

“Timisoara 2021 - European Capital of Culture and Cultural Heritage.”



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CEO Timisoara 2021: European Capital of Culture

Situated in the western part of Romania, near the borders with Hungary and Serbia, Timisoara – the capital city of the Banat region is preparing to become the European Capital of Culture in 2021. The theme of Light has been spotted as the central idea of transforming the city through culture and participation. Its meaning goes back to the city’s history, back in 1884, when Timisoara was the first city on continental Europe to have electric street lightening. Then, during the Enlightenment period, the city has witnessed outstanding economic, cultural and social development. Light is also about the civic energy of its people as in 1989 the sparks of Revolution against the communist totalitarian regime were first ignited in Romania, in Timisoara. Therefore, the slogan *Shine your Light – Light Up Your City* is about our values to spread in Europe for an open minded, visionary attitude.

The city is preparing for the cultural year a programme to engage its citizens and visitors in a one-year long Journey from light to darkness and the way around, across three Territories: People (the essence of community, the civic energy), Places (the visible grounds of our society, the public spaces, the historical heritage) and Connections (Timisoara’s connections with Europe and the world).

With a more than 300 years of history as a citadel, the city core values are interculturality, multi-confessionality, entrepreneurship and civic energy. Over 30 different cultures have lived here side by side for centuries, and it has always been a place where small sparks ignited transcontinental transformations all leaving tangible and intangible cultural legacies.

The city has over 14.500 historical buildings awaiting facelift, a process that has started, yet a lot to be done still. For the Capital of Culture year, the Journey will explore people, places and connections through artistic interventions on spotting local heritage and its profound connections to the European cultural heritage. Culturally, Timisoara and the region of Banat hold an ample array of material of intangible heritage, whose roots and connections spread across Europe.

We have started to approach heritage, both tangible and intangible, gradually in these years of preparations for the big year, with an outlook to the legacy after 2021. Our artistic interventions encourage individuals to experiment artistically with their own personal history in order to remix collective memories into works that make citizens aware of their identity. People learn to recognize the valuable elements of traditional art, artefacts and lifestyle and distil them into the rich non-material heritage of Banat in an authentic

contemporary manner.

Heritage Contact Zone, is a project funded through the Creative Europe Programme that investigates how heritage spaces can serve as a space of encounter and creativity, by developing participatory co-creation formats between citizens and artists and a toolkit for artists working with difficult heritage in a participatory way. The consortium of partners is led by H401 (Amsterdam-based cultural organisation, ex Castrum Peregrini) and includes the following entities along the Association Timisoara 2021 – European Capital of Culture: Goethe-Institut, Human Platform /Living Memorial (Budapest), Etz Hayyim Synagogue (Chania, Greece).

Under the title **Theatre as Resistance**, the artistic team made up of a theatre critic and a director explored the archives of all the theatrical institutions in Timisoara, and the personal narratives of citizens, in order to test the hypothesis about a cultural resistance through theatre during communism. The project investigated how these heritages could serve as a space of encounter and creativity.

Spotlight Heritage is a key programme, addressing the material heritage of the city, the historical neighbourhoods with its buildings, personal stories. It is linked to all European architectural styles of the past three centuries, and has often been mentioned as an urgency of the city, since most properties are in advanced state of decay. We use audience development tools to address the very complicated situation of the heritage of decaying buildings. Technology tools offer ways of working together, across disciplines, and to open existing information to wider audiences, while contemporary performances create the emotional bonds needed to inspire decisive actions to save the local heritage. Therefore, Spotlight Heritage is a digital cultural initiative of the Polytechnic University of Timișoara delivered in partnership with the National Museum of Banat and with the Timișoara Association 2021 European Capital of Culture, co-financed by the Romanian Ministry of Culture and National Identity, Municipality of Timisoara and Timis County Council. The project is part of Timisoara 2021 official programme and is to take place over a period of three years (2019-2021). It reveals, by digital storytelling, Timisoara through stories of cultural and historical heritage, of technical development, of communities and neighbourhoods, interwoven with the personal stories of the inhabitants of yesterday and today.

Moving Fireplaces is created by Timișoara 2021 together with *Prin Banat* Association. One of the project's main aims is to seek for stories, as part of the intangible heritage of the Banat region: stories of relocated homes and souls in them, the stories of people who were forced to leave their native places or, on the contrary, the stories of the happiest, who chose to live a good life other than the one in which they lived. The project is an instrument by which the living souls of the Banat tell their stories, sorrows, joys or burdens.

Slowing Down is taking shape in collaboration with the CRIES Association - the Resource Centre for Ethical and Solidarity Initiatives. *Slowing down* is the concept under which we invite you to rediscover the complexity of the relationship between culture and food, as part of our identity heritage. It is a project with a gradual development through which we propose including a responsible model of consumption and food production.



This is a short preview of what we are preparing for the European Capital of Culture year in 2021 around heritage. There is many more to come as the cultural richness of this place recall Europe in a nutshell and celebrate its diversity. A capital of culture year is not a finished point in the life of a city. But rather, a new beginning for the city and an enormous chance to restart the change.