have been gradually built up to this point to reach their peak, as well as events unique to 2029, presenting various spheres of art and with varying outreach. We intend to collaborate with the most important festivals and competitions in the world in order to be able to showcase their winners on our city's stages. These events might take the form of meetings, lectures, workshops with Nobel or Pulitzer Prize winners; concerts by the winners of the Queen Elisabeth Competition or the Leeds Piano Competition; an exhibition featuring winners of Ars Electronics or performances by entrants in the Rudolf Nureyev International Ballet Competition.

Our programme, and some of the projects and themes to be undertaken, have been the subject of international meetings and talks with numerous partners (see map 18). We have found many topics that unite us and we will develop them together. However, we have decided that we will work jointly with designated partners on the shape of the projects and their feasibility only at this stage, and that further collaboration will be formalised at a later stage. Moreover, we still have a long list of partners with whom we plan to establish contact and talk to about joint projects.

## AWARENESS

**With an increase in awareness, the possibility of development will increase in like manner. This, in turn, allows each of us to better adapt to the changing world and life's challenges, which helps in maintaining mental balance. The most important elements of awareness for us are Knowledge, Skills and Imagination.**

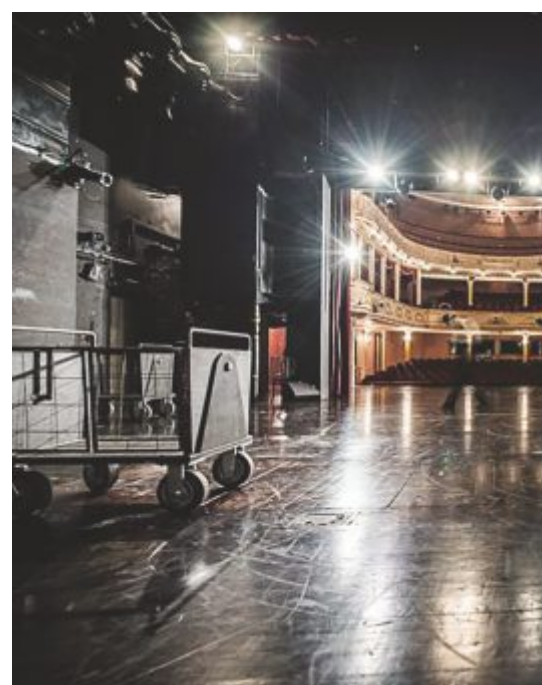
### GIGA PUPPETS

Giga puppets will be an outdoor spectacle featuring large puppets, with the participation of international masters of theatrical crafts, performers and producers. The spectacle will be performed making use of the latest technology and will combine elements of dance and form. The essence of the project will revolve around a combination of learning in the form of high-tech solutions, skills in the form of masterly made puppets and imagination that will take us to a world created by the artists. There will be four performances in total, one at the start of each of the four seasons. We would also like to use robotic puppets in some of these performances alongside live artists. In this project we wish to combine the cultural heritage of our city through the craftsmanship of artists from our own Puppet Theatre with modern technology. Giga puppets, through their personifications, will embody the changes taking place in the world. As part of this project we plan to hold performances in other European cities, and in the future the puppets may become spatial installations.

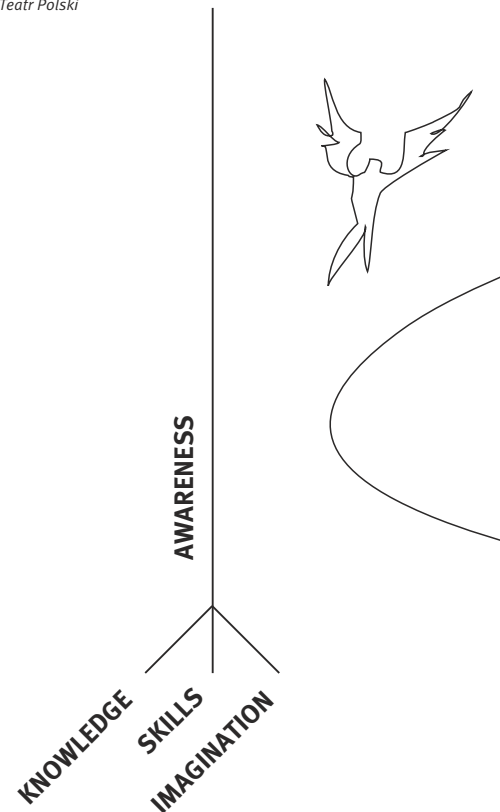
When: 2029; Cost: \*\*

### KNOWLEDGE

**Knowledge allows us to better understand the world around us, its complexity, how it works and the relationships between various elements. Thanks to this,**



fot. Teatr Polski



**we can better interpret phenomena and events, anticipate the consequences of our actions and make informed choices.**

### **A History of the T-shirt**

The aim of the project is to conduct a series of artistic performances, telling the story of a T-shirt or a sweater or a dress that represent a protest against social exploitation and consumerism. We will highlight the effect that the fashion industry has on the natural environment and the need to strive for recyclable fashion.

The performances will depict the entire production cycle, from wear to disposal, and show the controversies associated with it. The performances will take place at the railway station in front of random audiences who will take this story with them on their further travels. We want to invite the audiences to self-reflect upon what they have seen, seek out further information and to take appropriate action.

The performance will also be shared on social media to reach a larger audience. For each story there will also be commentaries from experts, from which we will build a list of good consumer practices relating to sustainable fashion. This list will be made available in the form of an infographic on the website. The project will end with an educational exhibition across the city. Instead of the usual posters promoting events, there will be clothes accompanied by their stories.

We will invite street and youth theatre groups to participate in this project.

When: up until 2029; Cost: \*\*

### **BBook Festival**

We will not limit ourselves to inviting only outstanding writers from Europe to this event, but also authors from Bielsko-Biała who write about our city and region. Numerous workshops will take place, with themes such as creative writing, calligraphy, creating comic books etc. The literary festival is a response to numerous requests from BB residents as submitted in the civic projects callout for the ECoC. The week-long event will take place in different parts of the city so that everyone can find something to suit them. The BBook Festival will be a breakthrough event on a national scale, as it will be the only one to combine together a festival which includes fantasy themes, board games, comic books and literature for children, teenagers and adults. The main theme of the festival will change annually and will cover a variety of topics.

When: from 2025; Cost: \*\*

### **A Recycled City**

This project involves creating a model of a city in keeping with zero waste principles and Trash Art, forming constructions made of waste materials, including electrowaste. Materials for the project will be amassed through public city collections. Year-round workshops will take place for participants of all ages giving them an opportunity to build individual elements of the city, brought to life through chemical and physical experiments. The recycled city will be created using imagination and creativity, and science will be applied in a fun way. Constructors, under appropriate supervision, will also have to contend with challenges facing the city - rising sea levels, extreme storms and other effects of climate change. The constructions created throughout the year will come together to form a model of the city and will then be exhibited. The aim of the project will be to draw attention to the protection of our planet in keeping with zero-waste principles.

When: 2029 - 2030; Cost: \*\*

### **SKILLS**

**We consider skills to be crafts, the practice of which often requires many years of learning the technique, of focus and commitment. This can lead to the state of 'flow', i.e. a fully engaged state of awareness in which we are completely immersed. Crafts can help us understand certain aspects of the world. For instance, a craftsman working with a given material gains a deeper understanding of its nature, properties, and uses.**



foto. D. Koperska



### Master Craftsmen

We would like to respond to the challenges of a rapidly changing world. Mass production, shrinking resources and a loss of craft skills are some of these challenges. We want to motivate people into taking action, to encourage them to discover the potential of a craft, to spread knowledge about the values associated with it, and to give them the opportunity to develop and discover their own skills.

To begin with, we plan to organise permanent workshops dedicated to theatre crafts, which will eventually become a theatre crafts school. Bielsko-Biała's masters of puppetry, wig-making, carpentry and other professions will teach volunteers from all round the world to create the various essentials employed in theatrical art. Prominent international experts will also be invited to share their skills and experience. These elements will be jointly created for productions to be performed in the ECoC year.

This project will address the need to preserve craft traditions and vanishing professions and to educate a new generation of craftspeople, whose numbers are diminishing in the labour market.

As part of the project, a Showroom and live workshop will be built on 11 Listopada Street, where BB residents will have the opportunity to observe the work of craftspeople live and to participate in workshops.

When: 2029; Cost: \*\*

### Dance Conference

The dance conference will be an event where participants from different countries meet to share their knowledge, experiences and passion for dance. It will be an important platform to enable dancers, choreographers, teachers, researchers and dance enthusiasts to learn from one other and to develop their skills and prospects. The aim of the conference is not only to promote the art of dance, but also to build bonds in the international community of dancers and to forge interest in culture and the art of dance. Working closely with the Polish Theatre, artistic projects blending theatre and performance art will be presented on stages built in the city.

There will be lectures, workshops and practical classes conducted by acclaimed instructors for both amateurs and professionals. Activities will include teaching people with disabilities to dance, as well as training for instructors wanting to work with the disabled. We will have discussions and discussion panels; dance shows; dance research and theory; what's new in dance to include inspiration and personal growth.

When: 2029; Cost: \*\*

### Subjective Truth

BB has many untold stories that could form the basis for documentaries. We intend to invite outstanding filmmakers to conduct workshops for young adepts in this field. They will come to our city for an intensive course in creating documentaries founded on local stories and real events. Once this training is complete, they will have the opportunity to see the reactions of masters of the craft and audiences to their work during showings of their films. We also intend to work with documentary film festivals to include these newly created films in the existing appropriate categories. Videos of the films will ultimately be posted online.

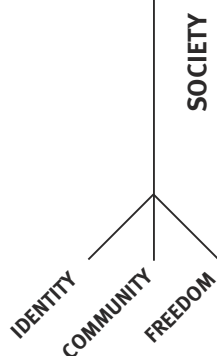
When: 2029; Cost: \*\*

### IMAGINATION

**Imagination permits us to interpret and anticipate events within our surroundings. Thanks to this, we can better understand the world around us and our place in it. Imagination is the key to abstract thinking, which is essential for cognitive development. We become able to think of ideas that do not immediately stem from our experiences. Imagination is the source of creativity. It allows one to create new ideas, solve problems and express oneself in an artistic way.**



fot. D. Koperska



### A City Matrix

This is a project verging on a social experiment. A group of volunteers, following open international callouts, which will comprise artists, intellectuals and creators of culture, will come to Bielsko-Biała to create a community which will tackle topics that are the challenges of today's Europe and will propose ways to solve the problems we face. The group will have a team of scientists at its disposal to conduct computer simulations using AI to test the feasibility of implementation of their ideas and concepts. The process will take three months. The artists involved in the project will create stories, paintings and other artistic expressions illustrating the world they have created. Their operating base will be open to visitors who will be able to share their vision of the future.

When: 2029; Cost: \*\*

### A Journey Into the Depths

A multidisciplinary experience based on creating a labyrinth that forms a path through a story and renders the viewer the main character of the story. Suggested themes might include a world without art - where graphic design does not exist, there are only the simplest of fonts, all buildings are the same, there are no books and there are no myths; or an experience inspired by *The Trial* by Franz Kafka. These exhibitions will be temporary. In the year of the ECoC title three exhibitions that are an artistic vision of awareness, society and environment, relating to the most important issues facing Europe, will be created. The course of the story being experienced very much depends on the direction in the labyrinth in which the participant of the experience decides to move. Thanks to this, each visitor to the exhibition will receive an individual experience. The project will be created in collaboration with artists and performers from open international callout.

When: 2028-2030 (exhibition opening 2029); Cost: \*\*

### The Weaving Mill of Creativity

This will be a place designed especially for children and teenagers (3-15 years old), where the worlds of culture and science collide, encouraging the youngsters to discover, create and explore (STEAM). It will be a space that arouses the imagination, develops interests and stimulates the curiosity of our youngest residents. We want children and young people to have the opportunity to work with international artists and create works of art in the realms of painting, sculpture, multimedia arts, music and cross-media creativity.

The structural makeup of the Weaving Mill of Creativity will be full of colours, shapes and inspiring elements that encourage interaction and creative thinking. The main objective of this place will be to provide access to various forms of culture and science in an accessible and engaging way. The interior of the Weaving Mill of Creativity will be divided into various thematic zones, such as a literature and art zone, science, technology and innovation zone, learning about the world zone, and creative leisure zone.

The Weaving Mill of Creativity will be a place that encourages active participation, collaboration and discovery through a variety of activities, workshops, interactive exhibitions and presentations. It is a space where children and young people will have the freedom to express their ideas, develop their passions and acquire knowledge in a fun and engaging way.

Time: 2029; Cost: \*\*

## SOCIETY

**Belonging to a society is one of the key elements for WELLBEING. Society allows us to achieve common aims and increases the sense of security and support, which significantly affect our ability to cope with stress, difficulties and the sense of social isolation, crucial for achieving mental balance, which is so important these days.**

### G29 (Generation 29)

The project revolves around the engagement of a group of teenagers from across Europe who will reach the age of majority in 2029. Starting in 2024, this



international group will meet in various European cities to undertake artistic activities, which demonstrate the greatest ecological or social challenges of the given city. In this project we want to identify ambassadors of change among young people. They will become an advisory body during the preparation of our artistic agenda for the year of the ECoC title.

Our project partner will be Larnaca, in which project members, working jointly with 12-year-olds from cities that are candidates for the ECoC in the coming years, will co-implement the project and prove that the actions they take do matter.

When: 2024-2030; Cost: \*\*

### COMMUNITY

**We can count on support and understanding within our communities which make up our society. It allows us to feel part of something bigger. Nowadays, we see an increasing breakdown of bonds and increasing atomisation, which is why it is important for us to address this topic.**

#### Senses of Europe

The project aims to weave together diverse European cultures that will come together in BB. It will be a celebration of music, dance and culinary arts, taking place in the summer of 2029. We will invite three experts in their fields and thirty students from each EU country to our city. Masters of these disciplines will conduct workshops for a group of Polish students of the different arts, and foreign guests will learn from local masters of their craft. Each week's workshops will end with an outdoor get-together which will involve music, dancing and the tasting of international dishes together.

When: 2028-2029; Cost: \*\*

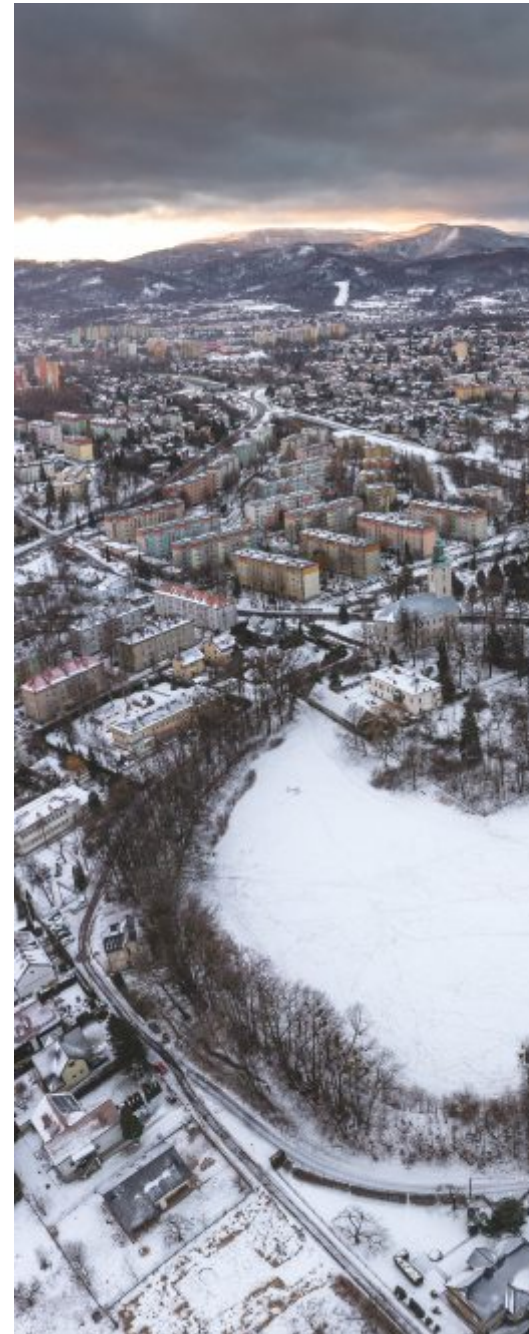
#### Community Gardens

The premise of the project is to create a specially made up garden location where residents grow, manage and make use of the produce they cultivate. We will create a garden that will perform various functions: to retain and support local biodiversity and protect plants without the use of chemical products; to strengthen social bonds, improve the mood and have a positive effect on mental and physical health. Today's cities need such communities, especially neighbourhood ones, to prevent anonymity and strengthen interpersonal relationships. Working in the garden is an opportunity for intergenerational transfer of knowledge and experience. Our project will use the principles of permaculture to plan the garden as a comprehensive ecosystem where different elements interact with each other. We will work together with institutions such as schools, nursing homes and charities to involve various social groups in the project. Regular workshops and training sessions as well as artistic exhibitions will be organised in the gardens, drawing attention to the issues of ecology, such as the growing of herbs, herbal medicine, healthy eating etc. They will be places of meetings and integration, educational activities and cultural events.

When: from 2024; Cost: \*\*

#### Mozaikon

The premise of the project is the creation of a mural made up of mosaics. The mosaic installation will be created as a response to earlier public consultations and will be an interpretation of values and symbols important to the residents, indicated by them during meetings and surveys in which representatives of various social groups will take part. Our partners from Europe will share with us their own conclusions and selected values. Once the results have been compiled, the artists will design a mosaic that will be made by the residents themselves during intergenerational art workshops. We want to give the residents of our city a sense of community and to be the driving force behind the creation of significant and historical works. It will be the participants themselves who will create the individual elements of the mosaic, which will eventually merge into one image. Artists will conduct similar workshops in other countries which will join in



fol. Pics Studio



fol. Inez Baturu







## 2. CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC CONTENT

the project.

The multi-phase creation of the mosaic, eventually forming one huge joint work, will have a symbolic dimension - various pieces of ceramic tiles, combined into individual elements of the mosaic, will eventually merge into one beautiful mural depicting various European cultures united by common values.

When: 2027-2029; Cost: \*\*

### IDENTITY

**Awareness of one's identity is important for self-definition, building autonomy and making decisions in keeping with one's beliefs. It also allows one to better understand oneself and others, making it easier to form relationships. Our identity has changed through numerous historical and socio-economic turmoil, and it is difficult nowadays to find identity in an era of globalisation.**

### The Abandoned Town

The project aims to unearth, and reveal to residents and visitors, the truth about the forerunner of Bielsko. This will necessitate conducting archaeological research in collaboration with research centres both domestic and foreign. The area being studied will ultimately become accessible in new adaptations of itself: in a multimedia format and also an exhibition sited adjacent to *Grodzisko*, the original fortified settlement area. It will also be a starting point for a discussion about towns and cities destroyed as a result of current armed conflicts and climate change.

The first site of settlement for our city was abandoned in favour of another, 1.5 km away, in a location where Bielsko was eventually to grow. There is little historical and archaeological knowledge about the events leading up to this. We do not know whether it was the result of an armed invasion or some other cataclysmic event. The remains of the settlement were never rebuilt and, from a European dimension, are unique. Today, they form a picturesque meadow surrounded by the remains of embankments with buildings around.

When: 2023-2029; Cost: \*\*

### Recreated Flavours

The aim of this programme is to discover what Europeans ate one hundred years ago and how different cultures once influenced the cuisine of our city and what flavours and tastes have resulted from this contact. We will recreate flavours that have disappeared as a result of historical changes and migration.

Our city's cuisine disappeared, along with most of its residents, after the Second World War. We would like to conduct a search across Poland and Europe for old recipes of Bielsko residents who moved away from our city. Perhaps someone still has a notebook containing their grandmother's or great-grandmother's recipe details hidden away somewhere? We will also encourage foreign project partners to search for lost culinary traditions from their own regions. The collected recipes will not just be recorded in writing, but they will also be handed over to chefs to try to interpret them anew and give them a modern twist. During the year of the ECoC title we will have the opportunity for four sessions in accordance with the seasons, which will be based on local seasonal produce, using plant ingredients that were once popular, but are no longer cultivated. These particular ingredients might be recreated with our partners or could be introduced into the community gardens.

When: 2027-2029; Cost: \*\*

### 43-300

A postcard, viewed by many as being a relic of the past, can still be an interesting means of contact as an alternative to modern e-mails or text messages. It could also be used to build ties and draw attention to important social problems such as loneliness or exclusion, and be a counterbalance to the digital world.

We will use postcards to present the true face of BB, and we will invite other European cities – their schools, cultural institutions and nursing homes - to participate in the project. Schoolchildren will be able to talk about their cities and share their history. For senior citizens, often suffering from loneliness, it will be



an opportunity to recall memories, be an excuse to talk and it will act as a positive mental stimulus, especially for people with dementia. We want to replace the proverbial and calculated 'postcard' charms with portraits of the city made by street artists who do not embellish reality and for whom the charm lies in the authenticity of the moment. This will also be a response to the false image of the world as portrayed in social media. We want the history of postcards to start at the beginning of our journey. We will ask residents to send each other a card to be received in six years' time. The cards and stories will be used to create an exhibition about us, showing the paths that we have taken.  
When: 2023-2029; Cost: \*\*

### **FREEDOM**

**Freedom is an indispensable element of a healthy and progressive society. It is thanks to freedom that democracy and human rights are able to develop. It stimulates self-realisation as well as innovation and creativity. However, with freedom comes responsibility, about which we must not forget.**

### **THE ART OF INCLUSION**

This project is aimed at young people (school and university students) from EU countries, engaging them in social life through various spheres of art. Through this artistic project we wish to prompt young people into taking a stand on issues important to the modern world and to educate them in this area. This venture combines art with current global issues and will be used to promote universal and humanist values. We will annually organise a socially engaged poster competition. The respective editions will address various issues and challenges of the modern world, such as homophobia, climate change, hate, mental problems etc. The conclusion of the project will be a youth festival of socially engaged art, which will combine development of cultural and interpersonal skills and will include young people in social life, shaping their civic attitudes through exhibitions, performances, workshops, and socially engaged art concerts.  
When: 2024-2029; Cost: \*\*

### **No comments**

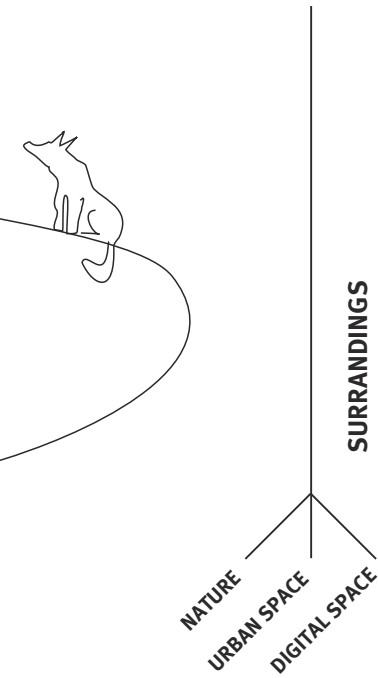
Breaking down stereotypes through dialogue and action is a clear signal that negative forms of thinking do not define us or our communities, but merely impose limitations. Through this project we want to create a sense of our identity having value, and that diversity is the true source of knowledge about a person. That creating relationships between people - focusing on individual characteristics and not on group identity - is a key skill and can be a powerful tool for building bridges and broadening horizons. We will invite artists from all over Europe to the project to create works that provoke, that draw out the most painful and stigmatising stereotypes. Various artistic techniques will be employed during each year of the project. Different areas affected by stereotypes, such as nationality, gender, sexuality or disability, will also be covered. The works of the artists will be printed in large format and sited in urban areas without captions or commentary. The objective will be to invite reflection and to provoke social discussion. Each campaign will be summarised by a series of debates involving experts - doctors, scientists and specialists in a given field. The project will end with an academic and artistic conference, implemented collaboratively with academic centres and non-governmental organisations.  
When: 2029; Cost: \*\*

### **A Map of Freedom**

Each of us has experienced a time when we have felt limited freedom or even been deprived of freedom, one of the core European values. We all have our memories, histories, stories and thoughts about it. We want to create an Internet portal where everyone will be able to post something that is an expression of freedom, be it a sound recording, a series of photos, a poem,







a story, a short documentary report or film. We will find out where people feel free the most and where freedom is most lacking. This will be presented in the form of a map. We will emphasise that everyone has the right to freedom, regardless of whether they are an immigrant, a member of the LGBTQ+ community or a member of a religious minority.

The aim of this inclusive project is to stress the importance that talking about what hurts us has a positive effect on our mental health, builds our self-acceptance and creates a tolerant SOCIETY. Sharing one's story with others can have a therapeutic and AWARENESS-enhancing function.

When: 2029; Cost: \*\*

### **SURROUNDINGS**

**Beauty and harmony in physical surroundings such as nature or architecture bring a sense of peace, joy and contentment. Surroundings rich in cultural, educational and recreational resources can contribute to the intellectual and creative development of each of us and society as a whole. We move around in surroundings made up of nature, urban fabric and digital space on a daily basis.**

### **Mindfulness Festival**

This festival will be a response to our fast-paced world, to the overstimulated mind, to the constant distractions that make it more and more difficult to maintain attention and focus, to the difficulties of building relationships, to the indifference to the nature that surrounds us and to the lack of awareness of the location in which we live. We believe that culture and art in urban areas, as well as activities in close contact with nature, can bring us greater mental tranquillity. It will be an intergenerational festival and one during which we learn from each other – the fully-sighted from the visually impaired, and those with full hearing from those that are deaf, the young from the elderly and vice versa. The agenda of the Festival will be built around the senses, thanks to which we feel and perceive the realities that surround us, which include the charming features of urban architecture usually so easily overlooked. We might start with 'listening to sounds' walks around the city, outdoor painting sessions with mountain views, forest bathing, concerts in the rain, sculpting with clay, breathing techniques, suppers in the dark, and ending with debates about air quality, mental health and sex education.

When: 2024 –2029; Cost: \*\*

### **NATURE**

**Nature has a direct impact on our health and wellbeing. It makes possible physical and mental regeneration. It teaches us how to be wild and joyful, giving us strength and filling us with optimism. Understanding and nurturing the relationship between humans and nature is crucial to maintaining ecological balance, as well as for our own WELLBEING and the future of our planet.**

### **Shapes of Nature**

This festival will take place in the green areas of the city, outside the urbanised zone, and in the year of the ECoC title along the entire Loop hiking route, and also possibly along the bicycle trail between Pszczyna and BB. The festival will be based on visual and sound installations made of natural materials and will be a discourse on the surrounding nature, beliefs and ourselves.

The installations will encourage hikers to stop and will direct their attention to great beauty which is often overlooked and which we want to take care of. These installations will be absorbed over time by nature and will be transformed in accordance with its rhythms, order and processes. As part of a prototyping exercise in the communal forests, we would like to create a story about old Slavic beliefs, the author of which would be local artist, Rafał Budnik. A new series of themes will be created every year until the year of the ECoC title,



with the participation of Polish and foreign artists. The Festival inauguration will take place in 2024.

When: 2025-2029; Cost: \*\*

### Basecamp Szyndzielnia

This event will be organised annually in Bielsko-Biała at the historic Upper Cable Car Station on Mount Szyndzielnia (1001 m above sea level). It will be the highest located Mountain Festival in the Beskid mountains. The festival aims not only to promote a healthy lifestyle, physical activity and respect for nature and the mountains, but also to be a place where the community of mountain-loving folk, explorers, hikers and travellers and naturalists can meet and exchange experiences. Included in the festival will be workshops and nature walks, outdoor painting and photography, a festival of nature films, numerous lectures conducted by renowned stars of the mountain, travel and natural world. We want to show off people who cross their own borders, and who will inspire others to learn and develop new skills, infecting them with a passion for the mountains and nature.

The Basecamp Szyndzielnia Festival will not only be an opportunity to immerse oneself in the beauty of nature, but also to come into contact with various forms of art and culture, together creating an unforgettable experience for all who take part.

When: from 2024; Cost: \*\*

### The River Reclaimed

In a response to the residents' requirements to create places of meeting and respite, as well as to draw energy from the proximity of water, we will once again intertwine the River Biła and its tributaries into the city. BB, historically disconnected from the river by the textile factories, strung along its banks, that used water for production, would now like to reclaim it. The riverbanks - the aorta of life - will be systematically reclaimed through the introduction of pedestrian and bicycle routes along the waterfronts, through squares being opened up to the water, through city beaches and the renaturalisation of parts of the riverbanks. Areas specified by our residents **will be used to conduct a series of river theatre and multimedia events**. Dipping their toes in the flowing streams, the general public will take organised **river walks** with a guide from the source of the river to where it emerges to get to know the waters and the issues associated with them (littering, overgrowth etc.).

When: 2029; Cost: \*\*

### URBAN SPACE

**These constitute the surroundings in which most of us spend a significant part of our lives. We should take care of them and shape them consciously. We should also look at them as a kind of canvas – a medium for art. We have the privilege of living in a place where much of the beautiful architecture has been preserved, but there is no shortage of spaces that can be transformed by art. Our aim is to build friendly and accessible urban spaces, the features of which create a unique identity.**

### Dead Street Art

The city is constantly changing, evolving and, every so often, a once busy street becomes empty and dies. How many cities in Europe can say that they have not faced this problem? In our case, one such thoroughfare is 11 Listopada Street, a promenade which traverses the historic centre of BB. Once part of the imperial highway and the main artery of east-west communication, today it remains full of memories, but empty of people. We have started a process of transformation, a part of which involves creating a Street Art project that will bring the street to life. We want to give forgotten places into the hands of novice producers of artistic events, who will be able to create a 15-minute spectacle on a given topic. Producers and artists will be selected in an international open callout undertaken by our partners. As the name of the street relates to the date of regaining independence by Poland after

fot. A. Andrychowski



fot. A. Andrychowski



## 2. CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC CONTENT

123 years of the Partitions, the first theme to be explored would be freedom.  
When: 2025-2029; Cost: \*\*

### **That's Another Story**

With their infinite layers of imagination and their daring, children are not intimidated by art. The premise of our project, addressing a theme that is important to us, revolves around an international callout for ideas for art installations to be installed in 2029 in urban playgrounds or sited in other areas frequented by children. The installations will be created by professional artists, but children from the artists' towns, cities or vicinity are to be included in the creative process. The unveiling of the installations will form a part of the opening ceremony.

When: 2028-2029; Cost: \*\*

### **A Second Wind for our Cemeteries**

Disconnected until now from the urban fabric by walls, closed and forgotten old cemeteries, both Lutheran and Jewish, will be made more accessible as **memorial parks**. These will be enclaves of old-growth urban greenery, monuments of cemetery art, places of respite from the city noise, enclaves of silence, reflection and remembrance of the distinguished families of factory owners, city officials and townsfolk interred here.

The introduction of **glow worm**-friendly plants will allow us to enjoy the benefits of a **Dark Sky** policy that we plan to implement in the evenings, resulting in the magic of places recovered on the map of our city - white patches filled with the light of memories, and interweaving the past with the present.

Holograms of famous and prominent citizens, to be located in areas of the city historically associated with them, will indicate the way to these memorial parks.

When: 2027-2029; Cost: \*\*

## **DIGITAL SPACE**

**The virtual environment has become an inseparable part of the life of modern society, offering endless possibilities; as any tool it is neither good nor bad. One must bear in mind that it can also be a threat. Operating in a digital space, along with understanding the effects and challenges associated with it, requires more and more careful attention. Thanks to their multisensory nature, art projects have the potential to provide powerful messages about unity in diversity, while showing how technology and art can work together to create deep and memorable experiences for visitors.**

### **Narrative Laundry**

Do we know what is true? Are we still interested? Did our forefathers care, or did they simply believe in what was convenient for them? Inspired by family history, the author of this project makes an impact with the story of his grandmother from the times of the Second World War, who, taken care of by the Third Reich's regime and believing in its propaganda, lived in affluence in a city where there was a laundry service for the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. We will create an artistic programme that will sensitise visitors to the falsification of reality. Working with experts, we will deal with green washing manipulation techniques, sport washing and all manner of fake news in the media. The creation of an interdisciplinary exhibition will be a starting point for discussions between artists and the community. It will constitute an element of a broader discussion about the state of democracy, freedom of speech and their limitations.

When: 2029; Cost \*\*

### **AI and Me**

This project is founded on the collaboration of artificial intelligence with humans in creating works of art. Thanks to an ability to learn and the ability to rapidly analyse, artificial intelligence can work with a human in creating music, graphics or other works of art, relying simply on the strength of a description of





the requirements it is provided with by the human. We plan to organise workshops during which those taking part will be able to transfer their imagination to a virtual world and create something extraordinary with the help of a computer. The works created during the workshops will become a permanent feature in areas of our city.

When: 2029; Cost: \*\*

### The Digital Fabric of Europe

The installation will consist of a large expanse of fabric suspended in a central part of the city. The material from which the fabric will be made is specially designed to react to external stimuli, such as touch, light or sound. It will use advanced technologies such as optical fibres, touch and motion sensors and microcontrollers to create a dynamic picture of Europe's diversity.

Each European country will be represented by a unique pattern and colour palette inspired by its culture, history, flag or landscape. Greece, for example, might comprise patterns referencing its ancient architecture. Norway might include motifs of the fjords and the Northern Lights.

Quiet sounds, from traditional music to the sounds of characteristic places or historical events representing various aspects of European culture, will be heard in the background. The sounds will change in response to user interaction with the fabric.

The aim of the installation is not only to demonstrate the diversity of European cultures, but also to show how technology can serve as a bridge that connects people and cultures. The fabric symbolises community and connection, while emphasising the individuality and uniqueness of each culture.

When: 2029; Cost: \*\*

We hope that by 2029 Ukraine's defensive war will be just history, and that our eastern neighbour will be rebuilding its economy and getting closer to joining the European Union. We know how difficult it is to rebuild a city after a war. One of our partner cities, Berdyansk on the Sea of Azov, is located in Russian-occupied territories and, owing to the strategic port located there, will probably be vulnerable to further fighting in the area. In order to revive its tourist opportunities, we intend to make available or give away some of our works of art and pass on best practice or other solutions that may be of some help in the reconstruction and economic recovery of the city. Substantive talks will take place as soon as Berdyansk is recaptured from its invaders.

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

The cultural programme of Bielsko-Biała will combine the cultural heritage of our city with the latest technological achievements, creating innovative projects that will attract a diverse audience and allow our audience to discover our traditions in a modern way.

When implementing projects such as *The Abandoned Town* or *A Second Wind for our Cemeteries* we will use augmented and virtual reality technologies and holograms to take the participants of the project on a fascinating journey through history. Visitors to the Lutheran cemetery will be able to immerse themselves in the past and learn about the stories of the people buried there. Thanks to VR and AR, we will be able to reconstruct the appearance of the ancient *Grodzisko* settlement and show what life was like there.

In the *Master Craftsmen* project we will recreate dying professions, giving them a modern dimension. Traditional crafts such as woodcarving, weaving and



fot. D.Koperska

theatre crafts will be brought to life thanks to new technologies such as advanced 3D printers and robots and digital prototyping. This combination of tradition and modernity will enable the creation of unique and innovative products that will delight both crafts folk and fans of new technologies.

We will also use the latest technologies during the *Recreated Flavours* project, where traditional recipes of regional cuisine will be combined with modern trends in gastronomy, thanks to which amazing presentations of dishes will be created, transforming traditional dishes into modern, culinary works of art. This unique blend of culinary traditions with new trends will allow visitors to appreciate both the richness of the culinary heritage of the city's past and will open doors to new, amazing taste experiences.

The combination of tradition and history with new technologies will be evident in many other projects, in which innovations in design, prototyping or creating multimedia exhibitions will be implemented.

To sum up, the cultural programme of Bielsko-Biała will combine the city's heritage with new technologies, enriching the experience of residents and visitors. Thanks to this clash of tradition and innovation, the city will become a vibrant place where history and modernity intertwine into one harmonious whole.

**2.4** *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?*

After the City Council had agreed a resolution to apply for the title of European Capital of Culture 2029, the President of Bielsko-Biała invited representatives of the world of culture, promotion and tourism, representatives of non-governmental organisations, business and experts in their fields to work with us on the bid. This gave rise to a series of meetings during which ideas and advice were exchanged and an artistic agenda for 2029 was jointly formulated.

We announced an open callout for suggested projects, and over a hundred of these were submitted. We undertook discussions and consultations with their originators. We are currently working on implementing some of the projects in the prototype phase in conjunction with municipal cultural institutions and the originators of the concepts. The suggestions include 'blanket beats', crepe paper flower workshops, a joint concert of Bielsko-Biała choirs, outdoor painting sessions and 'listening to sounds' walks. We will repeat an open callout for projects in the second stage of the competition but will be concentrating on several precisely defined categories/spheres of art that will represent the main trends of our programme, searching for additional threads to enrich the pattern of our fabric. The originators of all the projects to be implemented as part of the European Capital of Culture will play an active role and will receive extensive support during their creation, evolution and implementation.

There are two artistic secondary schools in BB: the Julian Fałat National Art School and the Stanisław Moniuszko National Music School, whose directors are members of the Policy Council and who are playing an active role in creating the cultural programme of the city. We plan to involve students from both schools in the cultural events planned for 2029, both as creators and as an audience of the programme.

Many of the projects would not be created or developed, were it not for collaboration with local artists. Human capital is one of the greatest assets of our bid.





- Culture Next Cities
- twinned cities
- cities collaborating in projects



### 3. EUROPEAN DIMENSION

**3.1** Give a general outline of the activities foreseen in view of:

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

The conflicts in the 20th century and the ongoing war in Ukraine demonstrate from experience that only mutual understanding and cooperation in the social, economic and political spheres can save Europe from the spectre of another catastrophe. **We wish Europe in its diversity to be a unity connected by a thread of community and weaves of awareness of common values across its geographical borders**, while preserving the uniqueness of the cultural heritage of its regions. This is reflected in the projects we are implementing and the programme we are preparing for 2029.

**Building partnerships and creating networks** between organisations and cultural institutions is a key element of our programme to assist us in increasing collaboration and exchanges of experiences. We are currently focusing on creating a Dead Streets Network, to support the development of city art as a means of reviving dead streets or districts (*Dead Street Art* project). We have been joined in this by Upeart in Helsinki and IFUK in Copenhagen. Talks with five other potential partners are underway. Another of our initiatives is the Platform for the Promotion of Musical Talent at the beginning of careers as part of the larger Base To Do programme, which is to be combined with a comprehensive scheme to expand the music sector in our region. We are in talks with representatives of Uppsala and Žilina on this. In consultation with twinned cities, and using contacts from networks to which we belong, we are planning to organise cultural events and festivals and to introduce educational programmes, geared towards presenting European diversity, that reference the history of the present and the future. Joint artistic projects in the fields of music, film, dance and visual arts will engage participants from many backgrounds, promoting a perception of the benefits of cultural diversity (*That's Another Story, City Matrix, Dance Conference, The Art of Inclusion* projects).

We are planning **student exchanges, artistic residencies and specialist study tours** related to various aspects of art and culture, and which enable residents of different countries to learn about each other's cultures. In 2023 we travelled to St. Pölten (a candidate city for 2024) at their invitation to the European Network of Small and Medium-sized Cities; to Bad Ischl (ECoC 2024), taking advantage of our geographical proximity and historical connections; to Essen (ECoC 2012) at their invitation as part of a project on the inclusive nature of hip-hop, co-financed by the Weimar Triangle; and to Elefsina (ECoC 2023) where the Culture Next conference was held. In November of this year we are going to visit Leeuwarden (ECoC 2018) at the invitation of the Culture Next network, and to Dublin (ECoC 1991) as part of the UCLG Global Culture Summit.

We are planning to implement the educational scope of our programme through **collaborative work with schools in Bielsko-Biala**, which currently boast the most highly developed networks in respect of international collaboration, and our institutes of higher education and universities which actively strive to attract students from abroad. We want to organise workshops together and create a space for public discussions, debates and lectures on diversity and intercultural understanding. We will organise international conferences and workshops focusing on various aspects of European culture and history, thus providing a platform for academics and researchers to share their knowledge and discoveries. An illustration of this might be the archaeological activities being carried out in *Grodzisko*, the ancient settlement in Stare Bielsko (*The Abandoned Town* project), through international partnerships with scientific and academic centres. We also intend to develop the 'Talks about the City' series, launched as part of our efforts to win the title, by inviting noted authorities from various fields to joint reflections upon the city in the Intercultural Centre of Dialogue Hall, located in one of our city's cultural institutions. We also deem it important to intensify joint activities with MyBB, a centre for the integration of foreigners in BB, to engage immigrants who have chosen our city as a place in which to reside.

We plan to implement programmes addressed at young people. Events such as summer camps, competitions and festivals involving youngsters can effectively increase awareness





and cultural skills and assist young people in understanding current realities by associating them with the past. These projects include the *Senses of Europe festival*, a pan-EU countries initiative, and the *Generation 29 project*, contingent on international collaboration between young people who jointly create artistic interventions referencing selected issues that affect Europe.

**In respecting local traditions and culture** we would like to emphasise the values embodied within the folklore of our surrounding towns that form the Beskid Agglomeration. A good illustration of this might be Beskid Highlanders' Culture Week - a festival during which representatives of cultures from various parts of the world present their heritage in a colourful and attractive way.

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

Europe has developed largely from a single cultural stem. Bielsko-Biała's position extends to weave together both Western and Eastern Europe, which has its roots also in the culture of the Slavic peoples.

We are not exactly sure where the first settlers who tried to found a town here came from. Similarly, we do not know why the original settlement, located 1.5 km from the now historic city centre, was abandoned. The lay of the land and the remains of defensive structures are the only evidence that from the beginning of the 13th century to the beginning of the 14th century there was a small-town settlement there. It is now a meadow surrounded by houses. The archaeological remains located in this area of urban development are, on a European scale, unique, as the former settlement area has not been redeveloped. We can assume that the settlement was destroyed as a result of some armed incursion or fire. This reflects the world of today when towns and cities are being destroyed as a result of climate change or armed conflict. To discover why this first location failed we are going to initiate the *Abandoned Town* project and as a result of this venture we will learn how our city was founded, and thus be able to complete the current blank page in European history. We held very interesting discussions in connection with this topic with representatives of Larnaca (2030) and Kiruna (2029), which are facing a demand to develop new areas of their cities. Moreover, Europe faces the challenge of rebuilding Ukraine and also adapting cities to climate change.

Centuries-long constant migrations of people will be one of the greatest challenges in the coming years, in making new arrivals an integral and enriching part of the community. The high level of homogeneity in our country has resulted in a considerable degree of distrust towards newcomers from other cultural spheres, but it is getting to know their cultures and co-creating them that may be the bridge we need to break down this distrust. Recent history has made us open up to a community of around 15,000 Ukrainian citizens in BB. A manifestation of this acceptance is the many city initiatives of integration and the unprecedented fact that the city has donated a plot of land for the construction of an Orthodox church in order that new citizens can also feel at home in a spiritual context. It is impossible not to see receptivity in this, manifested long ago in the once-pervading faiths of Catholicism, Protestantism and Judaism in Bielsko-Biała (project: *A Second Wind for our Cemeteries*).

In the 19th century Bielsko and Biąta were the third largest industrial centre in the former Habsburg monarchy. The new town of Bielsko was located at the crossroads of trade routes from the north to the south and from the east to the west of Europe. Most importantly, this industrial hub made use of the river connecting Bielsko and Biąta for the development of a textile industry along its banks, using the river's flowing waters (*The River Reclaimed* project). The city was then confronted with the rapid development of technology, and today it is facing a rapidly developing digital world. The use of high tech in our projects will improve the digital skills of our society and will be of interest to the young STEAM platform generation.

Another stimulus for development in BB was the rapid adoption of the concepts behind the Reformation begun in 1517 by Martin Luther. *The Second Wind for our Cemeteries* project revolves around revitalisation of, and access to, the Lutheran cemetery in BB. Europe has also been a witness to religious wars. We too face social tensions today that stem from religion or a different system of values. However, Bielsko-Biała has always been able to build its riches









through its diversity and it continues to cultivate this tradition to the present day (*A City Matrix* and *No comments* projects).

The Second World War is an important but difficult historical subject for us as it completely transformed our city in terms of national and religious composition. The year 2029 will mark the 90th anniversary of the start of hostilities. This event will prompt a discussion on the **state of democracy** and the threats to it, and what it can lead to (*Narrative Laundry* project).

The transfer of a forest to the local inhabitants by Mieszko, Duke of Cieszyn, was the first written record of Bielsko. Exhausted by work, the residents sought respite in what are now the communal forests surrounding our twin city. Nowadays progressive climate change leads to permanent changes of the environment and a diminishing of biodiversity. It is for this reason that we will limit logging in most of the areas occupied by the municipal forest, which may help the city adapt to climate change. It is worth mentioning that we are sited at the sources of rivers and that forests are an excellent way to retain water. We feel a responsibility to fight against the effects of climate change not only for ourselves, but also for the rest of the country. The topic of the effects of global warming is important, ongoing and regularly addressed by our city e.g. adaptation to climate change and Green Roofs for Bielsko-Biała, promoting and supporting their implementation.

We have always been a city of craftsmen and women, many of whom still reside here today. That is why we wish to create a school and workshops for craftspeople, beginning with a theatrical workshop (*Master Craftsmen* project). An **international exchange of skills** will allow for multilateral improvement of qualifications consistent with lifelong learning and increasing competitiveness.

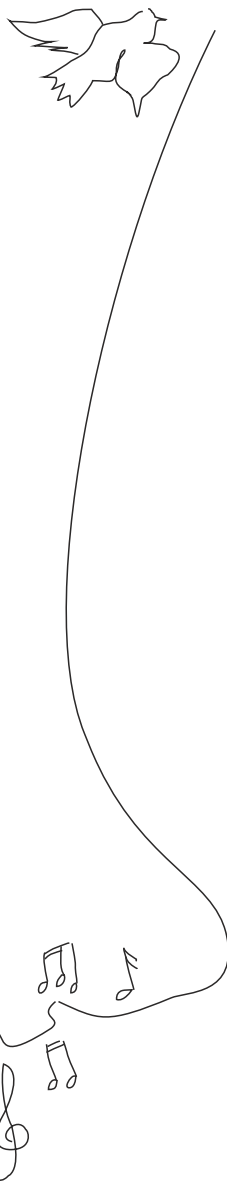
By co-creating projects at an international level by working with artists across Europe, collaboration with operators and cities in various countries and transnational partnerships, we will reinforce European collaboration and integration at the most basic, that is to say, interpersonal, level. Alongside our efforts to be awarded the title of European Capital of Culture 2029, we plan to focus on developing Bielsko-Biała's **international collaboration in the field of culture**. This collaboration is currently geared towards the activities of our twinned cities and international collaboration between our secondary schools and institutes of higher education. Only occasionally do our municipal cultural institutions carry out projects with participating foreign artists. The only opportunity we have to become acquainted with them is at such festivals as Bielsko-Biała Jazz Blizzard, the Sacrum in Musica concerts or during the biennials such as the *International Festival of Puppetry Art*, the *FotoArtFestival* or *Beskidy Highlanders' Week of Culture*. From autumn 2023, Cavatina Hall, our private concert venue, will begin a permanent collaboration programme with the Ostrava Symphony Orchestra.

However, there is no structured programme of support and development of international collaboration at the level of cultural institutions or non-governmental organisations and **there is no artist residency scheme**. This is particularly felt by our younger artists when starting out on their careers. **We plan to change this in the course of preparation and implementation of our programme.**

#### **We plan to take the following actions:**

- we intend for most events to be produced in international collaboration with partners from the networks in which Bielsko-Biała is involved (we are observing members of Culture Next from 2023) and ones that we plan to create (together with Upeart in Helsinki we are working on creating a network to revive dead areas of the city through street art)
- we intend to use the contacts we have made through trade networking (e.g. Energy City) to establish collaboration and develop promotion in the field of culture
- the Maria Koterbska Bielsko-Biała Cultural Centre intends to create a young musicians European platform and is currently looking for international partners
- we intend to create a programme to support the development of festivals in the city, providing them with more opportunities to invite outstanding foreign artists
- we intend to create an artist residency house.

In 2019 our twinned city of Žilina invited the cities of Bielsko-Biała and Frydek Mistek to support their efforts in bidding for the title of European Capital of Culture in 2026. Žilina qualified for the second stage of the competition. The relationships and friendships formed





during our joint work on the bid are still being maintained to this day. Continuing this collaboration begun in 2019, we plan to include Žilina in our programme and to jointly implement the projects developed at that time.

**We have compiled a list of around 200 projects to be developed.** These projects were submitted by residents, creative circles and creators alike. Each initiative requires an individual approach and finding the right partners, and this takes time. While belonging to a network obviously makes it easier to find partners, some of these projects will require finding other supportive bodies, be it film festivals like Locarno, San Sebastian, IDFA, or institutions such as CERN or ESA, or the Happiness Research Institute in Copenhagen.

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

The programme into which we will build our WELLBEING is founded on **common European values and references issues important not just to Bielsko-Biała, but to the whole of Europe.** We believe that visitors to BB will find matters of interest to them, regardless of which European city they are from.

Our strategy of attracting the interest of a widespread international audience is founded on **co-creating a programme with artists from different countries and cultures.** Efficient implementation of this programme will be facilitated by convenient access to our city by train, car or plane. We will be striving to create a high-quality artistic programme of events. In the year of the title we will invite artists who will attract audiences by their names alone, performers such as Yo-Yo Ma, Ludovico Einaudi or winners of prestigious artistic competitions taking place in 2028 and 2029. Existing events already taking place in BB, such as the FotoArtFestival, Jazz Autumn or the Bielsko-Biała Jazz Blizzard, serve as highly compelling references of how effective this strategy is.

**We are focusing on a policy of strong international collaboration.** From the very start of our preparations we have been building a **network of contacts**, and when putting together the programme we have based it to a greater degree on partners and their involvement. This partnership includes residents and the private and social sectors. **Our strategy is founded on weaves of experiences, relationships and outreach.** We want to include twinned cities, members of the Culture Next network and Polish Institutes around the world in our promotional campaign (we are currently working on an agreement in this respect), as well as other partners.

We are aware that in order to attract a broad international audience in 2029 we must start **building our outreach policy now for every international event organised in BB and the Agglomeration.** Along with our partners who comprise not only event organisers but also representatives of local business (hotels and entertainment centres in the Agglomeration) and larger international corporations and entrepreneurs (e.g. ZF, SFERA, FIAT, Magnetti Marelli, Cooper Std), we will commence work on packaging tourist services in our region, with weekend stays and longer visits in mind, taking the various interests and options of our guests into consideration. Because of the appealing cultural fare we have on offer, we want to encourage visitors who come on business to come again on holiday and bring family and friends. The large number of sanatoria and health resorts in our area can be tied in with what is already on offer in respect of cultural tourism, especially where mental health is concerned, this being an important feature of WELLBEING.

Thanks to the location of our city in the mountains and the popularity of physical leisure activities, along with the highly developed infrastructure of the Enduro Cycle Trails, we are visited by numerous foreign fans of downhill cycling. The stipulated starting point and finishing line of the 250 km mountain trail The Loop, launched in 2023, is to be found on top of Mount Szyndzielnia, located within the administrative borders of the city, at an altitude of 1028 m above sea level. Artistic project *Shapes of Nature* and the travelling *Ethno Jazz Festival* are to be incorporated into the entire route in 2029. We will be making contact with both cyclists and long-distance hiking enthusiasts, encouraging them to



fol. R. Hryciów

participate in the ECoC cultural programme.

In order to optimise and increase the effectiveness of our promotional budget, we will be relying on strategic media patronage – inclusive of ongoing promotion of the city and its cultural offerings – both in the traditional and the new media. This will also involve collaboration with bloggers and influencers. Our promotional campaign will be frequently directed at those who have already visited us and who we would like to return, as well as being a far-reaching campaign to attract new visitors. Special campaigns aimed at target groups will be created and tested in different geographical areas – local, regional, national and international.

We will invite the cities collaborating with us and project partners to become promoters of the European Capital of Culture 2029 in Poland. We believe that the residents of Bielsko-Biała, well-known for their pride in their city, will be the best ambassadors for the City of Weaves as the European Capital of Culture in 2029.

**3.3** *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?*

We know that the best solutions emerge from working together and by looking at a given challenge from different perspectives. That is why we have taken advantage of the generous nature of other winning or candidate cities (Chemnitz, Oulu, Budějovice and Rouen) and been able to talk to them about the challenges faced during preparation of the bid. We have also asked them for tips and advice. Workshops conducted by the Culture Next network, taking place during the conference on candidature for the title and organised in this year's capital of culture, Elefsina, turned out to be very important in this process.

We wish to focus on co-creating partnerships relating to the themes we will be undertaking when building our WELLBEING programme and which correspond with other Bidbooks. We want to develop through collaboration. We took the first of such steps in the preparations of the Žilina Beskidy 2026 bid. This experience inspired us. We were also very impressed by Cluj-Napoca, who decided to implement the content of its entire Bidbook despite losing its candidacy. This is the reason for our interest in the Culture Next network which they created. By belonging to it and developing international projects within this network, we want to link our programme with projects from other European Capitals of Culture or cities that did not win but wish to continue their planned activities. Invitations by Oulu (ECoC 2026) to take part in *That's Another Story*, *Generation 29* and *Dead Street Art* projects, and by candidate city of Rouen 2028 in the *Festival of Europe*, *Generation 29* and *That's Another Story* projects, are just the beginning of the type of collaboration that we would like to develop.

We have held a number of discussions with our foreign partners, including the two cities that are currently bidding for the title of European Capital of Culture in Sweden: Upsala and Kiruna. We discussed common themes of collaboration, and these will be refined in the coming months. Rouen plans to host the first phase of their Legacy programme in Poland and Sweden. We jointly agreed that we too be part of this project. Together with Rouen and Upsala, we are deciding on the course of the inaugural ceremony. We are also consulting with our Swedish partners on the celebrations to be held on 9 May 2029, the closing ceremony in that year and the transfer of the title to the ECoC successor. We are in consultation with Larnaca as a potential title winner.

We have also organised a meeting with other candidate cities in Poland to discuss challenges in the bidding process. The majority of Polish candidate cities have formed an agreement whereby we commit ourselves jointly to cooperation, regardless of the competition outcomes.

We intend in the near future to visit other cities that have been awarded the title to identify areas in which we can collaborate. Furthermore, we will be continuously monitoring cities declaring an interest in bidding for the title in 2030 and beyond, in order to build a network of collaboration in keeping with our City of Weaves agenda.





NIE POZWÓLAMY  
WYCIĄC  
TYCH  
DRZEW





## 4. OUTREACH

**4.1** 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.

### I participate, I create, I make decisions

For years there was a belief in our city that it was shaped for its residents, but not shaped by them. This approach discouraged proactive and participatory creation of the immediate surroundings. On the one hand, we were dealing with the grand expectations of certain opinion-forming people, but on the other with very little input from the community which acted merely as observers.

Fortunately, this began to change some years ago, and we want to use **the bidding process for the title of European Capital of Culture to be an accelerator of these changes**, to demonstrate to the residents their self-agency, and to show that their needs are being listened to and taken into account. They are invited to engage in dialogue about tomorrow, to make them also accountable for what the future might look like.

It is for this reason that the first months of preparations for the title of ECoC concentrated primarily on reaching out to the residents, both with details about the city's participation in the contest and also with a request to them to join the process. **In the spring we initiated an extensive callout to residents for projects**, from which we could create a cultural agenda for the city. We immediately began talking with the projects' originators, verifying the feasibility of such propositions. Suggestions with similar themes were grouped together and their authors sat down around a table and together co-wrote a project that could be implemented in the city. The most significant of the projects created in this way is the BBook Festival. We began to implement or prototype others right away and to hone them.

We are fully aware that not all residents want to create new projects, which is why we did not limit ourselves to general callouts only. **We have started a series of inclusive debates** on the subject of 'What is a city and why do we need it?'. These will continue at least until the end of this year. Looking at the reception of these debates, though, we believe that they will become a permanent fixture in the life of our city. They are attended not only by the residents themselves, but also by experts from Poland and abroad.

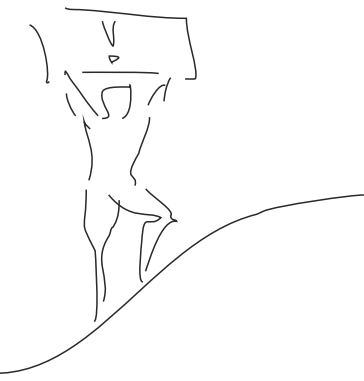
In addition, **we have started a series of workshops to improve the qualifications of personnel in the cultural sector**. The first four, relating to audience building, design thinking, fundraising and prototyping of tomorrow, are behind us. We are planning more and we are listening to grassroots voices when it comes to choosing the themes. At present, in response to earlier submitted proposals, we are planning to organise workshops on the themes of storytelling, sponsorship and the use of artificial intelligence. We have carried out community consultations with young people and created an **ECoC Information Point** on one of the main pedestrian streets so that anyone can come in, discuss our efforts and become part of the project in any way they feel might suit them.

**We have organised a series of trade meetings**. These have included the gaming industry, architects, athletes, travellers and explorers, restaurateurs, dance schools and the scientific community. Each of the groups willingly shared their ideas and appreciated being invited to the discussions.

**The European Capital of Culture Week** was an opportunity to meet people actively involved in cultural activities and who were also engaged in the preparation of the Bidbook.

The team formulating the Bidbook was present at several cultural events taking place in the city in order to be able to talk to residents, listen to their needs and involve themselves in the process of analysing the state of culture in our city and in search for solutions. As part of the ECoC Week, senior citizens from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland met at the border. This tri-border community integrated through entertainment, recreation and cultural activities. The idea of our candidacy for the ECoC in 2029 was very positively received by our neighbours from the south.

**We involved our residents in four concepts developed in the course of applying for the title of ECoC** and during the process of writing a culture strategy for Bielsko-Biała up until 2030. These are:



*Gaja Club protest in defense of trees. Gaja Club is an environmental organization that, based on the principles of interdependence, empathy, and cooperation, is building the EcoXXI generation. For 35 years, it has been engaging society in actions for the protection of the natural environment, biological diversity for us and for future generations, as well as for the respect of animal rights.*



- **an audit of the accessibility of public spaces**, which will be carried out with the help of our Czech partners and will take the form of workshops involving residents. It will allow us to analyse the existing situation and to form a plan to become even more accessible, going far beyond our standard norms,
- **creation of an urban system for the development of art on the streets of the city**, from street art, through to art in urban spaces etc.,
- **introduction of a dark sky policy** first in our city, and later perhaps across the entire Beskid Agglomeration, as an important ecological feature and to increase the attractiveness of the region. This would be implemented with attention to safety, in collaboration with the Dark-Sky Association,
- **creation of a network of community gardens** in different parts of the city.

**Our basic premise is that the authors of projects should also be their implementors for the duration of the project's life cycle**, or for as long as they want to be involved in it. The Bielsko-Biała Youth City announced a competition for projects to be implemented by young people under the supervision of experienced mentors from municipal cultural institutions. **Thanks to this, we can develop an effective development support system for both lesser and more experienced applicants.** That is why we do not plan to hand over the entire artistic programme to one person.

We are also aware that a large event such as the European Capital of Culture would not be possible without the support of residents, non-governmental organisations and local businesses. We are in constant talks with them and are shifting self-agency to them as much as is possible. Moreover, the entire preparation process will provide support in creating opportunities and enhancing the expertise of the cultural sector. In this way, it will be easier to maintain the legacy of ECoC 2029.

**A very large number of NGOs** operate in Bielsko-Biała in many different areas, ranging from sports and recreation, through what is widely understood to be culture and art, to activation of various groups and social aid. Whilst holding discussions with them, it was established that there is huge creative potential to generate activities of cultural significance and range, which will be undertaken at grassroots level. In following this approach, the city should be guided primarily by the principle of 'first, do no harm', which, to paraphrase, should mean creating such conditions not only for organisations but also for entrepreneurs that will not prevent them from expanding their activities. In the case of non-profit organisations, the city should facilitate these activities by setting up grants and competitions to enable the implementation of statutory guidelines, which will proportionally convert into grassroots cultural activities. One of the flagship grassroots initiatives is *Zajaki*, an artistic and educational project aimed at children and teenagers, underlining the role of self-acceptance, teaching tolerance, empathy and respect for others.

Also very important is the collaboration with local initiatives such as: **People – Innovation – Design Foundation** and **BB Design Lab**. The goal is to prototype eco-social city development through the cooperation among designers, scientists, artists, city authorities, and residents, based on sustainable design methods. We met with **Strefa Kobiet (Women's Zone) Foundation** (Brave BB – 16 Days Against Violence) and representatives of **Regional Women's Congress of Podbeskidzie**, as well as **Black Protest** and **Rainbow Podbeskidzie** (a local LGBTQ+ movement). We will continue to strengthen these collaborations and develop joint initiatives.

Our meetings with the architectural community have been very inspiring. Designers put forward a number of problems relating to such matters as spatial order, an overabundance of advertisements in public spaces, as well as the use of functional sculpture to be created in consultation with the skateboarding community. We are working to ensure that the architectural community is involved in the process of planning investments in the city, which would include the implementation of urban investments in the form of competitions.

We have **reached out to residents in various ways**. Surveys were conducted in the traditional manner and also using new technologies. In order to establish



#### 4. OUTREACH

contact with young people and better understand their needs and cultural interests, a Cultural Collective was established comprising representatives of various municipal cultural institutions. They visit schools and talk to young people to discover what their understanding of culture is, about their ways of spending free time, and to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of what the city has to offer by way of culture.

An important and necessary factor is to build **a strong volunteering community in the city**. A Youth Volunteer Centre programme was launched this year. It is directed at residents of the city and surrounding areas, as a large proportion of young people from surrounding areas attend schools in our city. We intend working together on prototype projects and audits in the coming months, as well as discussing the possibility of volunteering in the event of the creation of a cultural institution that is at the forefront of efforts to attain the title of European Capital of Culture.

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

**The fabric of the city must serve everyone. Anyone can be its creator and user. Therefore, one of our objectives is to ensure that the presence of people otherwise excluded from various areas of functioning in the city prevails in its cultural life.** However, we are aware on many levels what a long way we are from achieving this.

We have started **an audit of public spaces in terms of their accessibility**. In the first stages we are focusing our attentions on the historic fabric of the city centre where a greater part of outdoor events takes place and which constitutes the area of our further development of Urban Art. We will then extend this to recreational areas and also to areas further afield in the city. We will simultaneously start work on an audit of soft aspects in cultural institutions as well as in organisations and other bodies in the service and cultural sector. This will be combined with an educational campaign.

**The Polish Theatre in Bielsko-Biala is a leader in respect of accessibility** despite the limitations associated with the historical character of the building. Regular performances which have included a sign language interpreter and even a sign language choir have been staged over the last ten years. There have been opportunities to become acquainted with models of the scenery and of the building, and the performances themselves are accompanied by audio descriptions for the visually impaired. We have included a pdf on our website with best practices developed by the theatre.

**A programme designed to include people with special needs as regular attendees will be based on the measures taken above and on international exchange concepts.** Project proposals and needs, as submitted on our website, also included those suggested by, for example, the visually impaired. Dialogue between event organisers and groups of people with special needs will contribute to improving their ability to participate in cultural events.

Another aspect to consider is the issue of how to include people who declare little interest in art and participation in cultural life. One of the aspects is the development of urban space art and also earth or green art space. This will be art, out in the open, that we 'bump into' on a daily basis. In addition, we are planning educational campaigns and activities at various levels of difficulty.

We also want to create spaces in the city where anyone interested in creating cultural life can have free rein.

A further factor is the issue of cost-effective availability of the city's cultural life for certain groups of people. In addition to non-ticketed events, a support system is being developed, e.g. theatre tickets for 0.15 zloty, a 'large family' card, discounts for senior citizens, etc. These initiatives will be developed further.



It ought to be mentioned that when we started out for the title of ECoC, we stepped up discussions with members of the community with difficult life circumstances. These included homeless people as well as those with various special needs. During a lively discussion certain pointers for action were identified. Where people with disabilities are concerned, it was stressed that it is very important to adapt what is culturally on offer for the visually impaired, hard of hearing and deaf people.

Much more difficult to talk to about life, and even more so about communing with culture, was the community of people struggling with the problem of homelessness. Sadly, this community by definition becomes socially excluded and those finding themselves within it often avoid social life. The most important problem identified during our discussions was the fact that if someone finds themselves in a life crisis, and especially in the crisis of homelessness, it is very difficult for them to return to society to start living 'normally' again. More than anything else, such people lose their self-esteem, feel a lack of self-respect, and stop believing in their abilities and self-agency. In this respect, BB as the ECoC faces a huge challenge. We know that there is potential in every person to create good things, but the difficulty lies in finding the motivation that will bring trust and, as a consequence, change. During the discussion described above, a very positive collaboration between the visually impaired and representatives of a home for the homeless took place. Their mutual understanding on a very subtle level resulted in a declaration of collaboration. Bielsko-Biała is aware that providing shelter, board and lodging to ensure basic human needs is very important and is implementing such a policy. We also know that enabling people in crisis to participate in culture creates an opportunity to return to society and makes for a reciprocal relationship. We observed this already in the course of the first activities. We invited homeless people to work with us. As a means of promoting the ECoC for city residents they created a wooden installation on which the concept of the city's weaves is illustrated using colourful string. This first experience may set a precedent for engaging excluded people in the city's cultural activities, to receive tangible artifacts from them that serve to inform us about the culture, thereby enabling them to narrate it (projects: *Giant Puppets*, *Craft Masters*).

**Very interesting discussions were held with representatives of the LGBTQ+ and women's communities - fighting for equal rights.** Sometimes our idea of the real needs and feelings of these communities was far from their perception of reality, especially since these are very difficult issues throughout Poland, and in many places, they manifest themselves in a very brutal way. We do not see this in our city, so we are not fully conscious of the scale of the problems and needs.

We intend to organise meetings and hold consultations over the next few months with other communities, minorities and activists to learn about their needs and their view of our city. Among these, ex-servicemen comprise an important community, as the local airborne unit has been serving in peacekeeping and stabilisation missions for years. It will be a process that we hope will become standard practice in the life of our city.

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

**Education, especially secondary education, is one of the greatest assets of our city.**

Some of our schools have been operating continuously for 160 years. There are schools in the city dedicated to the arts, such as the **Music School** and **Art School**, as well as technical schools where our future craftsmen and women are educated. These include the **Bielsko Industrial School** (project: *Craft Masters*), the **Catering School** (projects: *Recreated Food*, *The Senses of Europe*) and the Hotel School, which is extremely important for the development of tourism in the city. All these educational establishments have been invited to work with us and we will work on many projects together. Even schools with a mathematical and IT profile (project *AI and Me* or *Virtual City*) have joined in helping to implement our vision and will assist in creating STEAM projects. All these schools already have, or are about to initiate, international collaboration and exchanges, far exceeding the contacts that the cultural institutions have. The Waldorf School is also a very active partner.



fot. D. Koperska



**Working with the University of Bielsko-Biala** (formerly the Academy of Technology and Humanities) and the emerging branch of the Medical University of Silesia (opening scheduled for 1 October 2023), along with numerous private institutions of higher education, is of great importance to us. This relates to their direct participation as volunteers, creators or spectators. In light of the fact that staff from the University of Bielsko-Biala are involved in the preparation of the Bidbook, establishing cooperation with students will be possible at the start of the new academic year. Young people of high school age and younger are more difficult to connect with. Building a relationship with them is a long-term process. One of the first steps was to start collaboration at the level of organisations which unite youngsters engaged in a common cause. **We work with the Youth City Council** and RedakcjaBB (The ZróbmyTo! - Let's Do this! - Foundation), which is a magazine and website published by young people.

In the knowledge that the participation of young people in culture, especially at post-primary school level, is low, **we have created the Cultural Collective**, a team of municipal cultural institution staff members who visit schools and talk to class councils about the cultural needs of young people. They are told what is available to them and what means have been set up for them to find out about the city's cultural life. We know that this is a serious challenge throughout Poland. Over the past few years cultural education has begun to be marginalised. In primary school education it has remained only in the form of art and music classes, and these are often led by teachers who do not have the requisite training. This has the effect of lowering the cultural skills of the whole of society. Young people have problems with finding a space in which to create. Applying for the title of European Capital of Culture, therefore, is an opportunity to create a project in our city that could be worth replicating not just in our own country, but also across other cities in Europe. **During a study visit to St. Pölten in Austria, a city bidding for the title in 2024, we fell in love with their Children's Art Lab project, a cultural education centre for children aged 6-12.** Making use of their experiences, we plan to create our own equivalent – *Tkalnia Kreatywności (The Weaving Mill of Creativity)*. It will be a space for children and teenagers where they will be able to come into contact with art and try their hand at various disciplines and with a variety of art materials. Furthermore, we want **to introduce art in the corridors of schools at all levels of education.** This will allow young people to interact with various types of art in their own environment and ultimately encourage them to visit galleries and other art-related places. An important factor will also be the development of art in urban spaces for all residents to come into contact with it. It will not always be an easy or pleasant art to look at. However, it will be designed to encourage involvement and to discard the notion that "art gallery opening viewings are not for me". Submissions include two projects inspired by good practices in Europe (London to be precise): a pedestal on which art installations change annually, and areas in the city created with street artists in mind, ensuring them minimal infrastructure.

**Collaborative work with MyBB, a centre formed for the integration and inclusion of foreigners in Bielsko-Biala, will enable this particular group to be included in the active cultural life of our city.** It is worth mentioning here that University of Bielsko-Biala lecturer Carlos Dimeo runs a theatre group in one of the city's cultural centres.

We will also want to continue our audience research with the help of the local university, its sociology department staff and students, in order to make better decisions and to create further projects. We conduct regular surveys with them regarding the level of involvement in the city's cultural life and the assessment of individual cultural institutions. Irrespective of the result of the ECoC competition, we will also continue long-term collaboration on the **city's audience development programme** with the Impact Foundation. In addition, we intend to motivate the residents as far as is possible to co-create the events for which they are to be the audience. **Prototyping, drawing conclusions, providing self-agency, bringing residents into contact with new forms of culture – these are the elements on which we will structure our work in the coming months.** And even now we are supporting a grassroots movement to make optimum beneficial use of civic budget regulations.







## 5. MANAGEMENT

### 5.1 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	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Annual budget for culture in the city (in millions of euros)	9,6	8,4	8,4	9,8	9,6
Annual budget for culture in the city (in % of the total annual budget for the city)	2,9	2,5	2,5	2,8	3,0

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.

Preparation for and implementation of the title of European Capital of Culture will be undertaken by a Local Government Institution of Culture, therefore its budget will automatically become part of the city's budget for culture. We will allocate €17.5m towards this in the years 2023-2030.

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

Our objective is that from 2029 the budget for culture will account for 4% of the city's budget (an increase of 1%) and will amount to over €14.5m.

#### 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.

OPERATIONAL BUDGET				
Total budget mln EUR	Public sector mln EUR	Public sector %	Private sector mln EUR	Private sector %
56,47	49	87%	7,47	13%

When considering the general picture of the macro-environment in economic terms Bielsko-Biała has a stable and decent economy, though we intend to be very cautious in all our calculations. We are, however, also guided by the principle that culture is not just a question of cost, but an investment. We should also point out that support from the private sector has for years been very high in

#### 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:

Public sector income to cover operating expenses in euros / in %

Polish government	The city	Region	UE	other	TOTAL
17,5 / 35,7%	17,5 / 35,7%	8,1 / 16,5%	3,3 / 6,7%	2,6 / 5,4%	49 / 100%



Polish government – has not declared a specific amount. However, the contribution can be estimated to be about 50% of the budget. Conservatively, we assumed that it would match the city's budget. The decision will be made after the final selection.

The city – owing to a stable financial situation, we anticipate that the entire implementation of the ECoC from 2023 to 2030 will amount to 17.5 million, with nearly half in the first year of the title. The vote is scheduled for no later than by the end of June 2024

Region – at the voivodeship level (Polish province authorities) an official decision regarding support has not been made. The amount is estimated. The revenues from the region include the voivodeship budget and the Beskid Agglomeration. In the agglomeration, the vote will take place by June 2024 at the regional level after the final selection.

EU – BB has been very effective in utilizing European funds since 2004. The Silesian Voivodeship has one of the largest budgets from EU funds at its disposal. We also intend to rely on the Euroregion for support.

OTHER - this includes funds from the Visegrad Fund, Weimar Triangle, and similar sources..

#### *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?*

For years the private sector has been an important factor in financing the largest cultural events taking place in our city. The very big challenge, however, is raising funds for new cultural initiatives and niche projects. This is where we will have to do the most work.

We intend to base our sponsorship strategy on long-term relationships, by creating a culture support fund. We will construct our bid in such a way that it underpins the goals of our sponsors. This would involve strengthening corporate image, attracting a global audience and raising awareness that the cultural environment can influence the mission of the organisation.

#### **Three levels of sponsorship:**

**Traditional sponsorship** through international corporations. We intend to **collaborate with global companies** interested in local issues, as well as those that wish to strengthen their position by forming an association with artistic and cultural events.

The third group of potential sponsors will be small and medium-sized entrepreneurs, who are the most numerous players in our market. For them, strengthening their position in the local market and also expanding into foreign markets is very important.

#### **Our bid will also be founded on ESG**

Environment, social responsibility and corporate governance (ESG) references the sustainable marketing activities of enterprises. We know that corporations and companies nowadays are more and more aware, and corporate social responsibility has become a regular area of business activity. By such means businesses build their long-term value, strengthen their image in the eyes of customers and strengthen relations with the local community and municipal institutions and local authorities.

ESG in the SOCIAL dimension means providing solutions and having an active influence on the local community. This is a proactive action, embracing not only a responsibility for the safety and health of employees, but also having an impact on the quality of life of the local community, promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.

#### **Private Individuals**

Our city can be proud of the strong support for non-governmental organisations by its residents. Many of them allocate **1.5% of their tax annually to social, charitable or cultural activities**. This amounts to **over €6m** and a huge social capital that we wish to tap into and to reinforce.

We also intend to expand the system of regular support for organisations and institutions in the form of micropayments for the implementation of their statutory objectives, as well as to popularise online social subscription funding tools, such as the Patronite portal for NGOs and Artists.

*OPERATING EXPENDITURE:*

*Please provide a breakdown of the operating expenditure, by filling in the table below:*

Amounts expressed in millions of euros in euros / in %

ECoC Programme	Promotion & marketing	Wages, overheads and administration	Other (e.g. reserve)	total operational expenditure
36,8 / 65%	8,47 / 15%	8,47 / 15%	2,82 / 5%	56,47 / 100%

*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? 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? Please fill in the table below:*

Income from the public sector to cover capital expenditures in euros / in %

Polish government	The city	Region	UE	other	TOTAL
20,37 / 25%	24,46 / 30%	4,08 / 5%	28,54 / 35%	4,08 / 5%	81,53 / 100%

Bielsko-Biała has for years been managing EU funding well. Since 2004, the year of our joining the EU, we have obtained over €275m. That is why we believe that our investments will be implemented with a significant share of European funds, especially since all projects will be carried out in keeping with the concept of the New European Bauhaus, while the budget of the Silesian Voivodeship for fair transformation is the highest in the country. In addition, we are part of the Beskid Euroregion which supports the development of Bielsko-Biała as well as that of the whole Beskid Agglomeration.

Owing to the specificity of Polish public finance laws, the city will be able to complete the process of detailing ECoC expenses by June 2024 at the latest. The Beskid Agglomeration will do likewise.

According to the information we have, the government's contribution is estimated to cover half of the budget. The Silesian Voivodeship will commence discussions on this topic only after the winner has been selected.

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

Our programme is not founded merely on purely cultural activities, though obviously having culture at the core of our activities, but it is also founded on **combining culture with environmental protection and nature, culture with mental health, economic development, education and social cohesion**. Apart from the obvious funding sources for artistic activities such as Creative Europe, we intend to approach other European sources, such as Horizon +, Erasmus + and Life.

We intend to create a platform at our institution for participants in cultural life, both organisations and individuals, to assist them to prepare applications and apply for EU and other funds, as well render assistance in seeking international partners for individual projects. This institution will also become the default point for networking city partners with foreign bodies.

Bielsko-Biała is also a member of the Beskid Euroregion, with which the city collaborates very actively.



*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.*

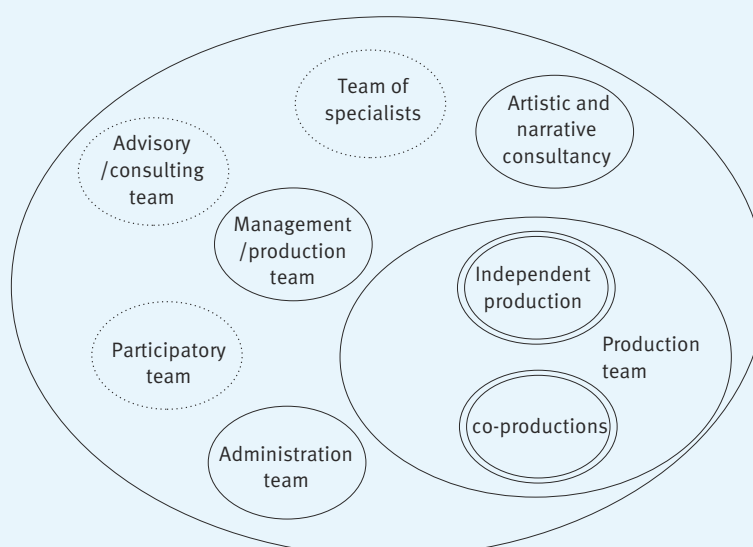
In order to implement our artistic agenda, we have no plans to build additional infrastructure apart from one exhibition plinth costing €50,000, and those that have already been provided for in the city's development plans - Pedanteria (a complex of multifunctional culture-creating spaces), a new base for the Baniailuka Puppet Theatre and the Centre for Mountain Enthusiasts. The total cost of these projects comes to approximately €81.53m.

## 5.2 Organisational structure

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

After successfully getting through the pre-selection stage, we will establish a body whose job will be to manage and implement the year of the European City of Culture. It will be firmly entrenched in the city's management structure to ensure its **durability and stability** and at the same time be flexible in operation and resistant to ad hoc pressures relating to achieving short-term goals, focused mainly on the promotion of current urban policies. After in-depth analysis of the legal system relating to the functioning of local government units, we have come to the conclusion that the most effective form of this structure would be a **Municipal Local Government Cultural Institution** independent of prevailing political activities, as safeguarded by Polish law. **The director of such an institution will be appointed by a specialist committee by way of an international competition.** The term of office permitted by law allows the director to conduct preparations and be in charge during the title year and during subsequent evaluation. Such institutions can be awarded subsidies, both specific and targeted, from the city budget for investments, as well as highlighted projects and tasks, guaranteeing stability of operation. Being a local government lawful entity, such an institution can apply for most of the funding resources available in Poland and abroad, as well as run a business and independently negotiate contracts and agreements within the ambit of its activities. **The decision to form a Municipal Local Government Cultural Institution, following public consultations in the city, is taken by the City Council**, the city's constitutive body. This manner of creating an institution guarantees full openness and transparency of the process of its formation and the planned scope of its activities and system of management.

During the course of planning of this structure, we particularly took into account **durability, transparency** and flexibility defined as being able to rapidly adapt to various tasks and changing local and global realities. In addition, a desirable and necessary feature of this institution must be the **ability to connect the recognised world of culture: institutional, alternative, individual (informal) creators, researchers, entertainers and artists, performers and international cooperation networks, with business, local governments, academic centres, non-governmental organisations, religious communities, integration centres** and so on.



A model based on **holacracy** seems to us to be the most fit for purpose. **It focuses on goals** and tasks. Each **member of staff can make decisions independently** within a set framework, as long as they display consistency in respect of the work standards adopted by the organisation, follow the legal conditions, serve to strive for the recognised indicators, and as long as the decisions made fall within the employee's competence. This system allows each member of staff to act in accordance with their own experiences and common sense, in order to make full use of his or her potential.

**As part of this structure, teams to perform individual tasks and functions will be appointed.** Once these are implemented and evaluated, the given team will be disbanded. Any analysis of activities will be catalogued and stored in the institution's database. Such a structure of activities will result in self-learning within the organisation and a vertical and horizontal transfer of information of which all participants will be a part. To this end regular meetings of all members of the institution, as well as individual teams will be instigated, as will a project management programme. Minutes, in all likelihood produced using AI, will be made available to all members of each meeting.

**'Holarchies' (teams) will be formed within this structure - management, administration, production, consultancy and specialist, and participatory teams. Youth and fundraising teams will also feature. The teams will be formed in keeping with the principles of equality and non-discrimination, in line with EU policy.**

**The management (production) team** will comprise the director of the institution together with the managers responsible for coordinating individual parts of the WEAVES project and the production team responsible for creating the Bidbook and its publication. The management team **will manage the artistic programme, paying heed to all the other teams, and having at its disposal a specialist appointed by open recruitment who will take care of a common narrative in accordance with the premise of the programme.** We anticipate a special advisory role for the participants of a selected group taking part in the G29 project.

**The administration team** will be responsible for organisational and accounting matters, essential to the efficient functioning of the institution.

**The production team**, the most mutable part of the organisation, will be responsible for individual artistic endeavours. This team will include three other teams responsible for individual wefts and warps and one other team for individual projects. This team will carry out its own productions, co-productions, as well as assist with prototyping and making independent productions undertaken by independent performers/artists and will support other bodies in carrying out their artistic or cultural tasks.

**The advisory and specialist team is a team** of collaborative specialists dealing with such matters as volunteering, sustainable development, audience building, accessibility, fundraising and sponsorship, storytelling, design thinking, the use of AI, and data collection and management.

**The participatory team** comprises a group of residents who have expressed a wish to become involved in the activities, as well as being an additional team that includes youth representatives and people participating in the G29 project.

The **Programme Panel** will be an advisory and opinion-forming body for the director of the institution, comprising people with extensive knowledge of the city and the region and influence in shaping areas such as culture, education, environmental protection for nature and animals, sustainable development, business, the third sector, activities for people with special needs and academic centres. The programme panel will be selected by the Management Team following consultation with the community.

An organisational structure such as this is formed to enable operational processes to be more resistant by creating a system in which the absence of a single employee does not threaten or destabilise the ongoing performance of individual projects, or activities as a whole. Moreover, it increases the potential of our cultural sector.

The artistic director will leave as much artistic freedom as possible to individual artists but will assess whether a given project meets the criteria set for it. We will also be able to take advantage



of the expertise of the person overseeing dramatic and artistic coherence during the course of the entire title year.

In addition, we intend to constantly monitor the organisation's carbon footprint and ensure its climate neutrality by the ECoC year through reduction of paper consumption, alternative means of transport, green office space, and use of renewable energy.

### 5.3 Contingency planning

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

We intend to use the ATOM model for risk management. ATOM stands for Active Threat & Opportunity Management. It is a methodology that applies to both threats and opportunities. Many other approaches deal exclusively with risks, but ATOM specifically targets both upside and downside risks, assisting in maximising opportunities and minimising threats in a single process.

## PROJECT STRENGTHS

APPLICATION PHASE	Community participation	A broad spectrum of people collaborating in the creation of the Bidbook; thanks to this the needs of the city and the points of view of various social groups are realistically reflected. This will increase the chances of the projects surviving if the application process is not successful.
	Increasing the potential of the cultural sector	The process of creating the Bidbook helped improve the quality of staff in the cultural sector. It connected various bodies and encouraged cooperation. Thanks to cross-sectoral integration we have been able not only to improve the quality of the ECoC bid submitted, but also what we offer in terms of culture in our city.
	Link to urban strategies	While preparing the application we have taken care that its principles connected well with current strategies, in particular the City Development Strategy until 2030 and the Municipal City Revitalisation Programme until 2030, as well as the City's Culture Strategy 2024-2030, currently being written (viz. p. 7).
IMPLEMENTATION PHASE	Cultural infrastructure	Very good facilities and amenities already allowing for the implementation of large cultural events (viz. p. 53)
	Easy access to Bielsko-Biała	Geographical location, network of roads, railways and nearby airports make our city easily accessible from all over the world (viz map p. 57)
	Artistic environment	We have a very rich and active artistic community in the city and vicinity and thanks to our secondary artistic schools (both music and art), it is constantly growing.
LEGACY PHASE	Experienced personnel in the cultural sector	Once the ECoC is implemented, our personnel in the cultural sector will have gained more expertise, thanks to which we will be able to continue our work more capably. This will also mean higher efficiency in the projects being undertaken.
	New strategies	The BB2029 evaluation will be the foundation for a new culture strategy for the city for the years 2031-2040. It will allow for a smooth transition to the management of ECoC heritage and the sustainability of the developed solutions, as well as analysing new challenges.
	Educational system for the recipients of cultural activities	The system of culture education developed during our endeavours and the implementation itself of the ECoC title will expand our audience and thus make the cultural sector develop further even after the end of 2029.

PROJECT CHALLENGES

APPLICATION PHASE	Lack of a dedicated institution in the first phase	An appropriate managing institution will be created once information is received about our transition to the second stage. In the event of disappointment in this respect some of the projects will have to be implemented by the home institutions of the people involved.
	Macro environment	At present, inflation and the war beyond the eastern border of Poland are destabilising the market. Only careful planning and monitoring of changes that are outside our sphere of influence can help us mitigate these risks. Each project will undergo its own SWOT analysis and this will be regularly updated.
	Low level of international cooperation in the cultural sector	Joining the Culture Next network and using these connections and relationships with the network of partner cities, makes for a significant change in our approach to international cooperation. Working together with small and medium-sized towns in the search for partners for individual projects will develop this too. We plan to participate in the UCLG Global Cultural Summit Dublin 2023 conference, to prepare for the creation of a Dead Street Art network and a European platform dedicated to emerging musicians.
IMPLEMENTATION PHASE	Extreme weather conditions	Together with experts in adapting to climate change, we intend to develop procedures and solutions that will help us minimise the effects of extreme weather that we cannot predict or prevent.
	Lack of full accessibility in the city for people with special needs	A process of auditing urban spaces in terms of accessibility has begun. The first phase will cover the city centre. It will be founded on solutions assisting us in improving the current situation in the city. Working with the ARTING festival we will make headway on new solutions to increase accessibility and comply with New European Bauhaus policy.
	Lack of a developed volunteering sector	This year, a three-year pilot scheme of a Youth Volunteer Office has been launched. We intend to develop best practice in the integration of people who want to work as volunteers. We will list institutions and organisations which need volunteers. We want this new system to develop and also for senior citizen volunteering and integration volunteering to emerge in the city.
LEGACY PHASE	Potential political changes	Local government elections will take place in 2029. There is a potential danger that the new local government may not be interested in the development of the ECoC legacy. In order to prevent this, we will build strong community support over the next five years and launch mechanisms that operate independently of the political situation in the region and nationwide.
	Maintaining momentum	Cultural environments, promotion, tourist traffic and international collaboration. We are aware that the intensive work during the ECoC year cannot be the end of our activity. It will be simply entering the next planning period with new objectives. Active international cooperation will keep us engaged and highly energised. Evaluating our endeavours will be a starting point for creating a new cultural strategy.
	Financial stability	We will make every effort that the organisation managing the ECoC is as independent as possible from public funding. We will achieve this by developing assets for the business environment and for the society, as well as participating in cultural and research projects in the international arena. It is important for us that key artistic projects produced by the institutions be economically justified and as self-sufficient as possible.



## 5.4 Marketing and communication

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

When describing strategy and communication, these can be compartmentalised into concept, primary message, objectives and promotion.

**CONCEPT** – our concept revolves around prosperity made possible through a combination of many weaves – awareness, society and the quality of the environment. We will communicate our individual warps in such a way that they reach specific community groups. We understand their character. We know that one group might be more interested in urban surroundings, for instance, another in the digital environment, and yet another in nature. Individual appropriate approaches will be made to them all. At the same time we will attempt to prevent supporters of specific domains and disciplines from cutting themselves off inside their ‘bubbles’.

**PRIMARY MESSAGE** – the concept of Bielsko-Biała is based on our slogan of CITY OF WEAVES. On the one hand, it directly references the city's heritage, its textile tradition, which meant recognition on a European scale in the 19th and 20th centuries. On the other hand, the motif of the weave derived from this tradition is transferred to a multidimensional and relational way of perceiving the city; a city where nature intertwines with culture, and multiculturalism becomes a space for social dialogue; a city of diverse artistic expressions and visions of development; a city with interwoven stories of people – of particular significance in light of the current dramatic context of war in Ukraine. There are the people on the road, fleeing from war and having experienced its cruelty, and there are the people helping them, full of empathy, who oppose all manner of aggression and violence.

### COMMUNICATION

We want to base our communication strategy on the DRIP model [Differentiation – Reminding – Informing – Persuading].

Marketing communication should emphasise the role of culture and the importance of engaging people. Its basic functions revolve around:

**Differentiation:** information which explains how BB ECoC 2029 differs from other cities and what benefits it brings, and how we are combining local cultural heritage and traditional art with new technology and international culture.

**Reminding:** reminding of and reinforcing the common features and diversity of cultures in Europe and highlighting its international dimension. The scope and diversity of our agenda that is achievable by being part of Europe.

**Informing:** sharing with the public what our cultural programme is about and how the programme is aimed at citizens, artists and institutions.

**Persuading:** messages encouraging both new and existing audiences to take part in the programme, to understand the richness and diversity of cultures in Europe and the common features of our cultures.

### PRIMARY OBJECTIVES:

Promotion of the programme and the brands of the European Capital of Culture and Bielsko-Biała. Our cultural and artistic programme is to promote and emphasise the role of culture and heritage in a European context, to disseminate European values: community, freedom, identity, knowledge, skills, environmental protection and sustainable development, accessible and safe urban and digital spaces.

### PROMOTION

- ATL (above the line): radio, press and media within the city parameters ensuring the best dissemination of information to the citizens and guests, and building the brand and its identity. Widespread communication and building brand strength are very important.

- BTL (Below the line): activities communicated to individual recipients, directed to specific, defined target groups, being memorable and creating a common experience. Focusing on marketing events and encouraging interaction; prototyping events and inviting the recipients to involve themselves in them and to share their impressions. We intend to address the campaigns to people who are looking for an informed way of spending time surrounded by nature, ensuring their being here and now, and experiencing various forms of culture in an authentic urban environment with an engaged local community.

**Digital tools:** an increasing proportion of society uses the Internet as its main source of information. However, different age groups use different tools. That is why we would like to use all available channels of communication. Moreover, we wish to develop digital expertise for better access to culture.

One of these tools is our website, the primary source of information about our endeavours. Here we describe why we are doing it, who is creating the project and how to join the team. We are also sharing what has been created and the good practices we have developed in social media. The website has been best placed in the context of SEO (search engine optimisation).

Another important channel of communication is social media, where we continuously provide information about our ECoC activities and highlight the merits of our city. It is also a natural platform for communication with residents. We are paying for some of our promotion material. YouTube is a particularly good channel where a series of films feature to show why our city wants to be the ECoC. These films with information about our cultural heritage are also for people from outside our city.

A city app, directed at both residents and people coming to our city to live or as visitors, is being created. It will be strongly integrated with our magazine Pełna Kultura (Complete Culture), which is produced both digitally and in paper form, forming the largest database of cultural events in our city.

Owing to limited financial resources, nationwide and pan-European media patronage will prove to be very important, as will collaboration with bloggers and influencers.

**Education and workshops.** It is very important for us to work together with the education sector in order to improve children's and teenagers' cultural skills and to inform these young people about the culture in our city and our endeavours to obtain the title of European Capital of Culture. We want them to understand the concept of the ECoC, to be keen to take part in artistic events and to be part of the creative process.

**Brand management provides assurance that in addition to promoting one's brand, all products will promote the ECoC brand.**

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

We intend to highlight the fact that the European Capital of Culture is a European Union project on several levels.

## **A LASTING SYMBOL**

We intend to create a plinth for artistic works (a grassroots-inspired project), to be a permanent commemoration of our candidacy. Our manifesto will be incorporated into the plinth explaining our motivations for applying for the title. The 'United in Diversity' motto and other European Union logos will also appear on it. New art installations will be created annually for the plinth. Invitations for new installations will be open to all European artists as well as to immigrants residing here. The subject matter of the installation will always reflect one of the European values. After a year's tenure the structures will be moved to a park and the installations will form a 'European Avenue'.



## EVENTS

The most important element linking the European Capital of Culture with the European Union will be the cultural programme itself, in which, apart from cultural and artistic events, we intend to include numerous conferences and discussion panels discussing important European themes. We would like EU representatives to participate in these events. The inaugural and closing events of the European Capital of Culture celebrations, along with the EU's Europe Day on 9th May, will be very important. We will coordinate these events with our Swedish partner (Kiruna/Uppsala). In addition, we would like to attach special importance to several significant anniversaries in 2029.

**1st May 2029 marks the 25th anniversary of Poland's entry, with ten other countries, into the European Union.**

**4th June 2029 marks the 40th anniversary of the first Polish free elections** after the Second World War. It will be an excellent opportunity to talk about the state of democracy.

**1st September 2029 marks the 90th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War.** This will be a good opportunity to reflect on the fact that peace is not granted to us for all time, and it is precisely the durability of the European Union and its values that are key to maintaining peace, evident when one considers the situation in Ukraine.

## OTHER MATTERS

We would also like to arrange a media and popularisation event around the awarding of the Melina Mercouri Prize to the city, to tell people about the originator of the concept of the European Capital of Culture.

While promoting and communicating the event during the setting up and celebrations/festivities of European City of Culture we will stress that the European City of Culture is the work of the European Union

All announcements, interviews, press conferences or meetings with the media will emphasise that the title of the European Capital of Culture is an initiative of the European Union. In addition, articles and educational materials on the European Union and its role in culture will be published on the website of the European Capital of Culture and in other information materials.

All promotional material, including posters, brochures, website, including partner websites, social media communications, information material and ticketing will feature the European Union logo and its motto to underline the European aspect of the initiative.









## 6. CAPACITY TO DELIVER

**6.1** 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.

A unanimous vote by the City Council on a resolution supporting a bid for the title of European Capital of Culture in 2029 was the first manifestation of general support for our candidacy. Voting that took place within the Beskid Agglomeration produced a similar outcome.

Work was simultaneously underway to gain the support of city representatives at various levels of government - the Provincial Parliament, the national parliament (*Sejm*) and Senate of the Republic of Poland and the European Parliament. Representatives of our region from various communities have supported our application and will be supporting our efforts.

Representatives from various departments and communities were involved in the BB ECoC Policy Council and in the TASKING TEAM which greatly facilitated collaboration and accelerated the acquisition and transfer of information. Moreover, it influenced the creation of multi-sectoral project teams required to pursue such objectives as a public areas audit, a programme for the development of art in urban spaces and the introduction of a Dark Sky policy.

**6.2** Please confirm and provide evidence that your city has or will have adequate and viable infrastructure to host the title. To do that, please answer the following questions:

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

Bielsko-Biała has a well-developed cultural infrastructure. We currently need to do renovation and modification work rather than create new sites. Below is a list of the most important sites in our infrastructure.

### **Cavatina Hall**

The first and only private concert hall in Poland for symphonic music, with a capacity of a little short of 1000 seats, and a recording studio that combines commercial functions with the promotion of culture. The design of the building blends office and cultural space in a unique way. The concert hall has a modern L-ISA 2 immersive sound system.

### **Grodzisko**

The medieval defensive structure is today a green space serving as a recreational area. Historically themed picnics with reenactment shows were often held here, transporting BB residents back to the Middle Ages. This is an area connected with the *Abandoned Town* project.

### **Point 11**

A place for meetings, events and creation, and engagement with culture for young people. It is intended to be a reactive place, one that implements the residents' projects on an ongoing basis and responds to their needs. It has been located on a road which is no longer a main commercial pedestrian street. Punkt 11 has been sited here with ambitions to revitalise and revive it.

### **Senior Citizens Clubs**

Support for senior citizens works on different levels. Day care homes and senior citizens clubs are run by the social services and non-governmental organisations. These institutions carry out motivational, educational, social and preventive measures in close connection with and through culture. There is a Senior Citizens Centre in the city, which is an information, cultural and motivational place, open to all elderly people. The city identifies with the slogan 'A friendly place for senior



citizens'. That is why expanding what is on offer culturally for the elderly, as part of the ECoC, can effectively contribute to their motivation and stimulation, directly affecting WELLBEING.

### The Amphitheatre in Lipnik

It is located in the national forest and has an auditorium of about 300 seats with a stage and facilities for artists. It is currently in the final process of renovation.

### The Animated Film Studio

The oldest Animated Film Studio in Poland. In addition to film production, archiving, reconstruction and education, it is currently creating an Interactive Children's Story and Animation Centre, OKO, which will be a modern entertainment and education centre offering children and parents a chance to learn through play using modern multimedia techniques. It is a state-run venture.

### The Beskid Library

This library includes the Intercultural Centre for Dialogue, a lecture hall and exhibition space. The network of the library comprises eighteen branches; one of the buildings houses valuable special collections and a regional research studio.

### The Bielsko-Biała BWA Gallery

Regularly placed on the list of the twenty best galleries and museums in Poland, it promotes contemporary art. It is the organiser of important exhibitions, festivals and competitions such as **Bielsko-Biała Autumn Biennale**. A permanent exhibition of the Bielsko-Biała BWA Gallery Art Collection is located in the restored Teodor Sixt Villa nearby. The gallery also organises artistic events, creative workshops, lectures and discussion panels. It is a space where contemporary art meets and mingles with social activities for the excluded and the elderly. It will be opening a new section dedicated to design and will also implement the Green Roof on the BWA Gallery project.

### The Bielsko-Biała Grodzki Theatre Artistic Association

An organisation that runs a number of artistic projects, occupational and educational therapies for people with disabilities and the excluded who have limited access to culture and art.

### The Ecosynthesis (Ecosynteza) Centre for Ecological Education

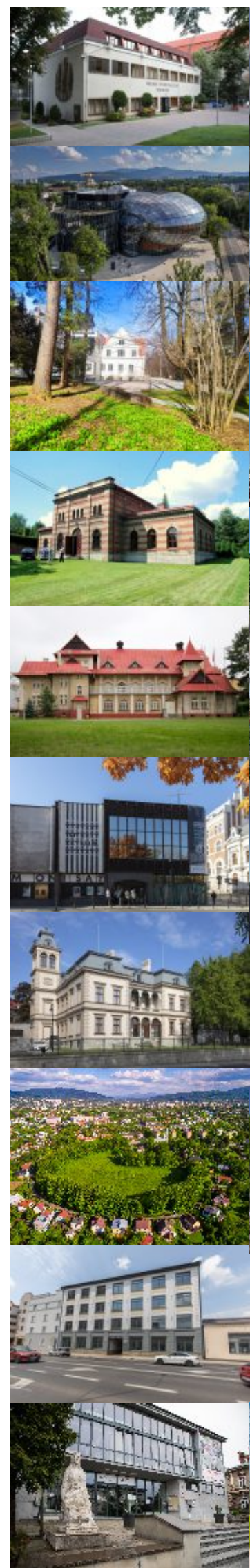
A historic villa once owned by industrialists, surrounded by a park, is an area for exploring and protecting native flora and fauna; promoting other environmentally valuable areas and protecting biodiversity; acquiring and expanding knowledge and skills necessary to protect the environment and improve its state; and disseminating the concept of sustainable development (New European Bauhaus) in all spheres of life. It is surrounded by 1.5 hectares of green space.

### The Historical Museum in Bielsko-Biała

The museum comprises four branches: the Weaver's House, the Julian Fałat Museum, the Old Factory and the Sułkowski Dukes' Castle. The Weaver's House is a recreated weaver's workshop of old and includes the weaver's living quarters. The Julian Fałat Museum is a place where outdoor painting competitions take place. The Old Factory has good exhibition areas, and a space for small concerts, lectures and artistic events. The facility requires renovation, including the addition of disabled access. The Sułkowski Dukes' Castle, standing tall over the Old Town, centre for research and houses a permanent exhibition of the history of Bielsko-Biała.

### The Jerzy Zitzman Banialuka Puppet Theatre

One of the oldest puppet theatres in Poland and the best known in the country and in the world. It comprises two stages and exceptional craft workshops and is the organiser of the **International Festival of Puppetry Art, one of the most important puppetry reviews in the world**. We are planning to build new premises for the theatre owing to the fact that the building constructed after the Second World War ceases to match not only the expectations of the audience, but also prevents further development of the theatre and fails to meet accessibility requirements.







### **The Jewish Pre-burial House**

There is a pre-burial house in the Jewish cemetery, which has been made available as a space for artistic events for many years. In the cemetery area where burials have not taken place there is a Secret Garden, a space for artistic and ecological activities.



### **The Maria Koterbska Bielsko-Biala Cultural Centre**

It boasts the second largest auditorium in the city, as well as technical and organisational facilities for the production of large open-air events. It organises such significant and important festivals as the **Górecki Festival of Polish Composers**, the **Tomasz Stańko Autumn Jazz Festival** and the ecumenical **Sacrum in Musica Festival**.



### **The Mikolaj Rej School Society**

The School Society building contains an auditorium with 380 seats.



### **The Municipal Cultural Centre**

A network of twelve sites located across the city, creating conditions for participatory art creation and artistic education for all age groups. As part of their expansion, a project to build a community centre in Straconka, an area in BB, is being implemented.



### **The Occupational Therapy Mansion House**

It has green areas with buildings adjacent to the Psychiatric Hospital, where workshops are run for people recovering from illness. These include: artistic handicrafts, professional development, sewing, decorating, office-working, photography and computer workshops, gardening and technical workshops, and housekeeping. Exhibitions, fairs, picnics and open days put on there allow people with mental illnesses to come into contact with culture.



### **The Polish Theatre**

The historic theatre has two independent stages as well as craft workshops, extensive storerooms for costumes and props, and an exhibition space. In terms of developing accessibility standards, it is a leader on a national scale. Extensive planning and demand from audiences has meant that a third, experimental theatre stage is being considered.



### **The Regional Cultural Centre in Bielsko-Biala**

**The Beskid Culture Week**, a festival of traditional folklore groups from around the world, is organised here; the building has its own exhibition space. It is an institution which belongs to the Marshal's Office of the Silesian Voivodeship. It promotes ethnographic themes such as regional heritage and disappearing professions.



### **The Soldier's House**

A cultural centre belonging to the Polish Army, used by the Airborne Unit based in our city. It has its own stage and workshop space as well as a green area surrounding the building.



### **The University of Bielsko-Biala**

The University of Bielsko-Biala (formerly the Academy of Technology and Humanities) is located in the city. It has numerous lecture halls, research space and the Ernest Zawada Gallery. Recreational facilities are available on campus for students and residents, including a 1,680 m<sup>2</sup> sports hall.



### **The Youth Volunteer Centre**

It aims to increase the participation of young people of Bielsko-Biala and surrounding areas in civic and public life. Its activities are directed at all citizens of the city and surrounding areas. The project responds to young people's real needs and problems which are a result of the long-running pandemic period. It contributed significantly to the alienation of young people and deprived them of the opportunity to build relationships with their peers or actively participate in social and cultural life. The project aims to equip young people with appropriate and necessary skills to build up a volunteering service and undertake specific activities outside.

## Schools:

### The Bielsko-Biała Industrial, Electronic, Electrical and Mechanical Institutes

These are historic secondary education technical schools, equipped with workshops where students undergo practical vocational training.

### The Gastronomy and Trade School

An institution with modern vocational training facilities that educates first-class cooks.

### The Julian Fałat State Secondary School of Arts

A highly rated art school in the country, with specialised studios.

### The Stanisław Moniuszko Music School

It has a concert hall for 320 people. There is a fully equipped recording studio attached.

## Urban Spaces

There are seven squares in Bielsko-Biała (Wolności, Wojska Polskiego, Ratuszowy, Chrobrego, Rynek, Żwirki i Wigury, and Bolka i Lolka) which serve as venues for city events. In addition, one of the streets in the city is also a space for artistic events. Places that are also intended for mass events include: Stok Dębowca, ZIAD, Błonia and an area of the sports airport in Aleksandrowice, the Municipal Football Stadium and the Sports and Entertainment Hall.

We have nine parks where various events are organised.

There are six mountain shelters within the city area and its immediate vicinity. In addition to this our mountain ranges offer some of the best Enduro bike trails in this part of Europe.

There are also many businesses and associations operating in the city, that offer their services and space for cultural events and functions. These include two multiplex cinemas, galleries and numerous dance schools and music clubs.

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

Bielsko-Biała, being near the borders of two other countries, is surrounded by a well-developed transport hub on land (motorways), rail and in the air (three airports located nearby). The municipal public transport system is a well-developed bus network. Cycle routes run along the north-south axis, following the River Biąta. Routes serving individual districts and housing estates are connected to the public transport system. Cycle trails in tourist and recreational areas serve as an extension to the basic network grid.

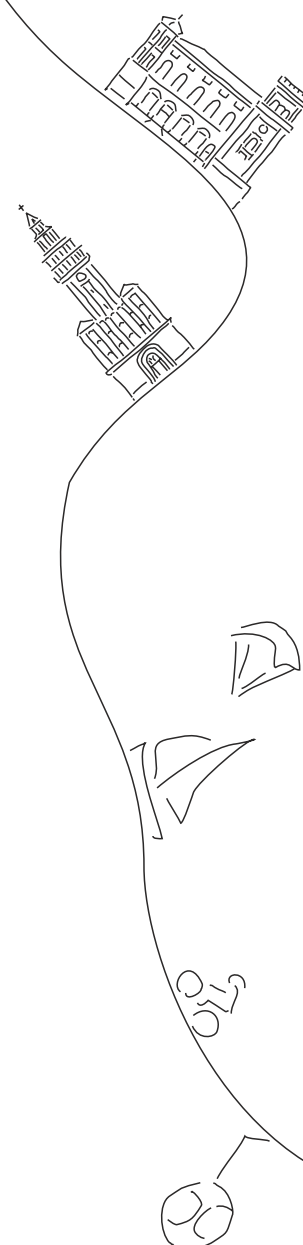
Work has commenced in the vicinity of the railway station in the centre of Bielsko-Biała on the implementation of an **Integrated Interchange Centre**, bringing together rail transport, local and regional buses, car traffic with provision of parking spaces, and cycle paths. The centre is to provide more parking spaces for rail passengers. More car parks are also planned in the rest of the city.

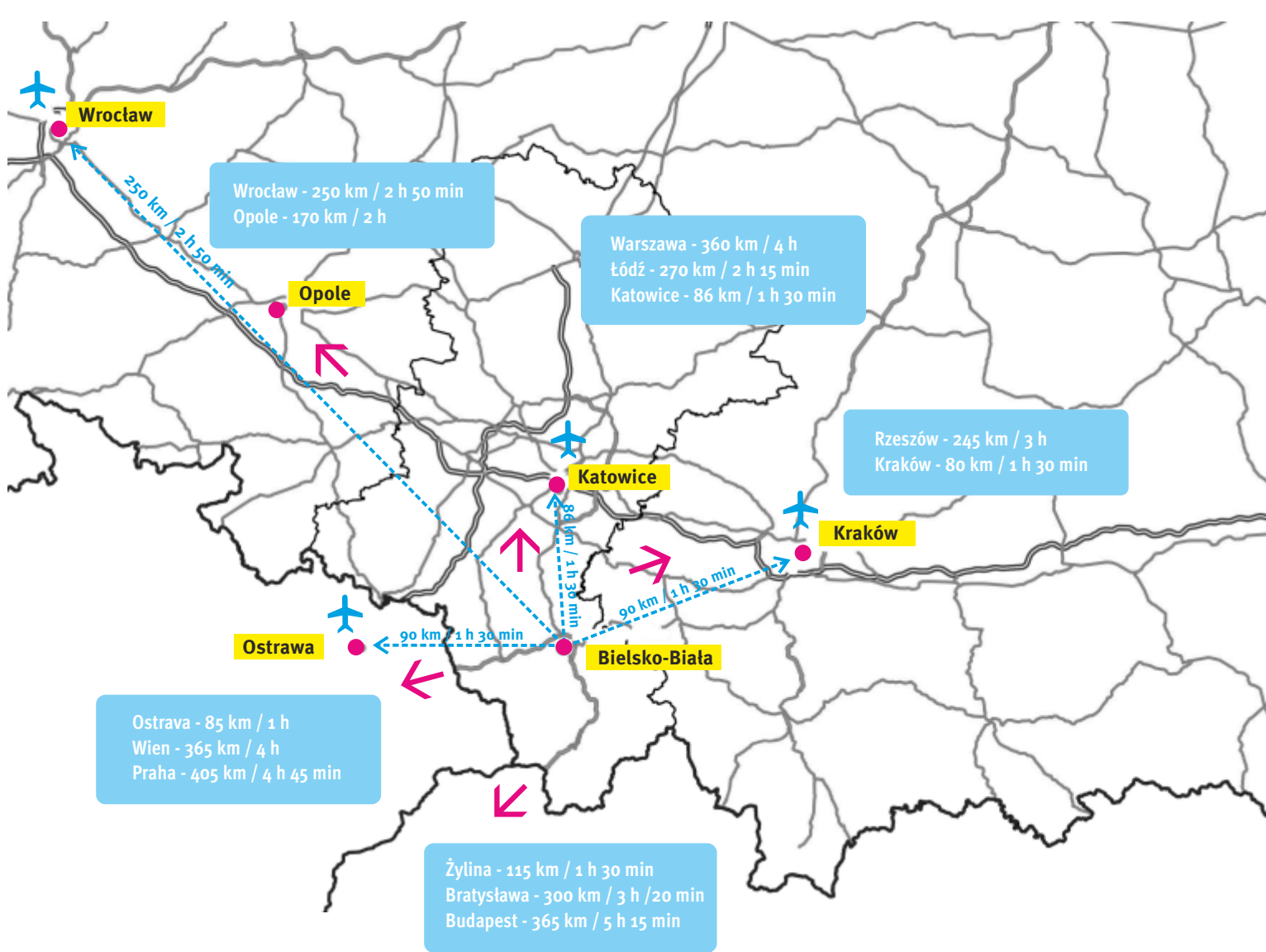
A **gondola cable car to the top of Mount Szyndzielnia** serves a recreational, tourist and sports function. It is a tourist attraction and an important means of transportation in the mountains.

**Bielsko-Biała is a very important transport hub owing to the motorways** running within city limits: the S1 Pyrzowice - Kosztowy - Bielsko-Biała – Zwardoń route (the Slovakian D3 motorway towards Bratislava was built as an extension of the S1 in Slovakia); the S52 Głogoczów - Bielsko-Biała – Cieszyn route which joins the R48 motorway in the Czech Republic.

Large urban centres and **airports** are easily accessible. There are **airports** in the near vicinity: Katowice-Pyrzowice, Kraków-Balice and Ostrava across the Czech border.

Wrocław is equally well serviced by public transport.





1857

Visitor accommodation  
in the city

22373

Visitor accommodation  
within the Agglomeration

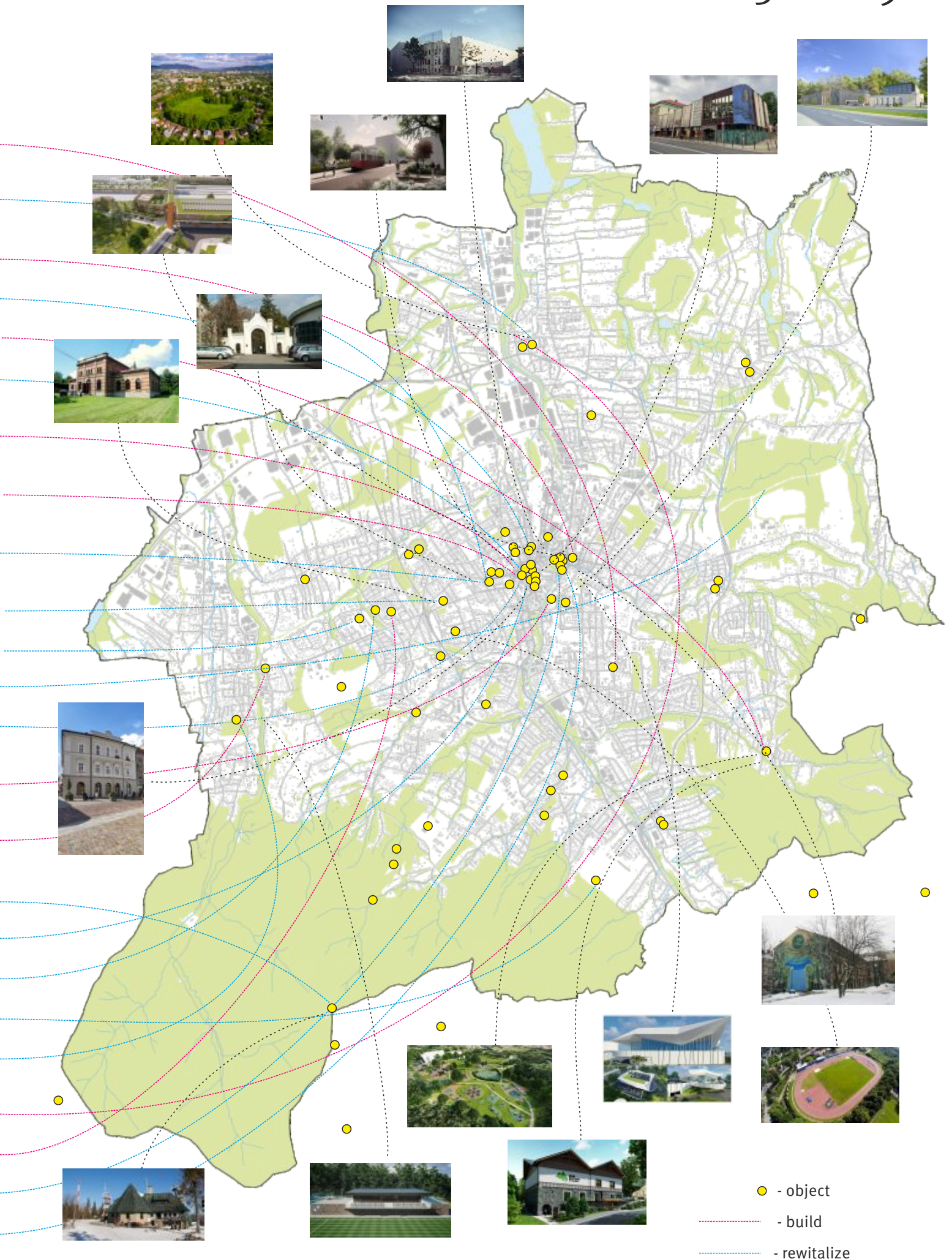


**6.3** In terms of cultural, urban and tourism infrastructure what are the projects (including renovation projects) that your city plan to carry out in connection with the European Capital of Culture action between now and the year of the title?

	PLANNED INVESTMENT	ACTION TAKEN	COST	DEADLINE
CULTURE	<b>Banialuka Puppet Theatre</b> - a new building combined with a Green Library	B	35 000 000	2028
	<b>An exhibition and multimedia project in Grodzisko</b> - connected to the Abandoned Town research project	R	500 000	2027
	<b>Pedanteria</b> – a centre for the documentation of heritage and creation of urban culture	B	25 000 000	2028
	<b>SFR Centre of Creative Industry</b>	R	1 250 000	2025
	<b>A Cultural Centre in Straconka</b>	B	3 600 000	2025
	<b>A green roof for the BWA Gallery</b>	R	2 200 000	2026
	<b>Forum of Success</b> (a pocket-sized museum for the Fiat 126p) * the car's 'tiny tot' pet name	B	1 000 000	2028
	<b>An exhibition plinth</b> in the city, providing a means of displaying art installations relating to the EU	B	50 000	2024
GREEN SPACES	<b>Old Lutheran cemetery</b> - a historic space opened up to the public as a memorial park with multimedia features	R	130 000	2025
	<b>Jewish cemetery</b> - a historic space, containing a pre-burial house, opened up to the public as a memorial park	R	1 300 000	2027
	<b>Creation of an ecological nature park at Stawowa Street</b>	R	1 800 000	2025
	<b>18 locations for new green parks and squares</b>	R	4 500 000	2026
CITY PLANNING	<b>Safe and pleasant areas along sections of 3 Maja Street.</b>	R	6 000 000	2029
	<b>An intergenerational activity and innovation centre</b> in a historic building equipped with tennis courts	B	6 500 000	2025
	<b>Beskidzki HUB</b> - A Centre for Digital Innovation and Modern Technology and local business incubators	R / B	48 000 000	2026
TOURISM	<b>The Mountain Enthusiasts Centre</b> (upper cable car station on Mount Szyndzielnia)	R	3 250 000	2025
	<b>New premises for the City Tourist Information Centre</b>	R	300 000	2024
SPORT	<b>Swimming pool</b> with water education centre	B	14 000 000	2027
	<b>Stadia in Wapienica</b>	R	7 800 000	2025
COMMUNICATIONS & TRANSPORT	<b>Renovation of the recreational areas in Blonia</b>	R	3 600 000	2027
	<b>Integrated Interchange Centre</b> - a new facility linking various forms of public transport, with car parks	B	45 000 000	2028
	<b>Construction of the Bielsko-Biala North Bypass</b> (Nowopiekarska Street)	B	70 000 000	2027
	<b>Revitalisation and reinstatement of the no. 190 train line</b> to Cieszyn.	R	80 000 000	2028
	<b>A woonerf</b> (home zone) on 1 Maja Street	R	3 000 000	2027

B - build R - reitalize

2023 - 2029





## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We have presented in the Bidbook the reasons why we are applying for the title of European Capital of Culture, and we have also shaped the concept of the City of Weaves. This is an extraordinary opportunity for us to both celebrate art in our city and also to use culture as a means of social development. Whilst preparing the application, and during the numerous discussions we held, we also came to understand that **the European Union needs Bielsko-Biała**, that we have resources that we want to share. **We understood that this was what we could offer Europe.**

**Working on the Bidbook made us realise that we are unique. Harmonious coexistence of people of different faiths and nationalities, entrepreneurship, innovative production, simplicity and a peaceful life in a compact city are our distinguishing features. Bielsko-Biała has survived many crises, which have been followed by transformation and revival thanks to its inhabitants, without help from the outside.**

Constant transformation determines a city's existence. Faced with challenges of a changing reality, those who can learn anew will survive. **The protective spirit of Bielsko-Biała lies in its diversity as well as in the strength and openness of its inhabitants, enabling them to adapt to change.**

At the turn of the 20th century the city's wealth and prestige were attributable to the textile industry, to which we owe the thriving development and unique architecture of those times. However, after 1945 all factories were nationalised. History repeated itself after 1989, when, as a result of the political transformation in Poland, workplaces were privatised and many of them went bankrupt. **Thanks to the entrepreneurship of the inhabitants, local business once again adapted to the changes, and new specialised companies have appeared. The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have brought new challenges to the world, to which we seek answers in our City of Weaves programme.**

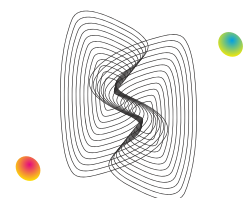
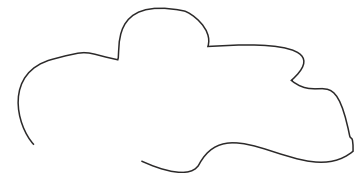
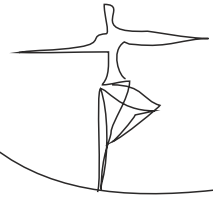
We derive joy from our proximity to nature. **We understand the value of our landscape and we protect it.** Health, physical activity and building relationships are important to us. We are constantly seeing new arrivals here, seeking a good place to live. We are known for our openness and hospitality. **Around 15,000 migrants from Ukraine live in BB today. Together with them and other minorities, we are once again creating a multicultural community.** Despite Catholicism currently being the dominant religion, Bielsko-Biała remains a Protestant island in Poland. In recent years, with the influx of citizens from Ukraine, Orthodoxy has also arrived in the city, which, thanks to the support of the local authorities, will have its own church here. Bielsko-Biała's border location is conducive to contacts with our Czechs and Slovak neighbours, and to trips by Bielsko residents to Austria, Italy or Croatia, as well to foreign visitors to Poland. Thanks to our good transport links **we feel that we are part of Europe.**

**We want EVERYONE** - regardless of age, origin, views or sexual orientation - **to feel safe and at peace in Bielsko-Biała**, and, through the sensitivity and empathy engendered by culture and art, to bring about increased respect for one another and to build social capital founded on bonds of trust and cooperation. **The artistic programme of the City of Weaves draws attention to the most important challenges for Europe, and Bielsko-Biała. We believe that we can be an example of good practice for the entire region and for the world.**

**In the intertwining threads of WELLBEING: AWARENESS, SOCIETY AND SURROUNDINGS, we offer the most valuable things we have – energy, creativity and, at the same time, much-needed peace.**

We cordially and warmheartedly invite Europe to get to know us.

This Bidbook was created with respect for European values. We have created it out of passion and love for Bielsko-Biała.



**Bielsko-Biała 2029**  
European Capital of Culture

candidate city



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fol. Cavatina Hall

*Cavatina Hall - a private concert hall equipped with the L-ISA sound system. The hall is managed by the Fiducia Foundation. Also under its care is a chamber hall, a professional recording studio, and a covered patio on the roof of the fifth floor.*

