

# Break-



Nitra 2026, European Capital of Culture  
Candidate City

# ing. Point

# Nitra

Selection Phase  
Bid Book

# 2026



Nitra 2026  
European Capital of Culture  
Candidate City

Selection Phase Bid Book, 2021

The applicant:  
City of Nitra in partnership with  
Nitra Self-Governing Region  
and support of 14 municipalities

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**Nitra  
2026**  
European Capital of Culture  
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# Introduction

## Q1

How the Breaking Point has changed since the preselection stage

# Has the concept changed? No, it hasn't. But it changed us. To a Breaking Point.

Many of us, Nitrančans – born or made – who worked on the candidacy, come from the independent cultural scene. We know the people for whom we are doing our festivals, exhibitions and activities. We know that they will come, we know what they like, and we know how to satisfy them. But the past year and a half broke all that apart. **Breaking Point made us talk to people we normally don't meet, think in ways we are not**

**used to and made us look at Nitra from angles it's probably never been looked at.** The result? The business as usual doesn't feel good enough anymore. What impact are we making, really? Aren't we preaching to the choir? Or as we said before: sitting in our own comfortable echo-chamber? And we hear we are not alone in this – many of our partners around Europe reported similar thoughts.

**So Breaking Point as a concept has not changed. But we have.**

Breaking Point means constant re-evaluation, re-thinking and re-examining for better and healthier outcomes. It means **to pick the locks** that tie us to our past with honesty and self-reflection. **To open up** ourselves inwards and outwards to firmly become a part of the contemporary and future European story. **To challenge** the people who switch channels rather than hearing uncomfortable truths. **To nurture** a healthy dialogue in an inclusive space where solutions are attempted by exchange of ideas. **To grow** a sustainable and successful city in the rich, deep soil that surrounds us. **To reclaim** our status as active and curious co-creators, place-makers and city-shapers.

That's why **it seems even more tangible and relevant** after the harsh pandemic winter and spring of 20/21 that changed the cultural paradigm in Europe more than we could have anticipated and assured us there's no way of going back to the old "normal". We need to break free from the norms of the past, and set a new normal that goes above and beyond previous constraints.

**We believe that Breaking Point is just that – and not just for Nitra.**

Beyond our own epiphanies we have had a good chance of trying the Breaking Point in practice – breaking the first eggs to start cooking the omelette. It wasn't always easy **breaking through the walls** of "But this is how we've always done it!" of several institutions that are quite set in their tracks. Still, we managed to get almost all of them on board in the end, so the political and institutional support of Nitra 2026 is in place.

**We broke the silence** that had built up between the independent and the institutional sectors. Never before did they meet and talk and clash and learn from each other as much as in the past eight months. Some of them even started cooperating already, and that is a huge win. The partners we need "on the ground" in and around Nitra to deliver our ECoC are ready to go. Overall we built partnerships with **196 individuals, organisations and institutions in Slovakia.**

Through our activities and communication we have already started **breaking the cycle** by opening up topics that are rarely touched upon in a proud (and often stubborn) historical city like Nitra. We found out it's not simple, but if done with creativity and honesty, it can spark an unheard amount of interest and ignite some deep thinking and conversations.

**We broke the space** by bringing culture to the corners of the city that probably never

experienced it. Whether the retirement homes or the bus stops by the factories – we found out that live culture can make it easier to connect before starting to talk about problems and their solutions. The people of Nitra really seem ready to break some stuff that we all would do better without. Go figure!

**We broke the barriers** of the city by thinking of our rural and peri-urban spaces more as part of a whole – with the city as a solidary regional centre. The regional municipalities and partners stand firmly with Nitra 2026 – and vice versa.

**We broke through** on the international level by making new and reactivating existing connections. With most of our European and international partners we have very specific and clear ideas on how to work together. **244 partner organisations and individual artists from 45 countries** are eager for the projects to start.

For Nitra to become the true Breaking Point where culture and art are used as ways to underpin a process of change we set on five goals we need to achieve:

- Breaking the cycle of our prevalent and often unhealthy historical narratives to become a more self-reflective and critical society. Where citizens are not members but **re:members** who are consciously and proudly part of a wider European story.
- Breaking the silence to connect and unite our atomised society in a **Healthy Dialogue**. Speaking up and listening to each other to find healthy and systematic solutions for present and upcoming issues.
- Breaking the vicious circle of a transit station with unengaged citizens and brain drain. Becoming an attractive **City Worth Caring For** with a vision and with citizens who care.
- Breaking the space not only in the public realm, but of spaces we commonly share including fields, forests or industrial parks. **The Therapy of Common Spaces** aims at decentralising culture, uniting the region into a cooperative, synergic, liveable, and fun space.
- Breaking the ground by reactivating our **Cultivation Gene** and becoming active creators who live sustainably and in consonance with their surrounding environment.

If we achieve these as a long-term legacy, Nitra will become a successful European Capital of Culture that will ultimately break free, not break down. One that can pave the way for other European cities looking to avoid breakdowns of their own.



# Contribution to the long-term strategy



## Q2

Changes to the NK31 cultural strategy since the pre-selection stage, and the role of Nitra 2026 in these changes

Last year we started this chapter on a gloomy note, moaning and groaning about culture being at the tail end of the city management's list of priorities in the past. The vision of Nitra's future set in the newly introduced **Strategy for the Development of Culture and Creative Industries in Nitra for 2021-2031 – NK31** – painted a light at the end of a very long tunnel. The strategy was approved by the city council on 10 December 2020.

Which brings us to the question: Has the strategy changed since the pre-selection stage? The short answer is – no. What changed is our understanding of just how important was the bidding process and the Breaking Point concept in laying the groundwork for breaking the moulds limiting us in achieving the vision stated by NK31. This is why we provide the long answer as well.

In the priority area of NK31 **Everyone for Culture, Culture for Everyone!** it promises to remove physical and social barriers in all areas of culture, actively involving minority groups with different language and cultural backgrounds, as well as senior citizens, people and families with social disadvantages into the cultural and social life of the city. The Nitra 2026 **outreach and audience development strategy** covers all target groups identified by the NK31 strategy. But we are not stopping there. Adhering to our participation principle, the involvement of local cultural actors and civic society is hardwired into every line of the artistic programme as well.

The strategy, under the priority **Future for Cultural Heritage, Cultural Heritage for Future!** encourages restoration and reconstruction of cultural monuments and historical sights, making them more attractive for local citizens and visitors. We believe we will deliver just what was ordered! **Incorporating local cultural heritage**, whether it's agriculture, archeology, traditional crafts, folklore, even urban legends, through experimental and innovative presentation methods is the very thing that gives our project that specific Nitraesque flavour. And most **Nitra 2026 related infrastructural interventions** are directed towards resurrecting our tangible cultural heritage as future cultural spaces, rather than building brand new facilities.

Speaking of cultural spaces... By **broadening the definition of space for culture** to include community gardens, parks, open fields and even the river and its waterfront, Nitra 2026 ties directly into the **Space for Culture, Culture for Space!** priority of the NK31 strategy. All the while including local communities as co-creators.

The Cultural strategy, to achieve **The City for CCI, CCI for the City!** priority, is planning for the newly established **Creative Centre Nitra** to strengthen the city's capacity for culture and CCI development in line with current trends and best practice from across Europe. Nitra 2026 supports these efforts by collaborating with Creative Centre Nitra and incorporating them into our **Cultivator capacity building strategy**. But it also raises the stakes by supplementing their activities with capacity building focused on crisis management, participatory approaches in CCI, our matchmaking **KulturSilo** platform and our extension of capacity building to cover Nitra's "gatekeepers" – like taxi drivers or hotel staff.

The last approach also ties into the Nitra 2026 contribution towards achieving the **Nitra for Europe, Europe for Nitra!** priority of the NK31 strategy, by helping to establish a systematic training programme for all those people a European visitor will meet first when they come to Nitra. Successful and sustainable implementation of the European Capital of Culture project in 2026 is a way to ensure the firm embedding of Nitra on Europe's cultural map – a key objective within this priority.

So this is the plan...and an ambitious one at that. But now is the time to tally and provide receipts on the past eight months of our candidacy related efforts and their contribution to specific objectives set by the cultural strategy. Along with our plans we are giving you a **Taste of the Break**. Meaning we are showing what Nitra 2026 has contributed to the cultural strategy already in the selection phase. Nitra 2026 x NK31 **connections and breakthroughs** are described in the table on the following pages.

NK31 priority areas	NK31 goals	Nitra 2026 will contribute to these specific objectives of the NK31 strategy	Nitra 2026 key goals
EVERYONE FOR CULTURE, CULTURE FOR EVERYONE!	Enhance the quality of artistic production, attractive to all groups of residents and visitors, through better funding opportunities and internationalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen the positive perception of the role of culture in society</li> <li>Ongoing support for integrated community development</li> </ul> <div> <div>NK31 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES</div> <div>TASTE OF THE BREAK</div> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial allocation in the grant scheme for independent culture increased by 200% in 2021 with priorities tied to Nitra 2026 topics and introducing inclusion and environmental consideration criteria</li> <li>Our Nitra 2026 on the Road outreach initiative brought culture directly to several target groups as a sneak peek of what we have planned for the future</li> <li>Together with organisation Post Bellum we organised a workshop for Roma children on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the Jewish Codex in Villa K</li> </ul>	RE:MEMBERS  A HEALTHY DIALOGUE  A CITY WORTH CARING FOR
	Boost the capacities of independent and established cultural operators to carry out audience development strategies and capacity building programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop education from kindergartens, primary schools, high schools, universities to lifelong learning and support creative potential</li> <li>Encourage cooperation between cultural and educational institutions and actors</li> </ul> <div> <div>NK31 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES</div> <div>TASTE OF THE BREAK</div> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nitra 2026 team encouraged the city to enter an URBACT project OnStage, introducing music classes as an inclusion mechanism and is taking active part in the project</li> <li>Celebrating the European Youth Week, we announced an open call for local students called "The Future of Nitra" for their artistic visions of Nitra in the future. Selected works were displayed in the city centre</li> </ul>	A HEALTHY DIALOGUE  A CITY WORTH CARING FOR
THE CITY FOR CCI, CCI FOR THE CITY!	Strengthen economic, social and cultural sustainability of operators in cultural and creative industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support education of actors in the cultural and creative industries in order to develop their know-how</li> <li>Define the usage of empty and semi-empty spaces owned by the city for CCI and community activities</li> <li>Strengthen the sustainability of the activities of CCI</li> </ul> <div> <div>NK31 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES</div> <div>TASTE OF THE BREAK</div> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nitra 2026 team organised training for prospective applicants from independent culture on funding opportunities</li> <li>Creative Centre Nitra is up and running with key positions already filled. Nitra 2026 team was involved in designing tailor-made capacity building programmes of the Centre</li> </ul>	A CITY WORTH CARING FOR  THE THERAPY OF COMMON SPACES  THE CULTIVATION GENE
FUTURE FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE, CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR FUTURE!	Create comprehensive system of support for actors in culture and CCI, especially in the field of cultural heritage and traditional crafts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change attitudes towards public spaces and historic buildings by strengthening personal engagement</li> <li>Networking of CCI actors at the local, national and international level</li> <li>Strengthen the capacities of traditional crafts and their connection with current trends</li> </ul> <div> <div>NK31 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES</div> <div>TASTE OF THE BREAK</div> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Along with Čierne diery (a collective that promotes forgotten architectural heritage) we published a map of Technical Monuments of Nitra</li> <li>We will publish a book "Survivors?!" with a selection of the agricultural heritage sites of Nitra Region in December 2021 in cooperation with Slovak Agricultural Museum in Nitra</li> <li>During International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra 2021 we co-organised accompanying events on local traditional crafts clubs and contemporary art</li> </ul>	A HEALTHY DIALOGUE  A CITY WORTH CARING FOR  THE THERAPY OF COMMON SPACES
	Ensure preservation and access to cultural heritage, that will meet cultural needs of residents and visitors of the city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attractive access to cultural heritage for the public in the physical and online space</li> <li>Restore art in public spaces that bear the memory of the city</li> </ul> <div> <div>NK31 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES</div> <div>TASTE OF THE BREAK</div> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We published a selection of forgotten architectural competitions online and we are researching the possibilities of reusing these places for artistic purposes</li> <li>Nitra 2026 team is creating a comprehensive atlas of visual art objects in public spaces</li> </ul>	RE:MEMBERS  THE CULTIVATION GENE

SPACE FOR CULTURE, CULTURE FOR SPACE!	Redefine the role of the inhabitants as co-creators of cultural public space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change the attitude of the audience/inhabitants and increase the share of activities that are organised by community actors</li> <li>Revitalise public spaces with new works of art in a participative manner</li> <li>Change attitudes towards the creation of public space and the involvement of residents, strengthening personal involvement</li> </ul> <div> <div>NK31 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES</div> <div>TASTE OF THE BREAK</div> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nitra 2026 team published an open call for ecological public space intervention, and in local citizens voting a Public Greenhouse was chosen to be built in winter 2021/2022</li> <li>We took part in the Architecture Day event, participating in the public discussion on topic of current issues of public and common spaces in Nitra</li> <li>Based on the questionnaire survey conducted by the Nitra 2026 team, several underused facilities were chosen for repurposing as new cultural venues. In cooperation with the city, we helped develop a strategy for repurposing of first one of those – Lipa Cinema</li> </ul>	RE:MEMBERS  A HEALTHY DIALOGUE  A CITY WORTH CARING FOR
	Complete and revitalise the cultural infrastructure adequately for the 21st century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove barriers and increase access of facilities owned by the city</li> <li>Develop cultural infrastructure in close interconnection with the development of the city</li> </ul> <div> <div>NK31 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES</div> <div>TASTE OF THE BREAK</div> </div> <p>With the Office of the Chief Architect, we are preparing the revitalisation of the Synagogue and the City Market</p>	THE THERAPY OF COMMON SPACES  THE CULTIVATION GENE
NITRA FOR EUROPE, EUROPE FOR NITRA!	Highlight Nitra on the map of Europe as a city in a beautiful landscape bearing significant traces of common European history and the present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nitra 2026 will contribute to building quality marketing of the city with the involvement of residents, diversifying the offer for new segments of visitors, linking tourism products to regional, national, international tourism projects and cultural tourism routes, creating attractive products for visitors using smart solutions, and strengthening cooperation and public-private partnerships in the city and region</li> </ul> <div> <div>NK31 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES</div> <div>TASTE OF THE BREAK</div> </div>	NITRA 2026
	Attract European visitors with an attractive offer utilising modern functioning smart infrastructure and cooperation with tourism actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nitra 2026 team nudged the city administration to prepare the visual identity of the City of Nitra and helped to set up terms and conditions for the tender.</li> </ul>	

# Q3

## Long-term impacts

We started this process contemplating **whether it's possible to break free rather than break down**. The impacts we hoped for seemed like a dreamlike snapshot of a perfect future just a couple of months ago. But those steps that we took since the pre-selection stage brought us closer to that vision, with long-term impacts we anticipate taking a more tangible form and better linked with our key goals responding to challenges we are facing. The change? An even greater resolve to utilise Nitra 2026 as a bridge between now and then. The “then” is described in the table.

By breaking...	...we are...	...and bringing long-term...
...the Cycle	...becoming <b>RE:MEMBERS</b> , individuals and communities who reflect successes and traumas of the past and present that are constantly forming us. We are good neighbours (to our next-door and European neighbours) with a regained sense of responsibility for places and communities we live in. We open new channels of communication to the shared past of our continent, celebrating the present and building our joint future together.	<b>Cultural Impacts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Increased identification with and pride in local culture</li><li>● Toned down Euroscepticism and increased citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural space</li><li>● Improved image of the city at regional, national, European and international level</li><li>● Greater connectedness of local cultural and creative sector on regional, national, European and international level</li><li>● Cultural and artistic offer is more diverse and of higher quality</li></ul>
	...creating <b>A CITY WORTH CARING FOR</b> as a human-centred place on the map of Europe with beautiful landscape, preserved and accessible cultural heritage, diversity of local cultures, and high quality of artistic production. Breaking it up and rebuilding it as a dynamic collaborative network of cultural and creative sectors, public sector, educational institutions and the civic society. Finding common threads to build territorial and specifically rural-urban cooperative (not competitive) relationships and making it more attractive to live in, study, work, or visit.	
...the Ground	...reawakening our <b>CULTIVATION GENE</b> , and getting back on track by bringing agricultural and natural heritage to life as an integral part of our culture in more environmentally sustainable ways. Learning to apply our inherent creativity to solve pressing current and future issues and to create added value and distribute it fairly. We cease to view ourselves as being exploiters and occasionally victims of our environment, and accept our roles as its curators and custodians.	<b>Economic and Institutional Impacts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Increased competitiveness, innovativeness and digitalisation in cultural and creative sectors</li><li>● Diversification of tourism towards sustainable tourism models</li><li>● Increased regional, national, European and international demand for local cultural and tourism offer</li><li>● Deepened cross-sectoral cooperation</li><li>● Increased valorisation of cultural and creative potential</li></ul>
	...delivering <b>THE THERAPY OF COMMON SPACES</b> , as a mediating link between the environment and necessities of urban development, broadening the definition of space for culture to include community gardens, parks, open fields, the river itself, even the digital space. Our common spaces are biotopes with a balanced combination of multiple functions fostering inclusion, where we become co-creators, place-makers and city-shapers.	
...the Silence	...establishing <b>A HEALTHY DIALOGUE</b> for an inclusive atmosphere that will allow everybody in, regardless of their age, origin, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status or other background. Creating a safe space to engage in multicultural dialogue and increase participation in cultural and social life. It will heal a growing producer:consumer, local:visitor, city:region, us:them split through a model of horizontal participation reaching those that are on the periphery – both geographically and socially.	<b>Environmental and Urban Development Impacts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Better quality of public and common spaces</li><li>● Decentralisation of culture and increased access to public and common spaces</li><li>● Derelict and underused urban “grey spaces” revitalised and re-purposed</li><li>● Reduction of negative environmental spillovers of culture</li><li>● Intangible cultural heritage and traditional knowledge used to foster resilience and adaptation capacities of communities</li></ul>
		<b>Social impacts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Increased citizens sense of ownership</li><li>● Deeper voluntary engagement</li><li>● Increased civic and cultural participation</li><li>● Increased tolerance and decreased social tension</li><li>● Improved health and wellbeing</li></ul>

# Q4

## Plans for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the ECoC on Nitra and for disseminating the results of the evaluation

Our entire Breaking Point concept hinges on constant examination, confrontation and re-evaluation. This is why the monitoring and evaluation strategy has an even more special place in Nitra 2026.

### The “how”

Baseline data is available for most indicators relating to demographics, tourism, CCI employment and output (databases of **Statistical Office of Slovak Republic, Tourism Satellite Account, Satellite Account on Culture and Creative Industry**) on local or regional level. **The Ministry of Culture** gathers yearly data on activities of cultural actors, but they cover mostly established culture. Some of the required data for independent culture was supplemented by a recent study of **Plenipotentiary for Civic Society** on NGOs and civil society. Looking at European level sources, we rely on the second edition of the **Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor** that combines data from Eurostat, Eurobarometer, DG Regio, TripAdvisor, OECD Regpat and ETER project, to provide a range of measures describing the ‘Cultural Vibrancy’, the ‘Creative Economy’ and the ‘Enabling Environment’ of a city. Along with an opportunity to benchmark against similar urban centres.

But to gather more comprehensive and detailed data on activities and visitors across the entire CCI spectrum that would actually enable us to separate Nitra 2026 impacts from external influences, we went on a literal “data mining” quest. On this hunt we found that most of the data we need exists, but it’s scattered across many departments of local and regional authorities, cultural actors themselves, even social services providers. And in various incompatible formats to boot. Luckily, the establishment of a comprehensive, easy to manage monitoring system of culture and creative industries sector is a clear requirement amongst the objectives in **Nitra’s NK31 strategy**. This opened the door for the Nitra 2026 team to negotiate with the city the revamping of the **Open Data Portal** and **GIS portal** of the city, that would “house” as well as disseminate Nitra 2026 monitoring raw data and results.

City’s GIS Portal will be revamped as an **inter-active GIS based platform** that will be used to monitor the change in use of public and cultural

spaces and evaluation through **sociotope and emotional mapping**. It will provide real-time information on attendance, satisfaction and shifts in behaviour patterns as well as timely data to show if any course correction is necessary. That data we had to track down across various departments? A protocol for relevant departments on how to integrate their databases into this platform is being prepared. **Nitra26 mobile app** will also be a great source of visitors data.

### The “who”

This is where we lucked out. With focus and scope of their research activities, the **two university campuses** are a one-stop-shop of research teams, international partner networks, tools and facilities we need to cover all thematic dimensions of expected impacts. Economic impact assessment (specifically that related to the cultural heritage and tourism sector) and heritage-linked urban development monitoring and evaluation will be conducted in cooperation with the **Department of Geography and Regional Development** at Constantine the Philosopher University. The department with partners from 14 European cities is currently co-designing a **SPOT-IT tool** (within Horizon 2020 project Social and Innovative Platform on Cultural Tourism and its Potential Towards Deepening Europeanisation). This uses an innovative GIS-based tool with region wide access offering a detailed interactive map of tourism related data, exploring emerging forms of cultural tourism and identifying opportunities for the development of cultural heritage. Monitoring and evaluation process related to intangible cultural heritage will be aided by the **Department of Culture and Tourism Management** at the same university.

Monitoring and evaluation of local and regional spillovers of economic impacts, institutional, environmental and urban development with focus on rural-urban linkages will be aided by the **Institute of Regional Studies and Rural Development** of Slovak University of Agriculture. The Institute was part of the consortium of universities along with Technical University in Košice implementing project KRENAR 2011-2014 (Creative economy – national, economic and regional conditions and incentives), focusing, among other things, on economic impact assessment of Košice 2013. They already helped us to test **social network analysis** as a method to monitor and evaluate dynamic shifts in the institutional environment and development of cross-sectoral cooperation (e.g. networking, cooperation, emergence of creative clusters and living labs).

Social and cultural dimensions, especially related to access, participation and inclusion aspects, will be investigated by partners from both of Nitra’s universities and the **Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture** – an





Svätopluk Square, the monumental Andrej Bagar Theatre and Nitra Castle with the Zobor Hill in the background

independent non-governmental organisation with nationwide scope. Our outreach and audience development strategy was already informed by their recent research activities on integration of foreigners in the city conducted with migrant communities, NGOs, educational institutions and employers. An important aspect of Nitra 2026 is the health and wellbeing dimension. The city is currently closing the first round of **Survey on Health and Wellbeing** within the Horizon 2020 IN-HABIT project, which will provide a comprehensive baseline.

More traditional impact assessment of projects with nature-based elements (e.g. Gardens of Nitra, Fields of Multiculture or The River and its People) will be supplemented by the **Laboratory of Neuroeconomy and Consumer Decision-Making** at the research centre AgroBioTech. It will focus on evaluation of direct physiological and psychological processes, visual and emotional perception of visitors and those interacting with revitalised and newly built spaces during various activities.

**Environmental sustainability** is hardwired into our concept to the extent that related monitoring and evaluation processes are integrated into the Nitra 2026 programme itself. The **CirculArch** hub that will be created in cooperation with Slovak architect Juraj Hariš will establish sustainability guidelines and conduct oversight for all ECoC related infrastructural interventions. On the programme side of things, in the **Green Culture** initiative, in cooperation with **OZ Očami prírody** (Through the eyes of nature), we are already starting to gather baseline data on the current state of ecological approaches employed in cultural organisations. Our **Sustainability Officer** will oversee these processes along with the Nitra 2026 **Carbon Inventory** – calculation

of emissions for each event broken down into transport (visitors, artists, and media – to and from Nitra), waste (events, visitors’ generated waste), energy, food and other. And projects like DiggIt, Survivors?!, New (b)Orders and even our audience development strategy have a research component already built in. **We also plan to push our participatory angle to the end!** Next to the usual suspects – the universities and research centres, monitoring and evaluation team, the Sustainability and Outreach Officers who are a part of the implementing organisation will also partner with communities themselves. They will be reached by trained **15 Community Co-researchers** – local observers, mostly NGO members, representatives of disadvantaged groups, and employees of Regional Development Agencies and Local Action Groups to also cover the region.

Behavioural changes and impacts related to inclusion, cohesion and wellbeing will be investigated through **focus groups, interviews and behavioural games**. This is where our co-researchers come into play to ensure participation of hard to reach communities in our evaluation process. Finally, through recurring **participative storytelling** and interviews we will discover what it’s like to “live through” a transformation of the city through the European Capital of Culture. **40-50 specially selected people** (families and individuals with diverse backgrounds) will be subject to a longitudinal study and instructed to keep a special **26x52 Diary** with weekly entries. Several were already identified (such as the representatives of the migrant community, a young teacher working with Roma children or the oldest volunteer at Nitra’s first community garden) and we are co-designing the diary with them.

The “what”

We need to ensure comparability with other past and present ECoC cities to promote transferability and a need for sound and actionable evidence on the multifaceted ways the European Capital of Culture initiative can contribute to long-term sustainable development. This is why we will adopt the **common core indicators** indicated in the Commission’s guidelines for the cities’ own evaluation. We also need to deliver what we specifically promised in this application. This is why a **context-based approach** is being developed

with various partners to complement the required monitoring and evaluation methodology. **Our definition of success** is the story that we tell around Breaking Point: To rebuild Nitra as a community full of **re:members** applying our most valuable asset – **The Cultivation Gene** in order to collectively create **A City Worth Caring For**, that applies **A Therapy of Common Places** so everyone can engage in **A Healthy Dialogue** and embrace European values. The table shows a sneak peek of indicators that will measure the direct impacts we hope this transformation will bring.

Nitra 2026 key goals × dimensions		Impact	Measurable indicator	Source of data
RE:MEMBERS	Cultural Impacts	Increased identification with and pride in local culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Number of born and new Nitrančans proud of their city/ region (disaggregated by socioeconomic characteristics and PCs*)</li><li>● Number and profile of local followers and their positive interactions with Nitra 2026 related social media channels</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Surveys and interviews</li><li>● Social media sentiment analysis</li></ul>
		Toned down Euroscepticism and increased citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Number and profile of people identifying as Europeans, perception and attitudes towards "Europeanness" and European themes</li><li>● Number of European themes discussed in the media, positive interactions from viewers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Surveys</li><li>● Focus groups, interviews</li><li>● Storytelling, diaries</li><li>● Media sentiment analysis</li></ul>
		Improved image of the city on regional, national, European and international level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Media coverage of Nitra 2026 (spatial and language disaggregation), number of articles</li><li>● Visitors perception</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Media and sentiment analysis</li><li>● Visitors surveys</li></ul>
A CITY WORTH CARING FOR		Greater connectedness of local cultural and creative sector on regional, national, European and international level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Number of Nitra 2026 and related projects with international partners, number of international partners</li><li>● Number of partnerships between local and international partners</li><li>● Number of new European-wide projects and initiatives born out of Nitra 2026 continuing after the title year, number of new memberships in European networks</li><li>● Number and profile of international visitors</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Nitra 2026 Association</li><li>● Nitra 2026 partners and cultural actors</li><li>● Cultural Managers Survey</li><li>● Visitors surveys</li></ul>
		Cultural and artistic offer is more diverse and of higher quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Programme composition by genre</li><li>● Number of visitors by event genre and their perception</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Nitra 2026 Association</li><li>● Nitra 2026 partners and cultural actors</li><li>● Visitors surveys</li></ul>
	Economic and Institutional Impacts	Increased competitiveness, innovativeness and digitalisation in cultural and creative sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Number and profile of people and organisations participating in capacity building initiatives</li><li>● Number of projects with digital component and number of partners involved, self-reported increase in digital skills by cultural managers</li><li>● New innovative initiatives in CCI</li><li>● Public spending on culture on local and regional level (per inhabitant, as % of total budget)</li><li>● Public spending on independent culture on local and regional level (per inhabitant, as % of total cultural budget)</li><li>● Share of alternative funding sources of cultural sector in total funding</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Nitra 2026 partners and cultural actors</li><li>● Satellite Account on Culture and Creative Industry</li><li>● Local and regional self-government authorities</li><li>● Cultural Managers Survey</li></ul>
Diversification of tourism towards sustainable tourism models		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● New sustainable tourism products and services</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Local and regional self-government authorities</li><li>● SPOT-IT tool</li></ul>	
Increased regional, national, European and international demand for local cultural and tourism offer		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Number of domestic and foreign visitors (spatial, socio-economic and disaggregation by PCs)</li><li>● Nights spent by domestic and foreign visitors (spatial, socio-economic and disaggregation by PCs)</li><li>● Share of tourism in employment, value added and GDP on the regional level</li><li>● Multiplier effects of visitors spending on local and regional economy (disaggregated by sector)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Statistical Office of Slovak Republic</li><li>● Tourism Satellite Account</li><li>● Visitors surveys</li></ul>	





# Cultural and artistic content

## Q5

### Artistic vision and strategy

#### Vision

Our artistic vision is to make Nitra a Breaking Point – **a place where the dysfunctional is broken down, replanted and put together into something healthy and resilient. Where the energy makes Nitra's cultivation gene break into action and our challenges break through our limitations to become opportunities.**

#### Strategy

We aim to realise this vision through six principles the Breaking Point artistic strategy is built upon: **Openness, Participation, Sincerity, Synthesis, Ubiquity, Edginess.** Here's how these principles are used across the presented artistic programme:

#### Openness: Nitra in Europe, Europe in Nitra

We cannot return Nitra to Europe on our own. It can only happen as a result of a two-way relationship. Our aim is **to open Nitra inwards and outwards**, involving our cultural and social capital in international and regional partnerships, participating in and creating projects across borders. And we have already started! The majority of our projects involve European partners and revolve around contemporary European issues or its core values. Seven international

artistic teams will examine mutual European heritage, its current transformation and identity in **(me)identity – (EU)identity** residency; **East of Eden?** will give architects, urbanists and artists a platform to deeply think about urban narratives of Eastern Europe; **New (b)Orders** bridges the gaps to look for common stories of rival nations, while **Museum of Parallel Culture** will showcase the presence of cultural unity of Europe even at its darkest hours.

#### Participation: Consumers into Makers

There is a reason why words for creativity and culture come from working on the fertile soil and making things grow. That's why one of our main aims is to reactivate **our cultivation gene**, giving every citizen the power of being a creator and producer. With **Gardens of Nitra**, a series of community gardens will sprout all around Nitra, allowing locals to become shapers of their neighbourhoods. In **Nitra, Dear Nitra\_Rework**, all the voices of Nitra will co-create the new version of our anthem; **Divadelná Nitra\_Polycentricity** will give citizens around the Region power to co-create their own theatre festivals; and in **Torn Apart**, they will witness their family stories as the base for a monumental art installation.

#### Sincerity: Breaking Down and Replanting Healthier

Honesty and authenticity go to the core of our approach. With sincerity, we can break free of the restraints of preconceptions and dogmas. We can **become a self-reflective and critical society** that doesn't believe in "magical" solutions but in systematic and strategic processes based on constant reevaluation of our present status and thoughtful reflection on our past. Our flagship

**Nitra: Lost. Possible. Future.** digs deep into ourselves – pains and prides of the past, dreamful possibilities and better-or-worse visions for the future. **What Would The Brothers Say?** will see untouchable legends come down from their pedestals; and in **We/Us** all of us will be confronted with the bigger picture of our society.

#### Synthesis: Cross-Pollination All the Way!

How about another piece of agricultural know-how we want to translate into culture and arts: *One of the results of cross-pollination is the introduction of new variations which are advantageous from an evolutionary point of view.* We want Nitra 2026 and onwards to be an open-source synergic space, inspiring natural sharing of know-how and **initiating cooperation** between various currently disconnected cultural actors or areas traditionally not associated with culture and arts. As a result, many of our projects' interdisciplinary nature blends together diverse cultural and social fields: **Fields of Multiculture** will bring together scientists, artists and local farmers; **DiggIt** will see archeologists and game developers cooperate; while folk music and electronic music will fruitfully clash in **Re-folk**.

#### Ubiquity: The Art of Boundlessness

The ongoing pandemic's impact on the arts and culture sector almost broke it to pieces. When they fall into place again, they have to do so in a different order. One that is more resilient. By making culture boundless, we will take it where it belongs – to people. Our strategy is to recreate Nitra into a vibrant space that reveals culture far-and-wide. In public spaces, natural environments, even our own pockets. By breaking these barriers, we will contribute to Nitra becoming a happier and healthier society whilst transforming its arts and cultural scene into a more resilient one. Teatro Tatro's magical balloon in

**The Theatronauts** will land in places where stories are rarely told; **The Fields of Multiculture** will recreate crop fields into gigantic land art pieces, and housing estates, senior homes' front yards or natural environments will become stages in **The View From The Cheap Seats** or **Wandering for Miracles**.

The pandemic also pointed out **the vast gaps in our "digital thinking"** in relation to culture. That's why each of our programme lines includes a project conceived almost solely for the digital world and most of the projects have digital outputs woven into them.

#### Edginess: Curious, Unexpected and Groundbreaking

Edginess is not only about bringing in and presenting cutting-edge and experimental art forms. We perceive it as a way of thinking – even about seemingly mundane things and activities. **Challenging our traditional perception** of what art is, and what it isn't, will transform our society into a more creative one that finds and enjoys art in the most unexpected places and situations. Is fermenting or upcycling your old clothes an art? We believe so and if you don't, **The Self-Preservation** and **Tired Attires** will prove you otherwise! Also, **Hlaholica Neue** will show you ways you never thought of the way we write and seemingly ordinary traditional inspirations will help design innovative children playgrounds in **Play Out!**

**With our artistic vision and strategy we try to stay as close as possible to Nitrančans' concerns and issues that we experience in our daily lives in order to engage the interest of our local and regional citizens. However, all of the principles and the connected themes are relevant European issues that deserve to be tackled with an enjoyable and entertaining programme that offers something for all tastes.**

## Q6

### Outline and structure of the Breaking Point cultural programme

The Nitra 2026 programme is structured into **3 Breaks** as our programme lines: **Break the Cycle, Break the Silence and Break the Ground.** Each Break presents cultural and artistic projects not only as a reflection of the most pressing

challenges Nitra and many of its European counterparts face, but as a creative and engaging way of tackling them head-on. Looking for answers to them. Or at least, as a way of starting important conversations.

The presented programme accounts for around 60% of the programme we envisage taking place in 2026 and its cumulative budget amounts to 9.9 m euros. We have reserved 5.7 m euros of the overall programming budget for opening and closing ceremonies and projects to be added in 2022–2025 (more in Q7). All partners listed under the projects are confirmed unless stated otherwise (tbc).

# Break the Cycle

The Mother of Slovak cities. The thousand-year-old city on seven hills. We've grown up with all of this in mind – a source of sometimes unhealthy honour to some but also a reason to dismiss the old and praise the new and shiny as more valuable for the others. We need to find the balance between the two. So let's break the cycle of insisting on one or the other extreme.

The projects of this Break are about a genuine and sober look towards our past heritage and present state that will hopefully result in more sure-footed stepping ahead to a less backward-looking and more inclusive future of shaping a true European identity.

**Keywords:** memory, self-perception, self-reflection, re:members, identity, past, present, authenticity, honesty, big history, small history

## Nitra: Lost. Possible. Future.

FLAGSHIP

#past #whatif #future #fluidity #mixedreality  
#blending #art #science #visions #interactive  
#intersocial #intermedia #audience development

The era of hastiness and individualism narrows our view of the world around us to our own self-contained and often egoistic and unempathetic vision of it. The context and our place in the bigger picture of the flow of time is getting lost. **Nitra: Lost. Possible. Future.** is an ambitious interdisciplinary project that widens the aperture. Standing on the verge of reality, fiction and prediction, it deals with the fluid identity of Nitra and its people, with its main aim to look at and to start an interactive discussion about who we were, could have been and possibly are going to be – as individuals, families or communities.

The project, led and coordinated by the **Slovak art curator and artist Zuzana Novotová Godálová**, will take place throughout the whole ECoC year and across the whole region. It will be accompanied by site-specific installations, performances, film screenings, mixed-reality experiences, talks, artistic residencies and an online catalogue. In order to make it a comprehensive experience we will create tools, digital and offline – like (self-)guided tours, audio guides and maps to allow visitors to experience all parts of the project.

**Our Lost, Possible and Future stories will be unveiled in three chapters:**

### Nitra: Lost.

In the past two centuries, Nitra has endured five different regimes – each with different values and mindsets. Sometimes building on each other but often trying to start anew. **Nitra: Lost.** reveals the layers of our heritage forgotten in this process.

### Torn Apart

Families and friends torn from each other. People torn from the land they called home. Beneš Decrees are among the most controversial laws in our history that have resulted in thousands of Germans and Hungarians losing their Czechoslovak citizenship and property after WW2. **Japanese artist Chiharu Shiota will create a permanent installation responding to this tabooed history.** She will invite people whose families had been affected by the decrees to send her letters with their personal stories or old found letters which will serve as the basis of the installation.

**Leader:** Kunsthalle Bratislava (SK)

**Partners / Artists:** Chiharu Shiota (JP), Deutsches Kulturforum östliches Europa (DE), Nitra Gallery (SK), Nástupište 1–12 (SK), Agrokomplex (SK)

**Duration:** throughout 2026 (preparation / installation 2025)

**Estimated budget:** 200,000 €

### The Stolpersteine 2.026

Initiated by the German artist Gunter Demnig in 1992,

The Stolpersteine project aims to commemorate victims of Nazi persecutions all over Europe. In 2026 along with a **Czech-Slovak initiative Antikomplex** we will invite European artists to work on an **updated version of Stolpersteine** for Nitra. Performative reactions, site-specific objects, interventions and murals will be placed around Nitra specifically in places where members of a once lively community of almost 13 000 Jews lived.

**Leader:** Antikomplex (SK)

**Partners / Artists:** The Jewish Community of Nitra (SK), Andrej Čierny (SK), Festival Konvergencie (SK), Nano vjs (SK), Jonáš Gruska (SK), BridA (SI), Marta Jonville (FR), Miro Tóth (SK), Tomas Matauko (FR), Anna Tretter (DE), Glowing Bulbs (HU)

**Duration:** Sep 2026–85th Anniversary of the Slovak State Jewish Codex

**Estimated budget:** 80,000 €

### The Lost City

26th March 1945, 8:15 a.m. 42 Russian planes dropped 166 bombs, demolishing or damaging over 700 buildings in the city, changing its character forever. **The Lost City is a continuous co-creation project between VR/AR artists, historians and architects.** Through mixed-reality experiences they will reconstruct the layers of the lost Nitra.

**Leader:** Architect of Nitra Association (SK)

**Partners / Artists:** 3apes studio (SK), The State Archive (SK), Nitra Regional Museum (SK), Nitra Regional Library (SK)

**Duration:** 2022–2026 (continual project)

**Estimated budget:** 150,000 €



re:membered

A living memory project curated by **Czech art historian and curator Kristýna Jiráťová** with the aim to collect stories, photos, homevideos, recipes or customs that have disappeared from modern life. The search will be used to **create a live exhibition and an online catalogue connected to the stories and destinies of individual families from Nitra.** Accompanying events will involve discussions, workshops of cooking and baking old recipes and concerts or film screenings capturing the life of Nitra that used to be.

**Leader:** Kristýna Jiráťová (CZ), art historian and curator

**Partners / Artists:** Post Bellum (SK), Jana Ambrózová (SK), Slovak Memory Institute (SK), The State Archive (SK), Nitra Regional Museum (SK)

**Duration:** exhibition / events Jun–Dec 2026 (preparation Jan–Jun 2026)

**Estimated budget:** 90,000 €



Nitra: Possible.

A single stamp of a municipal employee, a manipulated crowd or an ordinary day of an individual can change the image of our world for decades ahead. **Nitra: Possible** looks at the current state of the urban, political and social environment around us and reimagines it, offering a different perspective on it and highlights the impacts of the decisions we make today on the world of tomorrow.

What if...?

What if Nitra was never bombed in World War II? What if the Iron Curtain never fell? What if Slovakia never joined the European Union? A series of literary and filmmaking workshops – for professionals and school students alike – led by names such as **Laurent Binet**, **Peter Balko** and **Michal Hvorecký** in cooperation with local historians will result in a series of alternate history works that will **envisage Nitra, Slovakia and Europe that could have been – if some of its past had played out slightly differently.**

**Leader:** Nitra 2026 Association (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Laurent Binet (FR), Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava – Film and TV Faculty (SK), Film and TV School of Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (CZ), Goethe Institute (DE), Michal Hvorecký (SK), Peter Balko (SK), Nitra Regional Library (SK), local art schools  
**Duration:** Jan–Apr 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 80,000 €

East of Eden?

The destructive collective ideologies of the 20th century and the post-transformation individualism has left Eastern European societies distrustful of grander visions for the future. Probably nowhere is it more obvious than in the state of our urban environments that have been maintained in their status quos for decades. But while we enviously look up to the West, often paralyzed or trying to replicate their methods, we seldom think of how the post-socialist urban structures can organically grow into something that stands on its own.

**East of Eden?** led by **Architects of Nitra Association** unites international **artists, urbanists and architects** to bring **new possibilities, react and rethink the urban narrative of contemporary Eastern European cities** along with local citizens, mostly those who's going to inhabit the Nitra of tomorrow – our students and pupils. How about a sound gallery in an unused space between two housing blocks or a busy street reimagined into a colourful playground?

**Leader:** Architects of Nitra Association (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Euroarch (SK), Milota Sidorová (SK), MindSpace (HU), Osamu Okamura (CZ), Future Architecture Platform (EU), Michaela Pixová (CZ), Pavel Karous (CZ)  
**Duration:** May–Sep 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 150,000 €

Past Continuous

“Our present is more influenced by the past than the future!” Curated by **Ukrainian curator Kateryna**

**Filiuk**, the Past Continuous is a **multidisciplinary exhibition revolving around political memory**, a powerful tool that involves political interest and helps groups, communities and nations to form a collective identity based on one-sided historical narratives. The exhibition presents contemporary authors whose works respond to the collected collective memory, political manipulations, distorted memory, important historical events and their real, possible and imaginable impacts on the present.

**Leader:** Past / Future / Art Cultural Memory Platform (UA)  
**Partners / Artists:** Kateryna Filiuk (UA), Nikita Kadan (UA), Eva Frapiccini (IT), Jelena Jureša (RS), Renato Leotta (IT), Kristina Benjocki (RS), Bilal Bahir (IQ), Vlad Nancà (RO), Andrii Rachinskyi (UA), Daniil Revkovskiy (UA), Nitra Gallery (SK), Platform1 – 12 (SK)  
**Duration:** Oct–Dec 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 120,000 €

Nitra: Future.

The technological advancements, the ecological crisis, the migrants’ influx... the world we live in is changing quicker than ever. **Nitra: Future.** looks towards the future and offers a glimpse to the possible world of tomorrow. Apart from invited artists and scientists, Future. will closely collaborate with Nitranchans of tomorrow: our preschoolers, pupils, teens and university students. Together they will imagine various scenarios of our future: realistic, utopian, dystopian or maybe even the one most unimaginable – where there’s no Nitra at all.

The environmental part of this chapter will be a digital art project **Nitra: Future\_climate** mentioned in the Break the Ground programme line.



Futur.eu

As Europe heads deeper into the unknowns of the 21st century, previously unheard dilemmas spur in myriads. We will invite **scientists, climatologists, sociologists, futurists, philosophers, visual artists, writers, AI and IT experts for a three-day conference accompanied by an eponymous art exhibit.** From digital ethics, bioethics and space ethics through cyberterrorism to growing social inequalities, the experts will meet

to think together about healthy solutions for the evermore complicated Europe of tomorrow.

**Leader:** Creative Centre Nitra (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Platform1 – 12 (SK), Kempelen Institute of Intelligent Technologies (SK), Arts at CERN (INTL), Junichi Oguro (JP), Uschi Reiter (AT), Dave Greber (US), San Yi-Jou (TW), Vela Oma (MX), Department of Astronomy, Physics of the Earth and Meteorology, Comenius University in Bratislava (SK), Mária Bielíková (SK), Roman Nagy (SK), Dávid Koronczi (SK), Peter Vaník (SK), Matej Poliaček (SK), Michaela Brchnelová (SK), Juraj Podroužek (SK), Slovak Agricultural University in Nitra (SK), AgroBioTech (SK), inovato (SK), Tartu 2024 (EE), Nova Gorica 2025 (SI)  
**Duration:** Oct 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 130,000 €

A Case for Crafts

Delicate embroidery, glass paintings, leather handbags or hats made of corn husk. These are the techniques and products that Nitra region was famous for in the times of our grandparents. Sadly, they are now endangered, victims of a fast-paced age, which rendered the time-consuming hand-made skills too slow to adapt. How to make them relevant again?

After a thorough field research with **The Centre for Folk Art Production** we'll join forces with **Slovak Design Center to rediscover these traditions for the future.** Contemporary international designers, artists and artisans will take **artistic residences and public workshops to make craft-inspired designs** right in the cradles of each skill – like the stone dwellings of Brhlovce. These activities will culminate in an international competition **Rings on the Water** which will search for the balance between traditional and contemporary accessible to a broader range of makers, including high school and college students or hobby creators.

**Leader:** ÚLUV – The Centre for Folk Art Production (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Creative Centre Nitra (SK), Slovak Design Centre (SK), Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava (SK), OZ Nový Dvor (SK), Regional Centre for Amateur Culture in Nitra (SK), Handicraft Chamber of Ukraine (UA), Georgian Arts and Culture Center (GE), Fundesarte (ES), Craft Council Nederland (NL), Artex (IT), World Crafts Council Europe (EU)  
**Duration:** 2024 – 2025 (research), Aug–Oct 2026 (activities)  
**Estimated budget:** 170,000 €

We'll Be What We'll Eat

Food is an eminently cultural issue – and Nitra should know best, as it is regarded as the agricultural capital of Slovakia. But how will we and the whole Europe cope with the challenges of the future? What can we learn about food techniques from the past? What will we eat and how will it change us as a society? **We'll Be What We'll Eat** is about **connecting artists, farmers and cultural actors who are committed to the future of sustainable food** through the agricultural and cooking workshops, participatory banquets and intercultural exchanges linked to the culture of soil, terroir and food.

**Leader:** Hidepark (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Project COAL (FR), Table and Territory (FR), ArtMill (CZ), id22 (DE), AgroBioTech (SK), Slovak Agricultural Museum in Nitra (SK)  
**Duration:** Mar–Jun, Aug–Oct 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 80,000 €



The Alley of Unsung Heroes

#sustainableheroes #compostableheroes

Who and what deserves a statue? And do they need to be put up? Probably, yes – but they don’t have to be eternal. **The Alley of Unsung Heroes** is our contribution to the ongoing heated debate on the reevaluation of history, which involves devaluing statues of important historical figures and idols all over the world. The project curated by **Slovak-Lebanese art curator Omar Mirza consists of sculptures, installations, objects and interventions in non-traditional forms of contemporary visual art** which overlaps into performative art, literature, discussions or film projections placed in an outdoor space of **Nitra City Park**. Contemporary European or local heroes – may it be the latest Nobel Prize Winner or a local nurse – will be depicted in various art forms: made of local beeswax, ice, decomposable plastic, mushrooms and plants, sound, light, words of poetry, films or visible only in mixed reality. Transience and ambivalence will be present not only in the material level of the works and interventions, but also in their content and ideological framework. Who is a hero? When and how does someone become one? Is he for life? And who said that heroes have to be just people?

Heroes of the Youth

In 2025, we will organise a “warm-up” project, in which selected **students of art universities from Central Europe will participate in the form of a symposium.** Students will get to meet, exchange knowledge, compare their work and the approaches of their respective alma maters. Showcasing the hottest trends in visual art but also asking questions such as – who or what do the young idolise and follow? And who or what should they?

**Leader:** Omar Mirza (SK/LB), curator  
**Partners / Artists:** Kulturdrogerie (AT), Scenocosme (FR), Lise Autogena & Joshua Portway (DK/UK), Bahia Shehab (LB), Zaq Landsberg (US), Academy of Fine Arts in Prague (CZ), University of Applied Arts in Vienna (AT), Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest (HU), University of Fine Arts in Poznań (PL), Alexandra Salmela (SK/FI), Martin Piaček (SK), Public Pedestal (SK), Almostar (SK), Technical University in Košice (SK), Faculty of Fine Arts of the Academy of Arts in Banská Bystrica (SK), Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava (SK), Novi Sad 2022 (RS)  
**Duration:** Jul–Aug 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 130,000 €





## What Would The Brothers Say?

#brocult #broculture #comeback #mythbusting  
#soberingup #audiencedevelopment

St. Cyril and Methodius. The Apostles of Slavs. The Patrons of Europe. The two brothers whose impact culturally connects several nations across Central and Eastern Europe. We are taught of their mission of enlightening minds, helping the isolated, crossing differences. Revered and loved, their mythical presence is so strongly embedded in our identity that questioning it often equals heresy. But what do we really know of them? And what do we want others to know of them? **Aren't they ultimately – as myths usually are – just empty vessels we fill what we want with to reach our goals?**

**What Would The Brothers Say?** is a means of looking past the Brothers' halos and breaking the gap between their myth and its ideological (ab)use throughout past centuries. Narrated by the Brothers themselves, **historians and performance artists join forces to create a five-act critical piece** that will put them in five different historical contexts in which their legend was manipulated to serve the "bigger" purpose – from the 19th century Slovak National Revival through the Nazi puppet Slovak State and the Communist Czechoslovakia to the contemporary national-conservative movement.

**The New Theatre** along with the historians and their international partners envisions the **performance as "a critical pilgrimage through the centuries"**, using historical site-specific backgrounds as environments for each act. They also plan to create the performance to work in different settings in other countries where the Brother's myth was used to shape the course of history – for example Plovdiv in Bulgaria. The premiere in Nitra in 2026 will be digitised in a form of online video series.

**Leader:** New Theatre (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Jakub Nvota (SK), Szilárd Borárosz (HU), Matija Solce (SI), Agnieszka Oklak (PL), Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra – Department of History (SK), Slovak Academy of Sciences (SK), Plovdiv 2019 (BG), Elisabeth Kostova Foundation (BG)  
**Duration:** Jun–Jul 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 90,000 €

## The Theatronauts

#cultureintheair #cultureeverywhere #magicalrealism  
#nomadictheatre #theatrefromabove

Bring theatre back to the people! **Teatro Tatro is an independent wandering theatre troupe** led by well-known director **Ondrej Spišák** with a vast international work experience. During the summer of 2026, echoing magical realism and the tradition of nomadic theatrefolk, **they will bring theatre to the hidden corners of Nitra Region that haven't experienced theatre performances in ages. But how? In a... balloon!** Yes, its ensemble will become aeronauts, or better – theatronauts – similar to those who once flew in balloons or zeppelins, discovering new territories.

Where will they land? What stories will they tell? Not even they know – the magical hot air vessel will land in unexpected parts of the region – the smallest villages, housing estates in the cities' suburbs or even in the parking lots of industrial parks to bring some fun for workers during their work-breaks. Their tour will be digitally transmitted directly from what is happening in the balloon to connect them to the spectators – the earthlings down below. The ground support will be provided by several other **European nomadic theatres or new circus troupes** that will embark on a tour of their (and our) lifetimes.

**Leader:** Teatro Tatro (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** The Forman Brother's Theatre (CZ), Baltic Nordic Circus Network (LT/LV/EE), Circostrada (EU), Caravan Circus Network (EU), Szilárd Boráros (HU), Kreativni Pogon (RS), Ludovico (RS)  
**Duration:** Jun–Sep 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 140,000 €

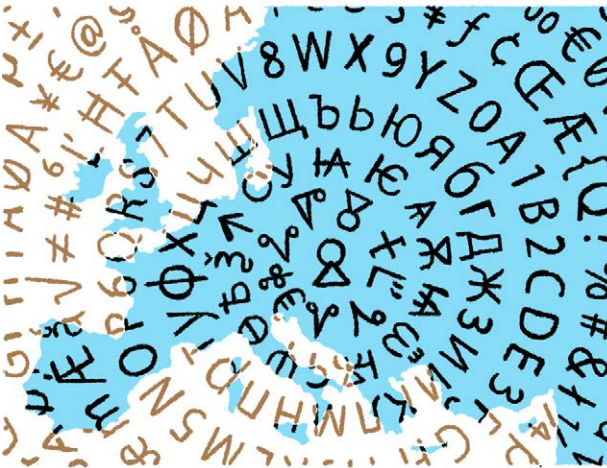
## Re-folk

#contemporaryfolklore #makefolklorecoolagain  
#generationbridge #inclusiveheritage #outreach

Due to the strong emphasis on traditionality and the various imprints of political and ideological narratives, it is easy to feel as if the folklore music is disconnected from the world we live in. On the other side of the spectrum is electronic music, which seemingly has all of what folk music doesn't. Based on the technological advancements of the late 20th century it represents the ideals of counter-culture, inclusivity and progress. The aim of **Re-folk** is to bring these mutually distant worlds together and **translate folklore music and bring it closer to new generations**, by merging it not only with musical tropes of electronic music, but also with the whole cultural context – its specific social and political attributes, its presentation and the way it is consumed. In its initial stage **Re-folk** works as an online hub of the folklore heritage of Nitra region, put together by ethnomusicologists from the **Department of Ethnology and Folkloristics at the University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra**, musicians and content curators. The content will be available as an open source material for anyone to work with. Together with international partners Re-folk selects 4-5 artists for an intensive residency held at Nitra, where they

work on their proposals, reflecting the project's topics. They will spend their stay in a special location where they live and work while their work will be presented to a live audience at the end of their stay.

**Leader:** Jonáš Verešpej (SK), electronic music curator and cultural worker  
**Partners / Artists:** Joseph Grim Feinberg (US), Oopus (EE), Mari Kalkun (EE), Terraforma festival (IT), Het HEM (NL), Gravity – Network of Electronic Music Venues (EU), Shape Platform (SK), Kunsthalle Bratislava (SK), Nová Cvernovka (SK), Lala Slovak Music Export (SK), LOM (SK), Department of Ethnology and Folkloristics, University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra (SK), Jana Ambrózová (SK), Marián Jarek (SK), International Academic Folk Group Festival Nitra (SK), Slovak Bagpipers Guild (SK), local folk music groups (SK)  
**Duration:** Mar–May 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 90,000 €



## Hlaholica Neue

#typography #glagoliticscript #writethefuture  
#typedesign #identity

They are everywhere around us – **means of communicating, marking, learning, preserving information**. Nitra has an important place in European history of letters and symbols – it's here where Cyril and Methodius brought the first Glagolitic alphabet and have set a foundation that has literally started to write the history in Slavic lands. But although we write and text more than ever, we're often oblivious to the functionality and artfulness of the discipline behind it all. Typography.

**Lead by Typogaráž**, an alternative space for contemporary type design, **graphic design studio Andrej & Andrej** and **Palo Bálik, a renowned designer and typography theorist**, the project **Hlaholica Neue presents the past, present and future purpose of typography** in the development of European civilisation. A series of events will fill the gap in public knowledge about writing systems, its creation and development, its place and importance in the daily life of not only designers. From guerilla rewriting of amateur graffiti into professional type designs through developing new and updated Glagolitic script to international conference and experimental workshops organised in partnership with **Peter Biľak, author of renowned Dutch type-foundry Typotheque** and pedagogues from **Swiss Écal University**, we will secure the future of type design. A new section dedicated to books designed

by Slovak typographers with interactive elements to inspire the next generation of font designers will be set in **Nitra Regional Library**.

**Hlaholica Neue will be accompanied by an eponymous showcase** curated by **Zuzana Husárová**, a researcher and author of electronic literature of Angewandte University of Applied Arts in Vienna, where international artists will draw from the original Glagolitic script that would form a linguistic, visual and auditory basis for various forms of textual projects, presenting historical documents but also various texts about contemporary identity. The project would also delve into xenowriting: posthuman recording mechanisms and AI in textuality. Several modes of writing would be presented: written text, projected and kinetic text, virtual schemes and imaginary fields of textual production.

**Leaders:** Typogaráž (SK), Andrej & Andrej (SK), Zuzana Husárová (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Palo Bálik (SK), Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava – Studio Typolab (SK), By Design Conference (SK), Typotheque (NL), Écal (CH), Type 01 (UK), UMPRUM – Studio of Type Design and Typography (CZ), Felipe Cussen (CL), Tomomi Adachi (JP), Jörg Piringer (AT), Eduard Escoffet (ES), Peter Gonda (CZ), Martin Bakero (CL), Katarína Gatialová (SK)  
**Duration:** Oct–Dec 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 120,000 €

## Diggit

#readthepast #retellstory #remakehistory #interactive  
#intersection

In 2026 something extraordinary will happen. The box containing archeological heritage will be opened, releasing the worlds of long gone stories and artifacts. A rogue team of **artists, animators, video-game designers and intermedia creatives will be called to join forces with historians and archaeologists from Slovak Academy of Sciences** to uncover the oldest secrets of Nitra region and try to answer the eternal questions by looking into our past – did our ancestors live in harmony with nature as much as we often think? What about gender roles? How did they solve ethnic conflicts?

The focal point of Diggit is to research and rediscover our past by **blending the knowledge of historians and archeologists with the unhinged creativity of today's content creators**, who will make it enjoyable to a broader public – the outcomes consisting of video games, digital installations and new-media experiences will be presented digitally or right on the selected archaeological locations in the Nitra region, including Gymeš castle, cultural heritage site of Zámeček, or the fresh addition to UNESCO list – the Roman Empire fortification in Iža, Komárno.

**Leaders:** Nitra 2026 Association (SK), Creative Centre Nitra (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Archeological Department of Slovak Academy of Sciences (SK), Slovak Game Developers Association (SK), Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava – Intermedia and Multimedia (SK), International Animation Festival Fest Anča (SK), Slovak Design Centre (SK), Matera 2019 (IT), Artex (IT)  
**Duration:** Apr–Jun 2026 research & residencies, Dec 2026 digital launch  
**Estimated budget:** 120,000 €



Museum of Parallel Culture

NR26.DIGITAL

#ironcurtain #rebels #underdogs #forbidden  
#subculture #easternbloc #digitalfirst

1983, somewhere East of the Iron Curtain. Morning. A pimpled adolescent in a self-made Jethro Tull t-shirt impatiently waits by the window. A postman appears and drops a brown parcel in the letter box. The boy waits until his steps fade and runs for the parcel as if his life depended on it. Back inside he tears the wrapping paper to reveal an unmarked VHS which he puts it into a smuggled recorder. The notorious yellow crawl appears. “A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...”

From the 1950s to 1980s, the European cultural universe was seemingly split into two worlds. The West – with its artistic freedom and a galore of subcultures, The East – with the creative forces bound by official dogmas and ideologies. But was it really that divided and separate? Nitra’s newly established virtual **Museum of Parallel Culture will present a fascinating but almost forgotten era of the Eastern cultural rebels and mavericks** who had connected Europe in the second half of the 20th century. While the officially sanctioned socialist culture was happening in broad daylight, the other, the “decadent” one was living in the shadows, in garages, pubs, black markets or through secret letter clubs. From X-ray vinyl bootlegging, amateur dubbing culture of Western blockbusters to electrical engineers building satellites from garbage can tops to get prohibited Austrian TV signals – the Museum’s peculiar online exhibition will showcase a fascinating part of our history and the resilience of culture.

Museum will present its contents through an online gallery, its own podcast, blogs, documentary series, interactive games, and an open-source library for local citizens who were a part of this phenomenon. In 2026, we will organise a series of live presentations, film screenings and pop-up exhibits from our own **The Bus Museum of a Parallel Culture**, that will present this phenomenon in the Western parts of Europe where it’s been rarely heard of. A special room dedicated to the artifacts of this era with a permanent exhibit will be installed in the **Nitra Regional Museum** from 2027 onwards. Through an international open call for dramatists and podcast creators in cooperation with **Slovak National Radio** called **The Calls From Behind the Wall** a series of drama podcasts based on the stories of emigrant families will be created to be broadcast to the world through major Slovak media and in 7 European cities through reinstalled telephone boxes.

**Leaders:** Juraj Malíček (SK), pop culture theorist and pedagogue, Nitra Regional Museum (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** X-Ray Audio (UK), Communist Consumer Museum (RO), Chemnitz 2025 (DE), Pochen Biennale (DE), Václav Havel Library (CZ), Platform of European Memory and Conscience (EU), University of Constantine the Philosopher (SK), Slovak Design Centre (SK), Slovak Nation’s Memory Institute (SK), Slovak National Radio (SK), Timisoara 2023 (RO), Tartu 2024 (EE)  
**Duration:** launch in Jan 2026 (preparation 2025)  
**Estimated budget:** 200,000 €

Survivors?!

MADE IN NR

#blackholes #industrialheritage #revisit #restart  
#replay #recover #reconnect #audiencedevelopment

The rusty objects and machines of the era of our grand-parents in an **almost forgotten Slovak Agricultural Museum in Nitra. The crumbling mills on the river Žitava. The abandoned sugar factory in Šurany.** This is only a part of the testimony of the region’s famous agricultural heritage that survived wars and nationalisation but not the post-communist transformation or well-intentioned but too ambitious European regulations. The last chance to save them is to reuse them. In our case, through art.

Co-production projects as the result of special residencies will bring attention to the forgotten technical monuments and all kinds of intangible agrarian heritage. Residences for performative, visual and multimedia artists, researchers and digital artists from Slovakia and abroad will work by the method of field research, i.e. participatory outputs in the villages. We are interested in ethnographic-anthropological genres, oral history, digitalisation, immersive theatre, progressive visual and multidisciplinary art forms. Our intent is to combine various traditional and progressive approaches. **At the end of the residencies, 4 main outputs will be presented consisting of performative, visual and multidisciplinary works on the topic of agricultural cultural memory:**

The Rite of Spring & The Harvest Festival

Directly in the beautiful but hugely underused open-air spaces of Slovak Agricultural Museum, **French choreographer and artist Marie Gourdain** will create two music and dance performances: **The Rite of Spring and The Harvest Festival** inspired by the two most important moments in a farmer’s year. The project will be acted by contemporary dancers from Europe and amateurs from the traditional **Nitra folk music ensembles Zobor and Ponitran.** With cooperation of **French composer Chapelier Fou** (Louis Warynski), Gourdain will create an original music composition as a mix of acoustic instruments using the museum’s objects and electronic music tools. An artwork by **German artist Anneli Ketterer** will complement the project.

**Leader:** Marie Gourdain (FR), choreographer & artist  
**Partners / Artists:** Chapelier Fou (FR), Anneli Ketterer (DE), Tanec Praha (CZ), Aerowaves (EU) – tbc, Slovak Agricultural Museum in Nitra (SK), Department of Ethnology and Folklore at Constantine the Philosopher University (SK), Folk ensembles Zobor and Ponitran (SK)  
**Duration:** Mar–May 2026 (The Rite of Spring), Aug–Oct 2026 (The Harvest Festival)  
**Estimated budget:** 80,000 €

The Stillwater Currents

In the past, there were almost 40 mills on the Žitava river alone. Human interventions in watercourses and the water pollution have multiplied an irreversible catastrophe – the mills have lost the most important thing, water propulsion. **In 2026, 4 mills will find new currents in**

**the form of sound and light.** World-renowned European light and sound designers, performative and visual artists will create various works here during creative residencies: lighting installations, video mapping and original sound compositions, or live performances showing what it was like when their mill wheels spun.

**Leader:** Tomáš Morávek (CZ)  
**Partners / Artists:** Katarína Ďuricová (SK), Kollárovo Milling Museum (SK), Luca Puverta and mammasONica (IT), MimoArt Company (FI), Nano vjs (SK), Jihočeské divadlo (CZ), Jochem Baelus and Ragtag vzw (BE), Theatermachine (NL), Signal Festival (CZ), The Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (CZ), Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava (SK), Academy of Arts in Banská Bystrica (SK)  
**Duration:** Aug–Oct 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 160,000 €



Play Out!

**The best way to preserve the cultural heritage for future generations is through play!** **Judit Böroc and Bence György Pálinskás, a young independent artistic duo from Hungary,** will return to children’s games connected with objects representing the agricultural heritage during an 8-week residency in the Nitra region. Working with local children, craftspeople and ethnologists they will use machines, machine parts, work clothes, raw materials – products of the region’s agricultural heritage – to **design 4 unique playgrounds around the Nitra Region.**

**Leader:** Judit Böroc and Bence György Pálinskás (HU)  
**Partners / Artists:** Department of Ethnology and Folklore at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (SK), Department of Ethnology UCM in Trnava (SK) – TBC, Department of Institute of Ethnology – Slovak Academy of Sciences (SK)  
**Duration:** Mar–April 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 80,000 €

Refined Solution

**The largest sugar factory in Central Europe, an industrial jewel that defined life in the region.** These are just a few of the attributes left that are associated with the sugar factory in Šurany. It brought white refined sugar to the world market through exhibitions in Paris and Vienna, and it even ascended to the Himalayas together with the first Czechoslovak expedition. Despite its undeniable historical qualities, the **Slovak performative collective Odivo** with artist **Juraj Poliak** and puppet maker **Ivan Martinka** along with the members

of a vivid local biker scene will choose a different path. One that maps the objective in a subjective way. Refining the narrative of the place through oral history collections and urbexing, they will present a sensitive, **archeological performance of individual fragments,** from which the spectator can compile their own image. How many memories can we preserve, cook and how many will be dissolved in time? How will they taste? Sweet, bittersweet or sour?

**Leader:** Odivo (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Šurany Museum (SK), Junkride Freestyle Park Šurany (SK), Juraj Poliak (SK), Ivan Martinka (SK), Livia Mendéz Balázsová (SK), Zebastián Méndez Marin (CR), Jazmína Píktorová (SK), Eva Priechková (SK), Silvia Svitekova (SK), Viktor Černický (SK)  
**Duration:** Jun–Aug 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 40,000 €

(me)dentify – (EU)dentify

MADE IN NR

#identitycrisis #eastandwest #bridgingeurope

In 2026 fewer Europeans will remember the totalitarianism and economic turmoils of the 1980s and 90s. Far more will identify our political and economic failures and successes with the era when we were a part of the EU. **We want to know how our identity has changed compared to previous generations.**

Examining the process of identification from the individual to the social and vice versa will produce outputs that will give us answers to questions about **the mutual heritage of Eastern and Western Europe,** its current transformation and reflection in culture. **(me)dentify – (EU)dentify** is primarily aimed at artists who use innovative methods in their performative work, connect new technologies and traditional methods and confront the possibilities of working in both classical and non-traditional performing spaces. We are interested in the context and critical points that have influenced the identity of individual nations.

**The project will be implemented over 30 months (2025-2027) and will consist of several forms of outputs:**  
● International residencies of artistic teams from 7 European countries (3 from Western Europe, 3 from Eastern Europe, 1 from Slovakia) in the Nitra Region and in partners’ countries and 3 meetings in Nitra region  
● 7 performative and cross-genre works from 7 countries (SK, CZ, NL, IT, BE, EE, HR)  
● Presentation of works during the International Festival Divadelná Nitra and other partner institutions and events within Europe  
● Online documentary outputs

**Leader:** Association Divadelná Nitra (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** International Festival of Contemporary Art 4+4 dny v pohybu (CZ), CAMPO (BE), BALTOSCANDAL (EE), Noorderzone Festival (NL), POGON – Zagreb Centre for Independent Culture and Youth (HR), Documentary Film Department Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava (SK), Festival Jeden Svet (SK), Santarcangelo dei Teatri (IT) – tbc  
**Duration:** residencies 2025, premieres Aug–Oct 2026, touring 2027  
**Estimated budget:** 850,000 €



# Break the Silence

The challenges we face as humanity show the cracks in social cohesion. During the most recent one – the Covid-19 pandemic – we were divided not only because of social distancing, but also by the ever-increasing polarisation among us, fueled through fake news and post-truth politics. Can we break the echo chambers we live in and the barriers that hold us in? We think so – through openness to ourselves and to everyone we share common space with. Projects of this Break propose a way out by breaking the silence and reconnecting people through a multi-faceted intersocial and intercultural dialogue.

Keywords: dialogue, inclusion, isolation, mental health, connection, cooperation, speaking up



## International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra '35

FLAGSHIP

### Divadelná Nitra '35

#theatreforall #creativediologue #crossinggenres  
#participatory #resilientart #audiencedevelopment

The biggest theatre festival in Slovakia and one of the biggest in Central Europe has been breaking the silence since 1992. Divadelná Nitra stood on the socio-political and cultural stage in opposition to the abuse of power in the 1990s, as well as the neglect of culture and the relativisation of the values on the break of millennia. Now, its role has to be that of a **spotlight of hope against urgent threats of seemingly impregnable barriers of social division and isolation**.

In 2026, the festival will celebrate its 35th anniversary and it will do so in big style – by breaking out of its traditional proportions and boundaries in length, size and boldness. **In its main programme in September 2026 it will present 20–25 dramatic works divided into 5 sections: European Contemporary, Slovak Showcase, Suomalainen Teatteri, (me)identity – (EU)identity and A Touch From Afar.** An exceptional space for presentation to an international audience will be given to young Slovak creators in the **Slovak Showcase**. **Suomalainen Teatteri** (Finnish showcase) will be created in collaboration with two Finnish partners representing contemporary dance, opera and drama theatre: **Oulu Theatre** and **Tampere Festival**. **European Contemporary** will give a platform to fresh and up-and-coming European talents. In the innovative **A Touch From Afar** section, the latest atypical virtual space productions will be presented. The festival will also present the results of **(me)identity – (EU)identity**, an eponymous residency project connecting 7 artists from Western and Eastern Europe (see further above).

The exchange of information about world theatre with young theatre professionals will be supported by the **V4 @ Theater Critics Residency Plus** platform for young theatre critics from Central and Eastern Europe. In 2026, it will also confront the rest of Europe by

complementing cooperation with Western European theatre critics platforms. Additionally, the festival will provide: activities like artistic interventions in public space, **Agora** that develops public conversation with different communities or **More Than Beauty**, a series of events devoted to the arts ability in dealing with mental health issues. The festival will also hold speed meeting sessions and networking events for both theatre professionals and amateurs in pursuit of searching for borderless theatrical connections. In the post-pandemic era, Divadelná Nitra also has to look for answers regarding the survival of the performing arts. Therefore, in 2022 the **The Point of Rescue Platform** will be set up, which will serve as an exchange of information platform for European and Slovak festivals, centres and stakeholders. An important partner will be Oulu 2026 with their **Hybridise Your Festival** project.

### Divadelná Nitra\_Polycentricity

To reconnect smaller towns and its inhabitants with European stories. To create a dialogue, to inspire, to bridge local with European, professional with amateur. For the first time ever, **Divadelná Nitra** will spread from our two theatre buildings not only to the streets, parks and suburbs of the city but across the whole Nitra Region. By becoming a whole year-round ongoing platform, it will amplify the dialogue with European theatre from its usual confines of highbrow festival bubbles to those who are rarely reflected within it.

### Divadelná Nitra\_Polycentricity is a series of 11 week-end theatre festivals throughout the Nitra Region.

Local active communities will take over the main role in dramaturgy and implementation applying the model of participatory spectator councils, with which the festival has been working since 2018 within the international network **Be SpectACTIVE!**

**11 participatory spectator councils** led by local community managers allow locals to become co-creators of their respective festivals. Together they will set topics important for the local context in advance. Groups of active citizens will develop those in their **dramaturgical selection of 11 works of European contemporary plays**. Discussions, art exhibitions, concerts and other accompanying events will support the public debate on key topics during the weekend festival. Part of the project is a **capacity building programme** for local community managers and activators. The goal is to establish such positions in every city of the Nitra region by 2024.

**Leader:** Divadelná Nitra Association (SK)

**Partners / Artists:** Andrej Bagar Theatre (SK), Karol Spišák Old Theatre (SK), Academy of Performing Arts (SK), Academy of Arts in Banská Bystrica (SK), Theatre Institute Bratislava (SK), Dotyka a spojenia Festival (SK), TINFO (FI), Tampere Theatre Festival (FI), Oulu Theatre (FI), The Finnish Critics' Association (FI), IETM (INTL), Be SpectACTIVE! Network (INTL), AICT/IATC (INTL), Trafó House of Contemporary Arts in Budapest (HU), The Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute (PL), Theatre Union of the Russian Federation (RU), Center for Cultural Projects Azart (MD), Tbilisi Theatre Festival (GE), Les Kurbas Centre For Theatre Arts (UA), OFF Biennale (HU), Generation After (PL), Lviv Academic Dramatic Theatre of Lesia Ukrainka (UA), Oulu 2026 (FI), local art schools and conservatories, independent theatres and cultural institutions, 11 cities in the region  
**Duration:** Sep 2026 – Divadelná Nitra '35; Jan–Aug, Oct–Dec 2026 – Divadelná Nitra\_Polycentricity  
**Estimated budget:** 1,100,000 €

We/Us

#bedifferent #dealwithit #diversity #togetherness  
#audiencedevelopment

Being different often means living in the shadows but also to have a deeper understanding of what it means to be a minority and the challenges of what other minority groups deal with every day. We want to **open this window into the lives of the “others” among us.** Women who face gender inequality, kids realising too soon that their race or ethnicity makes them isolated, people manifesting their gender identity or sexual preference, or people that are deemed too old to contribute to society.

We believe the best medium to bridge the widening gap between us is through art – not only as a therapy for the artists, but also for its viewers and society. **Exhibition project We/Us by the Nitra Gallery** is based on selected works of Slovak and European artists confronting a whole range of frictions, inviting us to a dialogue which encourages an ethos of learning, understanding and tolerance. Important parts of the exhibition project are artist residencies, subversive and provocative interventions in well-used public spaces so that everyone will be exposed to difference and has a chance to deal with it, including institutions working with overlooked minorities like people serving their time in prison or homeless centers, as well as workshops or discussions engaging with the public.

**Leader:** Nitra Gallery (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** 8mička (CZ), Alexandra Pianelli (FR), Zoe Chantre (FR), Bar Altaras (IL), Greg Thomas (UK), Roni Katz (DE), Maciej Bohdanowicz (PL), Karolina Kubik (PL), Nicolas Puyjalon (FR), Darina Alster (CZ), Lenka Kłodová (CZ), Alice Nikitinová (CZ), Radovan Čerevka (SK), Pavlína Fichta Čierna (SK), Žofia Fodorová (SK), Lenka Jakubčáková (SK), Lenka Lukačovičová (SK), Kristián Németh (SK), Ildikó Pálová (SK), Martin Piaček (SK), Emília Rigová (SK)  
**Duration:** throughout 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 140,000 €

Nitra\_diverse

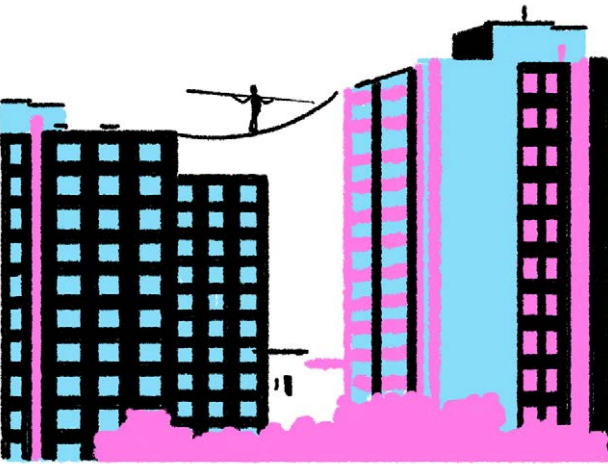
#diversity #visibility #diaspora #meetdifference  
#newperspective #audiencedevelopment

**People of Nitra rarely think of its population as being diverse, yet under the seemingly homogenous appearance lives a great variety. There are over 5000 foreigners living here today,** and many more are on their way to benefit from the city’s economic or cultural wealth. And even though we encounter people from different backgrounds, nations or ethnicities on the streets everyday, various researches show that only every second Slovak thinks they come into direct contact with foreigners. Partly because their presence in public life is often narrowed to cultural diasporas, and partly because people of Nitra aren’t used to experiencing much diversity – so it can be a little harder to break the ice with us.

Maybe we have forgotten about our past, when this town was never home only to Slovaks, but a true European melting pot, with Hungarians, Germans,

Jews and many more national and ethnic minorities. **In Nitra\_diverse we are partnering with Bratislava based M. M. Šimečka Foundation and local institutions or NGOs to increase the visibility of Nitra’s diverse population throughout history until today.** By creating a series of events aimed to reflect and focus on the diversity of our city and its people, including community get-togethers, various city walks led by minority-members or foreigners to let Nitranchans see their city through a different lens, or exhibitions and campaigns in public spaces, we want to celebrate all members of our society, peaking in multi-genre Diversity Festival in fall 2026.

**Leader:** M. M. Šimečka Foundation (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** [fjúžn] festival (SK), ERIAC (EU) – tbc, Jókai Theatre in Komárno (SK), Mareena (SK), Regional Centre for Amateur Culture (SK), Jewish Religious Community in Nitra (SK), Nitra Community Foundation (SK), Comin (SK), Hidepark Nitra (SK)  
**Duration:** May–Oct 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 90,000 €



The View From The Cheap Seats

#accessibleculture #backyardcinema  
#cultureeverywhere #socialdistancing

The best seat is your balcony, the best stage is your frontyard. No parking hassle, no queueing for drinks, and most importantly – you know exactly where an unoccupied restroom is. **The View From The Cheap Seats** is bringing the culture back home – quite literally, as we are planning to **bring different art forms to the housing estates, suburban villages, nursing homes or hospital atriums, changing them into temporary cultural venues.** No particular theme, just some new circus, movie nights, buskers, stand-up comedians, and fun site-specific interventions that breaks the routine. Sometimes it can be culture that comes to people, and not the other way around. So grab some snacks, move a chair, sit back and enjoy.

**Leader:** Nitra 2026 Association (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Anna Tudos (HU), Maria&Henri (SE/UK), Jan Mocek (CZ), Silné Reči (SK), Ésacto'Lido (FR), Cirk La Putyka (CZ), Hidepark Nitra (SK), Platform 1–12 (SK), Flaam Festival (SK), Oulu 2026 – Culture Monopoly (FI)  
**Duration:** Jun–Sep 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 100,000 €



Protesta Festival & Conference

#speakup #freespeech #criticalthinking #respublica  
#activesociety #audiencedevelopment

When journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kušnírová were killed in 2018, the very core of our values was shaken. Even more so in Nitra as this is where they both met as young university students. When the whole country spoke up and rallied peacefully in the streets, so did Nitra – in a protest organised by their friends. We see protesting and the ability to speak freely without being threatened as one of the most important signs of free society.

**Protesta Festival celebrates but also critically examines this right with a series of unique events aimed at presenting the idea of protesting and speaking up around the world.** From the French Revolution to protests in Poland – the newly established biennale between Nitra and Bratislava in partnership with Slovakia’s biggest **cultural centre Nová Cvernovka** will present the history of protesting through a series of concerts, a theatre-like protest flash mob and a special focus on students through informal learning with **Trans Europe Halles network.** A special VR installation in the city centre will transport its visitors to famous historical rallies and protests and a participatory exhibition with locals sharing their memories of the Czecho-Slovak Velvet Revolution or recent protests of 2018 will retell the stories of events that have changed the course of our history. Protesta Festival will conclude with a **two-day conference** coordinated by Laco Oravec of Nová Cvernovka, where journalists, media experts, protest organisers and philosophers along with students and youth from around Europe will look at the challenges and dangers that modern democracy and its most important institutions such as free journalism and the right to speak up face in today’s post-factual era.

**Leader:** Nová Cvernovka (SK), Creative Centre Nitra (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Open Space (RU/EE), Trans Europe Halles (EU), Goethe Institute (DE), British Council (UK), People in Need (INTL), IZOLYATSIA (UA), Socially Engaged Art Salon (UK), Cross Attic (CZ), Hyenaz (DE), Artists at Risk (INTL), teatr.doc (RU), Amnesty International (INTL) – tbc  
**Duration:** Feb 2026 (Biennale timeline: 2023, 2025 Nová Cvernovka, 2024 Creative Centre Nitra, 2026 Festival and Conference in Nitra)  
**Estimated budget:** 230,000 €

New (b)Orders

#openborders #lostconnections #meetEurope

The past two years have been the years of creating new borders. The UK has found itself outside the EU, and due to the pandemic, the European Union is struggling to keep its promise of a continent with control-free open borders. The new borders that were created have made cuts into our families, friends and work relationships, and crossing them became unimaginable. But these are not the only borders we must reflect on. Recently we marked the 100th anniversary of the Treaty of Trianon, which resonated strongly in our ethnically diverse region. As a country which still strongly remembers not being a part of the EU, **we want to provide space for presenting art from non-EU countries, mostly the ones we have natural connections with** (the Caucasus, non-EU Balkan and non-EU Soviet countries). Thirty artists from these countries will have the opportunity to present their art based on an open call. This might be an opportunity to reincarnate the letter-writing tradition of the former Czechoslovak and Soviet students from before 1975.

In the co-production project of **Andrej Bagar Theatre and Thalia Szinház**s Košice called TRIANON, these artists will have the opportunity to go back to the document that defined the borders between Hungary, former Czechoslovakia, Austria, Romania and former Yugoslavia. **The two theatres from areas with strong Hungarian minorities will try to (re)define the mutual relationships,** cope with their past and free themselves from emotions based on injustice and loss. They will also offer the opportunity to tackle the theme of nationalism and cultural and national demarcation. The project also incorporates AGORA TRIANON – a discussion forum composed of the creators of the TRIANON play and both Slovak and Hungarian experts in the fields of history, science and research of the themes and impacts of the Treaty of Trianon.

In the **literature project Celemantia – Brigetio**, four pairs of authors from countries that share borders will meet at four literature residencies to create engaging poetry revolving around common national stories that they have different views on. **Because where else will we find a common story together than in literature?** And the public won’t escape this process either – through interventions in public space, in **Cozytown.** **Population: Anyone,** public libraries, bookshops and parks, people will become a part of one common narrative. And those who will stay at home will be able to read the new books and the digital gallery of the project.

**Leaders:** Andrej Bagar Theatre (SK), Thalia Szinházs Košice (SK), Nitra 2026 Association (SK), OZ Literis (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Slavka Cíváňová (SK), Miklós Forgács (SK/HU), Viola Fodor (HU), Katalin Öry (HU), Róbert Lakatos (SK), Bakos Árpád (RS), Plovdiv 2019 (BG), Cári Tibor (RO), Kata Kántor (HU), József Czajlik (SK/HU), Forum Minority Research Institute (SK), Slovak Institute in Budapest (SK), British Council (UK), OZ literis (SK), International Book Festival BRaK (SK), Roman and Ethnographical museum Iža (SK), Pro Castello Comaromiensi (SK), Komárno City (SK)  
**Duration:** May–Jul 2026 (TRIANON 2023–2026, open call 2025)  
**Estimated budget:** 180,000 €





## European Musical Marathon

#music #universallanguage #talkingthroughmusic  
#mylastsongjustwentviral

A universal language of communication that everyone understands? Music! In this ambitious project curated by the local musical hero and versatile musician **Igor Holka, leader of the largest independent drumming orchestra in Slovakia – Campana Batucada**, we will bring together over 200 musicians from all over Europe. Igor, who has years of experience working with integrating marginalised groups through music, envisions the project as a continuous musical improvisation where musicians – professionals, amateurs or even casual bystanders – are taking batons from one another for more than 4 days; switching tempos, genres, moods and volumes, showcasing variety and diversity of European musical world. Swedish jazz sextet handing in their tune to folk ensemble or to local garage rock heroes? What could go wrong?

Partnering with European music schools, experienced local promoters, international music export offices and culture institutes, we believe **this could become a legacy project with Nitra becoming a musical capital of Europe for 100 hours every year**. The marathon will be streamed and saved for later viewing on its own website. Can we make this go viral? We sure think so!

**Leader:** Nitra 2026 Association (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Igor Holka (SK), Campana Batucada (SK), Flaam Festival (SK), Soundczech (CZ), Hungarian Oncoming Tunes (HU), Austrian Music Export (AT), Sharpe Festival (SK), Lala Slovak Music Export (SK), KS Music (SK), Double Head Production (SK), music:LX (LX), Initiative Musik (DE), Piranha Records (DE)  
**Duration:** Aug 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 200,000 €

## The Upper Town Funk

#Nitalives #oldtownisback #meltingpot  
#closethemalls #audiencedevelopment

A part of the biggest castle in the country with a lot of stories to tell. Yet, Nitra's upper town feels gloomy and dead silent for most of the year – filled with parked

cars and its gorgeous courtyards always closed. It's a fairytale place and a scar at the same time, right in the heart of the city that everyone would love to reclaim for real life. **To break this silence, we will join forces with well-known promoters and festival organisers to bring a series of events** to its premises. Curated by Nitra 2026 Association, the series of events will enliven the castle's surroundings with regular film screenings and concerts in the castle moat, night tours, craft markets, a festival of light, historical martial arts performances or live sculptures performed by primary and secondary art school students. In the more quiet times we will use the spiritual and meditative nature of the castle hill to hold therapeutic art workshops.

The premises of **Salesian Centre EFFETA** and the **Diocesan Charity**, a space recently used by Syrian migrants, opens up for the possibility of an **"Open Pasta Kitchen" offering work to marginalised groups**. They will offer you special homemade Nitra pasta – slíže. The Upper Town Funk could become the citizens' kiss to wake up this sleeping urban beauty. So we can all live here happily ever after.

**Leader:** Nitra 2026 Association (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** KS Music (DE), Biela Noc (SK), Hector Agency (SK), Double Head Productions (SK), Flaam festival (SK), New Theatre (SK), Castellum (SK), Kinoklub Tatra (SK), EFFETA (SK), Diocesan Charity (SK), Roman Catholic Diocese of Nitra (SK)  
**Duration:** Apr–Sep 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 500,000 €



## Break The Ice Festival & Sauna on Wheels

#democraticsauna #breaktheice #resilience #icecold  
#brrrrr #audiencedevelopment

**"There's no better place to break the ice between people than freezing water. Everyone's equal when the adrenaline kicks in!"** says Táňa, the always smiling sixty year-old leader of **Zobor Polar Bears**, Nitra's ice cold swimming association.

During the lockdown winter of 2020–2021 thousands of people around Europe looked for much needed endorphins at freezing urban beaches – nervously

stepping into the ice-cold water and discovering health benefits and pure joy of swimming in it. And that's why we want to promote it as much as we can! In 2026, the annual **Polar Bear Festival** in Nitra City Park, a popular event where the cold swimmers from all around Slovakia come to meet, will change into the **Break The Ice Festival** where we will invite local and international swimmers – like those who conquered La Manche – and health specialists to talk about how cold swimming leads to a more harmonious way of life, greater resilience to stress and often to becoming a member of a strong and healthy community.

The festival will be headlined by a two-day workshop by a **Dutch iceman and one of the biggest stars of the world ice-swimming community, Wim Hof**. The additional programme will offer concerts on the stage in the middle of the lake, ice statues sculpted around the park, film screenings about winter swimming and **European Soup-Off** – a cook-off where international teams will showcase the soups that keep their part of Europe warm during long winter days. During the festival we will reveal **Sauna on Wheels** – our own mobile sauna made with cooperation with **Oulu 2026** that will move around Nitra's suburbs and Nitra Region throughout winter so everyone can get the sense of what sauna is about: equality, honesty and fun. After the winter, the sauna will be taken by a film documentary crew to Europe's only **Mobile Sauna Festival in Teuva, Finland** – promoting Nitra 2026, Oulu 2026 and the sauna culture through half the continent.

**Leader:** Zobor Polar Bears (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Wim Hof (NL), Oulu 2026 (FI), Nitra 2026 Association, Tartu 2024 (EE), European Sauna Marathon (EE), IWSA – International Winter Swimming Association (World), regional Slovak ice swimming associations (SK), Mobile Sauna Festival in Teuva (FI) – tbc  
**Duration:** Jan 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 160,000 €



## The Conspiracy Festival

#hoaxes #conspiracies #postfactualsociety  
#thinkandlearn #fightwithfun #audiencedevelopment

Hoaxes, conspiracy theories, urban legends. While they have been a part of our culture for many years, they

made a leap to the mainstream only recently. With the main reason for their unprecedented spreading being weak digital literacy and the fact that there are still a number of social groups throughout Europe who are unable or afraid to reap the benefits of modern society's advancements.

**The Conspiracy Festival led by a Slovak multi-artistic collective JaOnMi CreatureS** will bring this topic to the "real" world – the streets of Nitra, the region and the world. First, a team of scientists, conspiracy debunkers, futurologists, art and theater theorists will prepare a "Conspirator's Handle" based on an **analysis of urban legends and conspiracies, their original roots, as well as local mutations**. Then they will become a basis for the design of material objects – allegories of conspiracies. Each of them designed by renowned artists and scenographic schools from Slovakia and Europe will become a site-specific installation, be it a pavilion with thematic content, float or statue until the end of the festival. Viewers from all over the world will be able to learn from or confront them (and hopefully poke fun at them) through an online satirical gallery. Our ambition is to bring selected objects abroad in live form throughout the 2026–2027. The project develops one of the lines of audience development (Neo-Critical Revolution) focused on Internet literacy, the development of critical thinking and the fight against hoaxes and conspiracies. It includes lectures, discussions, workshops on conspiracies with an expert and creators, chess tournaments for the development of critical thinking and debate events.

**Leader:** JaOnMi CreatureS (SK), Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Living Memory Association (SK), Ján Markoš (SK), Slovak Debate Association (SK), schools in Nitra and Nitra Region (SK), The Association of Seniors of Slovakia (SK), Iuventa (SK), YAADA The Yeats Academy of Arts (IE), The Hungarian University of Fine Arts (HU), JAMU (CZ), Art Academy of Latvia (LV) – tbc, Estonian Academy of Arts (EE) – tbc  
**Duration:** Aug–Sep 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 120,000 €

## Nitra, dear Nitra\_Rework

NR26.DIGITAL

#thisistheanthem #thisisus #createtogether  
#ouridentity #audiencedevelopment

To proudly claim a membership to a tribe. A football team. A city. A nation. Anthems are used to distinguish us as a part of something bigger or others similar to us. But what if they actually gave voice to all the people that make up our society today? Think about it – our local anthem 'Nitra, dear Nitra' is almost 150 years old, reflecting the ideas of the national uprising of the 19th century. But how would it sound if it was made now?

An artistic team led by **British multiinstrumentalist Eddie Stevens** (of Moloko and Róisín Murphy) **will try to come up with the Nitra's anthem rework** – be it a parody, a critical piece, an artifact of the time, or all of the above. The project is meant as a collaborative process with citizens of Nitra spanning



throughout 2026 – partly as an online process, partly live. Articles about the city, annual reports of various institutions, fan chants, memes associated with Nitra, or other documents and pop-cultural elements will form the work’s online basis. For the live part, Eddie and his team will hop into a van and drive around local towns, villages, and farmstead in a one week voyage, recording sounds, stories, voices and filming people.

The resulting rework of the anthem will be presented in the form of an multimedia art installation envisioned by Eddie and a music film by Slovak **director Juraj Johanides**. The piece will also possibly be performed live by local people at Nitra Amphitheatre accompanied by **Mieskuoro Huutajat – The Screaming Men Choir of Oulu**.

**Leader:** Eddie Stevens (UK), music producer  
**Partners / Artists:** Jana Kirschner (SK), Juraj Johanides (SK), Oulu 2026 (FI), The Screaming Men Choir of Oulu (FI)  
**Duration:** Apr–Jun 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 85,000 €



I-isolated

MADE IN NR

#isolation #alonetogether #mentalhealth  
#intergenerationaldialogue #prisonbreak  
#audiencedevelopment

Isolation. One of the words that dominated the entire preparation of our candidacy. Due to the pandemic, individuals, families, and entire regions had to be isolated. Barriers weren’t only imposed, they have formed in our heads. However, there are those among us who are mentally or physically isolated from society not for weeks, but for years, even a lifetime. The pandemic highlighted their isolation even more and brought it to extreme dimensions.

Through various programmes, **we want to fight feelings of loneliness, bring important positive impulses and connect them with the community**. These will be followed by a line of mental well-being workshops for the public. We are also developing a lively and contact-less form in case of a pandemic’s resumption.

A-part

In **A-part** we will actively **involve people who have had to fight some form of isolation** in their lives. People with mental or physical disabilities, seniors or anyone whose life has been affected by a lack of contact with another. An international creative team led by **Roberta Lagros Štěpánková, who is not only an active performer but also a psychotherapist**, will create a joint dance work in a series of workshops through which they will process their own life experiences. We all have a part to play and it’s best played together. The workshops will also include the participation of teachers and students of psychology and psychotherapy from the **University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra, Masaryk University in Brno and CODARTS Rotterdam**, which is currently focusing on new methodological procedures in the field of art therapy.

**Leader:** Roberta Lagros Štěpánková (SK/CZ), performer & psychotherapist  
**Partners / Artists:** CODARTS University for the Arts (NL), ACCAC Global – Accessible Arts & Culture (INTL), Janáček Academy of Performing Arts (CZ), The Studio of Physical Theatre (CZ), The Masaryk University (CZ) University of Constantine the Philosopher (SK), Milan Lukáč (SK), Linda Lukáčová (SK), Mila Haugh (SK), Žaneta Vítová (CZ), Matthieu Legros (FR/CZ), Melanie Venino (DE/FR), Gianna Gruenig (CH), Bettina Neuhaus (NL/DE), Ursula Sabatin (AT)  
**Duration:** Jan–Mar 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 35,000 €

Memory. Cultivated.

According to the statistics, every tenth person over 55 (and every sixth among women) suffers from various forms of dementia. Dementia patients and their caregivers are a part of our community, even if they often live in isolation. Through art, we want to enhance their living conditions and cognitive functions, while overcoming obstacles together and integrating them into the community. Under this project, we will create a mobile interactive space, travelling all over the Nitra region and beyond, where lecturers will **help people regain their memories** through various programmes led by the **Memory Centre in cooperation with National Museums Liverpool**. The project will also incorporate lending art therapy aids for home use, as well as a capacity building programme, which will further open this theme to professional and non-professional caregivers through art therapy training, along with workshops for cultural actors in the field of working with and curating programmes for dementia patients.

**Leader:** Nitra 2026 Association (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** National Museums Liverpool – House of Memories (UK), ACCAC Finland (FI), Hana Polanská Turečková (CZ), Peter Mazalán (SK) Memory Center (SK), ŮLUV – The Centre for Folk Art Production (SK), Senior Homes in Nitra Region (SK), City of Nitra (SK), Nitra Self-Governing Region (SK), Galleries and Museums in Nitra Region (SK)  
**Duration:** Sep–Nov 2026 (preparation 2024 – 2025)  
**Estimated budget:** 80,000 €

Prison Break

The only women’s prison in Slovakia is located in Nitra. Can we help wives and mothers maintain their relationship with partners and children, even though they are isolated from each other? Can we **help ensure**

**that their imprisonment is not a point that breaks their lives** and isolates them forever from the rest of society?

In cooperation with the **director and coordinator of the “Die Werft” project Peter Protič, The Homeless Theatre, the Justizvollzugsanstalt Wiesbaden and the Prison and Judicial Guard Corps** we will develop educational seminars and workshops to **create a strategy for implementation of art therapeutic procedures in Slovak prisons**. Following the capacity building program, participating creators will acquire special skills for creative theatrical work with convicts.

**Leader:** Peter Protič (SK/AT), director of Die Werft project  
**Partners / Artists:** Divadlo bez domova – The Homeless Theatre (SK), Die Werft (DE), Justizvollzugsanstalt Wiesbaden (DE), brut Koproduktionshaus Wien (AT), Světlá nad Sázavou Prison (CZ), ApsArt (RS), Uršula Kovalyk (SK), Patrik Krebs (SK), Madlen Komárová (SK), Prison and Judicial Guard Corps (SK)  
**Duration:** throughout 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 40,000 €



Inter-gen

How to start an **intergenerational dialogue** in a world where the gaps between children, parents and grandparents widens as fast as the speed of the wireless internet connection? **The Karol Spišák Old Theatre in Nitra** decided to look for a solution to this issue. The interactive theatrical productions will be intended primarily for teenagers and their grandparents, but also for everyone who wants to close the gap between generations.

**Leader:** The Karol Spišák Old Theatre (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** The Slovak Theatre in Vojvodina (RS), Elisabeth Kostova Foundation (BG), Plovdiv 2019 (BG), Stále dobří OZ (SK), Association of seniors of Slovakia (SK), local elementary and high schools  
**Duration:** Oct–Dec 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 45,000 €

Outside the Boxes

MADE IN NR

#integration #newminorities #industrialparkgallery  
#foodmakesfriends #audiencedevelopment

The industrial park Nitra-North was finished in 2018 much to the dismay of the locals, definitely

changing the character of the city and its population. An anonymous vast field of grey boxes became a trigger for a new wave of labor migration to the Nitra region and a spark that ignited a clash between “us” and “them”.

“Their” stories remain closed behind the walls of the production halls though. We want to solve the bubbling problem using the experience of **Eleusis 2023** and our partner **Cittadellarte**. **Outside the Boxes project aims at integrating new minorities, activating them and improving life in Nitra by spreading the values of a multicultural society and tolerance**. Within various residences, **we will open and revive the gray zone of the industrial park by collaborating with visual, performative and multidisciplinary artists from different parts of Europe**. The open call through which they will be selected will be carefully coordinated with the help of the company employees directly. During the inter-social creative exchange, artists process the life stories of the workers from Romania, Ukraine, Serbia, the United Kingdom and many others. **The shadows of the industrial zone and the city itself will thus become their gallery**. Various groups of Nitra residents will also be involved in the preparation of the works. The results of their joint work will be presented during special guided tours, in which visitors will get acquainted with the finished works. Part of the results will be installed in the city center.

The general public in Nitra will get acquainted with the lives behind the walls of the area also through a web comic series. In cooperation with **OZ Mareena and Open Pasta Kitchen**, we will provide an integration program **My Home Is Your Home** for smaller groups that will work with a principle of **pop-up folkekok ken kitchens** that presents new cultures by the best friend-making tool – sharing their national meals with locals.

**Leader:** Nitra 2026 Association (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Eleusis 2023 (GR), Cittadellarte (IT), People in Need (INTL), Mareena (SK), Nastja Pertsjonok (EE), ASA-FF e.V. (DE), Jana Svobodová (CZ) – tbc, Nitra Community Foundation (SK), Factories in the Industrial Park Nitra-North (SK)  
**Duration:** Jan–Jun 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 180,000 €



# Break the Ground

We Nitrančans know a thing or two about sustainability – we are natural growers, harvesters, cultivators. The soil runs through our veins. The truth is though that this image is fading away. Can we save it while it's still alive? And can we use its principles in growing... people? Breaking the ground is a means of awakening our cultivation gene and reclaiming our status of active participators, creators and caretakers who live in unison with their surrounding urban and natural environment. The projects of this Break see sustainability – ecological or cultural, participation in creation and cultivation of the human potential as one interconnected topic.

Keywords: cultivation, growing, agri-culture, environment, sustainability, participation, potential



## Gardens of Nitra

FLAGSHIP

#farmtotable #growyourself #cultivationgene  
#healthycommunity #getdirty #soilculture  
#nurturenature #audiencedevelopment

As a society culturally connected to the soil but facing atomisation, isolation and consumerism, in need of more functional public space, yet blessed with perfect natural conditions, we aim to build **5 state-of-the-art community gardens as local neighbourhood centres scattered throughout Nitra**. The Gardens of Nitra will not only enliven our neighbourhoods visually but will mostly serve as organic community hubs offering an inclusive space that stimulates intersocial dialogue. Primary activities will include eco-education or workshops focused on plant care, cooking classes, preservation, up-cycling and creativity. All gardens will be equipped with basic event inventory (stage, audio and light equipment, projector, etc.) for its co-owners to host their own cultural programme with the help of Nitra 2026 Team. Swaps, barbecues, screenings, concerts or markets would form just a part of the programmes that local people can develop.

### Here is how we plan the build up:

In 2021 we already started developing a cohesive plan along with the **Institute of Landscape Architecture** from the **Slovak University of Agriculture**. Through a field research called **Landscape Observatory** and a series of international workshops called **Landscape Democracy Seminar** organised with the **Dutch LE:Notre Institute** and the **German University of Nürtingen-Geislingen**, the local landscape architecture students learnt about various techniques of participative co-design in residential areas right in the two largest housing estates in Nitra – Chrenová and Klokočina. This know-how will be used to fulfil one of the main aims of the project: to create spaces bottom-up with active support from the top. **We are designing the process, not the site.**

In 2022 along with the **Institute**, the **Department of Environment** and **The Head Architect Office in Nitra**, with local community garden pioneers **CUKETA** and cultural centre **Hidepark** we will continue the process

with online questionnaires, door to door campaigns and participatory meetings and discussions in different neighbourhoods interested in having their own garden. In 2023, the faculty will put community garden projects with their specific localities in the curriculum, creating a co-creation platform for students, teachers and garden-hungry residents. In the summer of 2023, we will hold a week-long international workshop with the **European Landscape Architecture Student Association (ELASA)** where this work will be confronted and complemented by landscape architecture students from all over Europe. In 2024 and 2025 the gardens will be implemented, in 2026 already flourishing. The project will culminate in an eponymous festival for European audiences in summer 2026.

**Leader:** Nitra 2026 Association (SK)

**Partners / Artists:** BOKU – University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna – Institute for Landscape Architecture (AT), LE:NOTRE Institute (NL), Forum for the Development of the Gdańsk Agglomeration (PL), University of Nürtingen-Geislingen (DE), Association of Green and Blue Sesvete (HR), Tartu 2024 – Estonian University of Life Sciences (EE), Slovak University of Agriculture (SK), CUKETA (SK), Hidepark (SK), Agrofilm (SK), City of Nitra – Department of Environment (SK)

**Duration:** throughout 2026 (preparation 2022 – 2023, infrastructure 2024 – 2025)

**Estimated budget:** 1,000,000 € (infrastructure included)



## Fields of Multiculture

#landart #horticultureNOTmonoculture #rewild  
#breakthefields #wildart #audiencedevelopment

### Break the monoculture, bring on the multiculture!

Huge single-crop fields not divided by strips of trees or bushes, are exacerbating the effects of global warming, as the water from them evaporates quickly and drains away, making them more prone to erosion. Large monocultures also require more pesticides and offer no shelter for game and birds. Nowhere else in the European Union is this problem more serious than in the Nitra region – the area of our fields averages up to 18 hectares, which is four times the European average!

**Fields of Multiculture** is aiming to point out this critical issue through the prism of visual art. Resident artists from all over Europe in cooperation with researchers from **Slovak University of Agriculture**, local farmers and landowners will **transform several hectare sized**



and rather dull fields into visually interesting and colourful works of large-scale land art. The project will serve as a dispersed natural art gallery around Nitra region. Specific fields that can be seen from various attractive viewpoints – castle ruins, hills or lookout towers – are being selected in 2021, with over 150 hectares already confirmed by their owners to be revised into huge eye-catching art pieces. The project has an ecological and social overlap as well, as a metaphor for one of the greatest European ideas – multiculturalism.

**Leader:** Slovak University of Agriculture – Faculty of Horticulture and Landscape Engineering (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Alexandre Ralston Bau (FR), Earth & Life Institute – Université catholique de Louvain (BE), Benedikt Rejt Gallery (CZ), Tartu 2024 (EE), MaaJaam.ee / Wild Bits (EE), ELAN – European Landart Network (EU), LAND network (EU), Jaroslav Beliš (SK), Michaela Bednářová – puojd (SK), ECO-farm Nitra (SK), Organix Lužianky (SK), LandArt Festival (PL), local farmers and landowners  
**Duration:** Apr–Aug 2026 (preparation 2024–2025)  
**Estimated budget:** 150,000 €



## Take Over The Institutions!

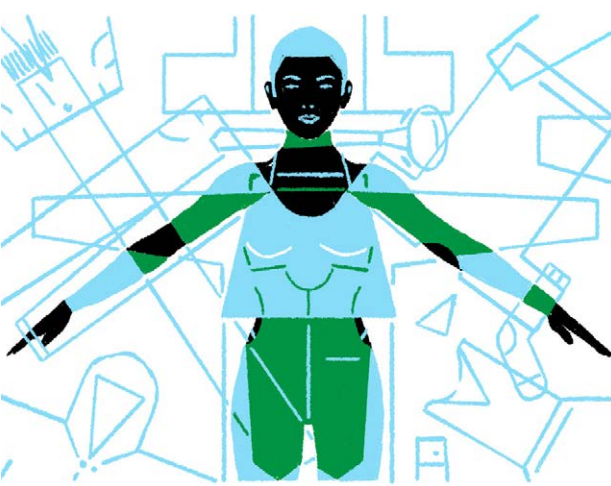
#youth #futureleaders #university #newgrounds  
#audiencedevelopment

“You are terribly slow and old-fashioned and you don’t understand us at all!” the students shout. “You have no idea how it works in real-life, the theory that they teach you is useless!” the people from cultural institutions respond. What to do about it? The students have to become masters!

Throughout 2024 and 2025, Erasmus+ and students from local art faculties, high schools and conservatories will get their chance to get to know the behind-the-scenes of traditional cultural institutions of Nitra – be it the imposing Andrej Bagar Theatre, charismatic Karol Spišák Old Theatre or progressive Nitra Gallery – tutored by local managers, artists and technicians out of their comfort zone. Working together with the professional team the students will attend special capacity building camps throughout 2024–2025, to get ready to take over the operation of the institutions and to present their programmes during the European Youth Week of 2026. We will give the students a free hand, so we can’t provide more

information on the outcomes. But you can count on it to be an original and unexpected week – with who knows what consequences. The outputs of this project will be used in an European platform developed for supporting the participation of youth in culture, with an emphasis on cultural volunteering.

**Leader:** Nitra 2026 Association (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Andrej Bagar Theatre (SK), Creative Centre Nitra (SK), Karol Spišák Old Theatre (SK), Nitra Gallery (SK), Juventa – Slovak Institute of the Youth (SK), Kaunas 2022 (LT), Novi Sad 2022 (RS), Studentski Kulturni Centar Novi Sad (RS), EUUniverCities Network (EU) – tbc  
**Duration:** May 2026 (capacity building 2024–2025)  
**Estimated budget:** 40,000 €



## Tired Attires

#slowfashion #shopless #remakemore #doityourself

Fashion consumer’s behaviour in Europe has radically changed over the past 20 years. Long tradition of reworked and upcycled garments largely motivated by scarcity and family traditions has inverted into the need to catch up with the newest fashion trend while being lured by fast fashion. **Upcycling is a process of utilisation and reanimation of discarded materials into a new garment or product consequently satisfying the constant demand for newness.** From the design point of view, upcycling is not only as a visual technique but also a medium of change.

Through a series of activities we want to teach people how to rethink the clothes, to navigate the viewpoint that new fashionable clothes does not necessarily mean it was never worn. Activities are structured around five pillars, each looking at the garment from a different perspective. Starting with the research that will be looking into the history of up-cycling in our region that was applied on both traditional and modern garments. While cooperating with European educational institutions like University of the Arts in London, The Swedish School of Textiles, VIA University or Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, the initial part will help us to draw a discourse around the topic. To better understand the starting point, historic data will be combined with data collection focused on the sewing skill and relationship with the fashion

nowadays. Results of observations will be applied to the final structure of the workshop that will tackle the needed skills and knowledge of all generations while cooperating with the Slovak Fashion Council, second-hand chain Textile House, Hungarian Fashion & Design Agency and experts in the specific fields.

Considering the emerging digital universe that plays a significant role in our lives while combining recent history, we will introduce the platform of open source sewing plans that would be shown on virtual 3D avatars with adjustable measurement. Sewing patterns will be applicable to the post-consumer textile waste and ready to be hand-made at home. As part of the pop-up designers project, there will be a seasonal collections presentation introducing foreign designers to expand the diversity of clothing created from up-cycled materials or post-consumer waste and with the opportunity to purchase clothing that is not only rare, but also sustainable.

**Leaders:** kunterakt collective (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Matthew Needham (UK), OFFORM 3D (CZ), University of the Arts London (UK), The Swedish School of Textiles (SE), VIA University (DK), New Order of Fashion (NL), Hungarian Fashion & Design Agency (HU), Carnica Institute – Textile Art Biennial BIEN (SI), Slovak Fashion Council (SK), Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava (SK), Textile House (CZ/SK), ITIMEX (SK), Creative Centre Nitra (SK)  
**Duration:** Feb–Mar, Sep–Oct 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 100,000 €



## The Self-Preservation Society

#foodculture #fermenteverything #jamsandpickles  
#yourgrandmaknows #harvestnow #eatlater  
#audiencedevelopment

The vast and fertile fields of Nitra region bring fresh joy to our tables every year. But when the crops are abundant, our hard working farmers face the same challenge after every harvest. What to do with all of it? And here comes the ancient technique of food preservation. From grapes to wine, honey to mead, cabbage to sauerkraut, carrots and cucumber to čalamáda or chilli to chilli pastes, The Self-Preservation Society project aims to spark interest in reclaiming our food as a means of cultural survival, taking action to break off the confining dependency of the role of consumer,

reactivating our primordial cultivation gene and taking back our dignity and power by becoming producers and creators. The Self-Preservation Society will work closely with local farmers, community gardens, artisans, food experts and our elders, who will share their wisdom on preserving food.

At an eponymous festival, a series of workshops, presentations and tastings will be held on various techniques of preserving, winemaking, brewing, pot making and sourdough making will take place early in September. The festival will be headlined by two biggest stars of the world fermentation scene. **David Zilber, former head of the two-Michelin star Danish restaurant NOMA’s Fermentation Lab** will show how much of the wild flora in the urban landscape can be actually used in the kitchen and preserved while **American fermentation guru and author Sandor Ellix Katz** will prove people that literally anything green and colourful can be fermented. All these processes will be preserved (pun intended) digitally in the form of an eponymous docuseries. The festival will be accompanied by an exhibition called **Umeňje** (Slovak wordplay on art/umenie + eating/jesť) showcasing works of visual artists who often work with edible and temporary materials such as **Andrej Dúbravský, Ester Šabíková** or **Kati Décsi**.

**Leader:** Natália Vargová (SK), culture manager and artisan gin maker  
**Partners / Artists:** Fermentación Natural (ES), Rotzooi Festival (NL), Wild Fermentation Festival Groningen (NL), David Zilber (CA), Sandor Ellix Katz (US), Læsk (DK), South Korean Embassy in Bratislava (KR), Jan Klimeš (CZ), JZT Ferments (CZ), Slovak University of Agriculture (SK), Agrofilm Festival (SK), local farmers and breweries (SK), Nova Gorica (2025), Braga 2027 (PT), Ernest Zmeták Gallery (SK)  
**Duration:** Sep 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 100,000 €

## Bits & Beats Camp

#technologymeetsmusic #pioneers  
#isthisnoiseormusic #magicboxes #pushthebuttons

0100111001010010. From an IT techies’ perspective, that’s binary code. But show it to a hardcore guitarist, and it’s a sick guitar riff. In today’s world, **music and technology go more hand in hand than ever.** Musicians often need to be programmers and software, occasionally hardware engineers to push their music forward. Some even enjoy this part of the process more than the music-making itself and then create computer-generated music from pictures of the Moon taken by NASA, or build upright pianos that play by themselves.

This project delves into the depths of organic and inorganic music, where man and machine go hand in hand. In collaboration with **Faculty of Informatics and Information Technologies at the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava** and various music/technology pioneers such as **Chris Messina** (Bon Iver) or **Halldór Eldjárn** (Ólafur Arnalds) we plan on launching a **two-week-long camp in the magical premises of the Tovarníky Manor, where 20 music producers from Europe selected in an open call will get to make music, build special musical hardware and instruments,**



and create previously unheard sounds and noises with some of the most qualified artists in the field. The outcome of this camp will be a vinyl compilation of music recorded at the camp, and a presentation of the creations in front of a live audience.

**Leaders:** Sharpe Festival (SK), Flaam Festival (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Lala Slovak Music Export (SK), Slovak Technical University (SK), Czech Technical University in Prague (CZ), Chris Messina (US), Halldór Eldjárn (IS), Tomáš Michalčák (SK), Jonáš Gruska (SK), Tovarníky Manor (SK), Creative Centre Nitra (SK)  
**Duration:** Jan–Feb 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 90,000 €



### Story of the Seed

#learntogrow #agri-culture #hands-on #newtraditions  
#greenmuseum #audience-development

The Slovak Agricultural Museum in Nitra deserves to be at the heart of us Nitranchans since it archives what made this city and region what it is today. **But sometimes it takes more than displaying historical attire and agricultural tools – it takes a story to make people love what they experience.**

This is why the Museum will introduce new interactive features by telling the Story of the Seed – **an exciting journey and hands-on adventures for the visitors**, from the moment the seed touches the ground, through the hard work that goes into its cultivation, all the way to the processing and finally – the food and plant-based products. Corn, hemp, flax and grain will once again cover the fields surrounding the Agriculture Museum. The old willows will transform into woven goods under the craftsmen’s hands in the Weaver’s house, workshops will let visitors process the crops the same way it was done a hundred years ago and the results of the regional crops will be offered to buy or swap at the seasonal markets, where you can set up a picnic right in the Museum’s green area with ponds and meadows.

In addition, **a giant site-specific communal installation called Wicker Basket by Austrian-Croatian collaborative collective Numen** will be built in the outdoor premises of the museum. Inspired by the old technique of basket weaving and made of biodegradable and

organic materials, it will serve both as a monumental reminder of our cultural heritage and as a giant playground for people of all ages.

**Leader:** Slovak Agricultural Museum in Nitra (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** ULUV (SK), PUNKT (SK), Sashe (SK), Slovak Design Centre (SK), Šumné (SK), Circular Economy Institute (SK), National Agricultural Museum (CZ), ArtMill (CZ), Numen – Sven Jonke (AT), Christoph Katze (AT), Nikola Radeljko (HR), Archeological Institute at Slovak Academy of Sciences (SK), Department of Ethnology and Folklore, Department of History, Department of Tourism & Department of Museology at Constantine the Philosopher University (SK), Faculty of Horticulture and Landscape Engineering at Slovak Agricultural University (SK)  
**Duration:** Mar–Oct 2026 (preparation 2025)  
**Estimated budget:** 300,000 €

### Wandering for Miracles

#countryside #artinnature #walkandlisten #wideviews

Art, nature, science. Miracles consist of a combination of these concepts. **The international contemporary long-term and site-specific festival will take you through Nitra’s countryside and the mysterious protected area of Ponitrie.** The venue for this unique series of site-specific works will be a 60-kilometre-long tourist track starting at Nitra’s most well-known monument, the Zobor Pyramid, along which the contemporary artists from all around the world will explore the interactions between art, nature, science, and technology miracles of today. Visitors will also encounter a performance that embodies the relationship between art and nature.

Our society, surrounded by the dilemmas of morality, ecology, law and humanity, finds itself in the uncertainty of tomorrow. The belief in miracles can play an important role in it. The only thing we need to open new worlds, to see miracles behind the banality, to discover new territories in and around us, is to embark on a journey. **Besides the festival, artistic pieces will be presented in the form of an audio walk for individual listener-walkers.** Eight teams of independent artists and established European theatres will tailor twelve works inspired by the local environment. In the scope of this project, the **Theatre and Cultural center Pôtoň in Bátorce** will offer a special programme of creative residencies in Nitra’s countryside for Slovak and international artists.

**Leaders:** Pôtoň Theatre (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Sláva Daubnerová (SK), Tjarnarbió (IS), Kultur-Traverse (LI), Company B. Valiente (NO), Circolando CRL – Central Elétrica (PT), Kunstencentrum BUDA (BE), Oulu 2026 (FI), FiraTárrega (ES) – tbc  
**Duration:** Apr–Jul 2026 (preparation 2025)  
**Estimated budget:** 200,000 €

### CirculArch

#reduce #reuse #newmindset #cradletocradle  
#zerowasteECoC #leadbyexample

Architecture as we know it today is not sustainable. We produce more and more materials, the society needs to

build more and more buildings, and the architects want to make more and more money. This never-ending cycle is by definition unsustainable. **Even the project of ECoC is not really tenable – it encourages throwing a great amount of resources onto a small area. Juraj Hariš is an architect interested in a construction-boom** and we want to create CirculArch with him – architecture hub, which would promote material circulation or reusability and **oversee the development projects of Nitra 2026 with a detailed guidelines of what materials would be used, how to eliminate their carbon footprint, and how to regulate the inevitable waste management.** CirculArch would research material options, establish a building practices palette, create sustainability guidelines and host workshops with local builders and construction firms. The outcomes of its work could serve as a role-model for future ECoC projects, with our know-how shared openly to each of the following cities, and ideally the citizens of Nitra themselves.

**Leader:** Juraj Hariš (SK), architect  
**Partners / Artists:** Nitra 2026 Association (SK), Crafting Plastics (SK), City of Nitra (SK), Nová Cvernovka (SK), Institute for Circular Economics (SK), PUNKT (SK), Festival NASUTI (SK), id22 – Institute for Creative Sustainability (DE), Project Coal (FR), Oulu 2026 (FI)  
**Duration:** activities in 2026 (preparation and planning 2023–2025)  
**Estimated budget:** 200,000 €

### Green Culture

#ecoculture #culturalshift #carbonfree  
#leadbyexample

We joined forces. The established and independent theatres, museums, galleries, cultural and creative centres. Both local and international. The environmentalists and cultural actors. The responsibility for the future generations’ environment is on all of our shoulders, CCI included. **The common goal is very clear – avert the global ecological catastrophe.** What role in preserving a healthy natural environment can cultural institutions have? What sustainable solutions can we implement? Where is the balance between ecological and economical?

These are the questions we will be dealing with in Green Culture, an international platform for sharing information, experiences, and ways of implementing practical solutions in the cultural fields, including theatres, museums or galleries. The **Slovak Agricultural Museum in Nitra** will tackle the problem of our polluted Nitra river through transforming small isles into root cleaners, and together with **Museums for Future** they will implement various ecologically sustainable practices into the running of their institution as soon as in 2022. The **Andrej Bagar Theatre** and the **Karol Spišák Old Theatre** will continue to support the writing and implementations of ‘green edu dramas’. Together with **OZ Očami prírody** (Through the eyes of nature) and starting in 2021 we plan on gathering information on the current state of ecological solutions in the CCI. The first candidate will be the **International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra**, which will incorporate ecological experts in the role of ‘environmental patrol’ as early as September 2022. Apart from the festival,

they will also visit and evaluate various institutions in the city. One of the main outputs will be the creation of a ‘green methodology’, which will be incorporated in the strategic documents of both the **City of Nitra and the Nitra Self-governing Region.** There will be lots of experiments, network meetings and tons of work in 2023–2026. One of the key factors will be our cooperation with international partners, as well as the interconnection with the Nitra: Future\_climate project. Through the capacity building programme CULTIVATOR we **will nurture the individual skills of CCI actors in ecological approaches in cultural management and programming.**

**Leader:** Nitra 2026 Association (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Tartu 2024 (EE), Nova Gorica 2025 (SI), Nitra Self-governing Region (SK), City of Nitra (SK), Andrej Bagar Theatre (SK), Karol Spišák Old Theatre (SK), Slovak Agricultural Museum in Nitra (SK), Nitra Regional Museum (SK), Nitra Gallery (SK), Crafting Plastics (SK), OZ Očami prírody (SK), Dept. Of Ecology and Environmental Sciences at the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (SK), Theatre Institute Bratislava (SK), Dept. of Forensic and Criminalistic Environmental Sciences at the Technical University in Zvolen (SK), schools involved in Green Schools (SK), University of Chemistry and Technology in Prague – Faculty of Environmental Preservation (CZ), Institute for Circular Economics (SK), PUNKT (SK)  
**Duration:** 2023–2026  
**Estimated budget:** 35 000 €

### Nitra: Future\_climate

NR26.DIGITAL

#climatecrisis #ourfuture #seeimpact #makeimpact  
#bebetter #audience-development

**How we talk about the climate crisis is increasingly crucial in how we can tackle it.** As the climate emergency creeps closer to the top of the political agenda, where it belongs, it also becomes obvious we struggle to communicate about it. What to say about the environmental crisis, and how, is an important question, because our emotional register – how “doomy” or “hopeful” we are – will inevitably shape the outcome of the discussion. But the information requires interpretation.

**Nitra: Future\_climate is about interpreting this pressing crisis in a way that feels tangible, understandable and – more importantly – closer to home.** Focusing on the future of European and Nitra regions in the forthcoming century brings the environmental change in a context and scale that is much more comprehensive and relatable. Using science, data analytics, art and architecture in a dialogue with both local and European ecologists, climatologists, agricultural researchers and artists as a universal language that blends into a **series of digital and physical projects which present what dangers lie ahead, and what we can do about it.** Digital maps of Nitra region’s climate in the next decades made with **Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute**, comparing climate zones and their shifts from European South to **Oulu** in Finland, immersive visualisations and AR / VR experiences of the climate crisis’ impact on various places around Nitra and Europe made with **3 apes Creative Studio**, artistic interventions and open-calls for design

and architectural students from **Czech Technical University, University of Chemistry and Technology, Slovak Agricultural University or Slovak Technical University** creating solutions for urban and natural spaces most endangered by the changing conditions will be the tools to make the invisible threat accessible.

**Leader:** Juraj Kusy (SK), multidisciplinary designer and activist  
**Partners / Artists:** Environment Preservation Faculty on University of Chemistry and Technology in Prague (CZ), id22 – Institute for Creative Sustainability (DE), ACT – Art Climate Transition (EU), Project COAL (FR), Oulu2026 (FI), Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute (SK), Slovak Agricultural University (SK), Constantine the Philosopher University (SK), 3 apes studio (SK), A-EN (SK), Carpathian Development Institute (SK), team of VOLBA2050.WORLD (SK), Nová Cvernovka (SK), People in Need (INTL), Slovak Agricultural Museum (SK), Slovak Technical University (SK)  
**Duration:** throughout 2026 (preparation 2025, continues after 2026)  
**Estimated budget:** 200,000 €



## The River and its People

MADE IN NR

#publicspace #makeover #touchtheriver #letitflow

Nitra river has always been an important part of the region's history and identity, bringing fresh water to people and crops, with its waterfront also being a space for much needed rest. Today it seems somehow rejected and overlooked – no wonder, as it is one of the most polluted rivers in Europe.

We want to **bring back life and culture to Nitra's riverbanks** through a series of international workshops and interventions happening from 2022 in **cooperation with the institutions** like Institute of Landscape Architecture at Slovak University of Agriculture, Department of Architecture at Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava **and various international architecture workshop initiatives and studios** – such as Polish Mood For Wood, Hungarian Field of Sparks, Latvian Nomad Architects or Slovak Woven.

Confronting the Nitra river and its unused shores through the whole region, young architects, designers and artists will face a challenge of **revitalising it into a functional public space again**, co-designing the projects with local communities – fishermen, boaters or just locals who love to spend time outdoors. The project would include lectures and discussions about the

role of rivers in urban areas from various perspectives: environmental, historical, social or cultural.

**Leader:** Jakub Samuel (SK), architect  
**Partners / Artists:** Mood for Wood (PL), Nomad Architects (LV), Jozef Pilát (SK), Grau Architects (SK), Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava – Department of Architecture (SK), Institute of Landscape Architecture at Slovak University of Agriculture (SK), Field of Sparks (HU) – tbc  
**Duration:** Jul 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 500,000 €

## Imaginarium Un-limited

MADE IN NR

#listentoyouth #growth #prosandpros #inspiration #audiencedevelopment

The final word of our ECoC year has to belong to those who will carry the cultivation gene for many years to come – the **children and young** absolvents of artistic schools!

Led by Slovak composer **Marek Piaček of the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra**, together with various European professionals and dozens of children from Slovakia and Oulu will co-create a contemporary opera that will be presented during the closing ceremony of our ECoC year in Nitra and digitally in Oulu. Revolving around our agricultural history from the neolithic revolution until GMO controversies, it will provide unexpected connections of classic instruments with **young bagpipe players** from the region that represent the famous UNESCO-labeled tradition.

This project will be the result of a three-year preparation process. A new venue called Imaginarium would be built as part of our candidacy and then filled by **year-round camps with the participation of children from all around Europe**, while in between camps they will stay in touch to exchange their experience and continue their cooperation on projects through digital channels. At Imaginarium, children and teenagers will work together on various assignments in the field of scenography, music composition, dance and new technologies. Before this phenomenal finale, a series of events (international summer camps, workshops led by professionals, training, presentation) will fill Imaginarium's calendar for a full year, incorporating other artistic schools from the Nitra region and other ECoC cities. Special attention will be devoted to absolvents of artistic schools (with cooperation with Regional centre for amateur arts) and to cross-generational projects.

### Residencies in Nitra:

- 4 camps for kids in the Nitra region (2024, 2025, 2026)
- 1 camp in Oulu

**Leader:** J. Rosinský Art School (SK)  
**Partners / Artists:** Marek Piaček (SK), Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra (SK), Halil Itzak (IL), Guild of Slovak Bagpipers (SK), Oulu 2026 (FI), Oulu Theatre (FI), Regional Centre for Amateur Culture (SK), artistic schools in Nitra region, senior houses, other ECoC cities  
**Duration:** Sep–Dec 2026  
**Estimated budget:** 190,000 €

## Cultivator Capacity Building Programme

There are cities which, if designated, could wake up the next day right in their ECoC year and no one would notice. And there are those like Nitra. For us, being awarded the title is one thing, but to truly become a European Capital of Culture is a whole different ball game. And if this ball lands in our court, we will have some work to do.

To successfully implement a project of the ECoC scope and to ensure its sustainable legacy, we need a strong, confident and skilful cultural and artistic sector open to international partnerships, cross-sectoral approaches and innovative methods. Although we “outfitted” many of our projects with a built-in capacity building element from the get-go, we felt it just wasn't enough. That's why we prepared a capacity building programme called **Cultivator** which stems from the experience we've had over the past 18 months with local cultural players, artists, active citizens or hospitality workers. We've held hours of open talks and discussions about the troubles they encounter, the skills they lack or needs they have.

### The Creative Core

Our capacity building programme focused directly on the CCI sector **Cultivator+** will be implemented in a joint approach with the newly established **Creative Centre Nitra**, which will function as a **CCI Academy** with a city and region-wide reach. The CCI Academy kick-off will take place at the Future of the Skills in CCI conference planned for September 2022. The Academy targets those already swimming in CCI waters, as well as those exploring the options. It's organised as a tiered offer of **group courses and individual consultations** – tailor-made incubators and accelerator programmes built around four pillars: plan development, managing team, media management and marketing and self-management.

**CCI LABs** will provide hands-on experience focused on arts production, exhibition setup in gallery/alternative spaces and curating for visual arts, recycling, up-cycling (ecological sustainability in arts and culture) as well as contemporary takes on traditional crafts, and new technologies for multimedia and audio-visual creation. These are supported by **networking programmes, internships and public placement** of CCI “products” and developed pilots. Creative Centre Nitra programmes will be supplemented with capacity building activities dedicated to **crisis management in culture**, because that “C-thing” is probably not the last scourge that may befall the cultural sector. Capacity building in **participatory approaches in CCI and audience development** is another hot topic for cultural managers and creators alike. These will be delivered via workshops led by experts from Slovakia and abroad, personnel exchanges between institutions and networking events, even supporting our creatives in finding and applying for mobility and residencies programmes (e.g. the Visegrad Fund's Performing Arts Residency).

### The Technical Staff

How does one become a lighting designer, stage technician or a promoter in Slovakia? Most of the current technical staff first dipped their toes in by moonlighting or volunteering as teenagers, and from there developed necessary skills strictly through learning-by-doing. This doesn't mean they lack expertise or professionalism. It just means there's a space for fast tracking the process. CCI LABs being developed at the Creative Centre are the perfect way to do it. Along those already mentioned, the offer will include **lights and sound LABs** for performing arts and music. But we are not relying only on the Creative Centre. This is where Antenna – Network for Independent Culture with its **School of Light Design** will come in handy. For both, the creative core and the technical staff, the **KulturSilo** platform is being designed with the Creative Centre. An online platform will house contacts, profiles and sample works as a go to space for finding partners, staff, or just getting inspired.

### The Gatekeepers

A cabbie picking you up from the station, a bus driver taking you to your hotel and a receptionist checking you in. These are the faces of Nitra a visitor will see first. You may enlist a guide to take you to all of the breaking points along the paths we prepared, and may even be stopped by a local cop on your way. If there is a break in communication at this stage, your all-around experience won't be as captivating as we are hoping for. This is why training opportunities (also envisaged by the NK31 strategy) will be in place, **to improve language and communication skills** of all those who act as an interface of our city. **Constantine the Philosopher University** is a one-stop destination for language courses in various formats and the NGO **Mareena** will provide courses on intercultural communication.

### The New Kids On The Block

Cultivator doesn't target the supply side only. For CCI to feel at home in Nitra and for Nitra to see CCI as a part of its identity, we focus on the demand side as well. Creative Centre Nitra will showcase their **activities in public places**, organise **workshops, discussions and conferences accessible to everyone** – anywhere where we might find potential new audiences to bring into the fold and demonstrate possible CCI career paths for kids and students.

Even if we lose this ball, we will continue to play. The bidding phase pushed the capacity building initiatives to the top of agenda for the Creative Centre and it will stay there whatever happens. If we do get awarded the title there will be many elements that will happen with a more international scope and outlook.



Breaking the Geographical Barriers

The way our cultural amenities are presently concentrated is a significant barrier. Both at the city and regional level. In our case this is further exacerbated by the rural character of the **Nitra Region**, leading us to further deepening the atomisation of our communities through a growing city:region split. We will address this through a model of horizontal participation built around the idea of going beyond the city centre and into residential housing estates, industrial parks and our most remote rural communities. This creates benefits for the rural communities and leaves a legacy of Nitra 2026 for the region and the city.

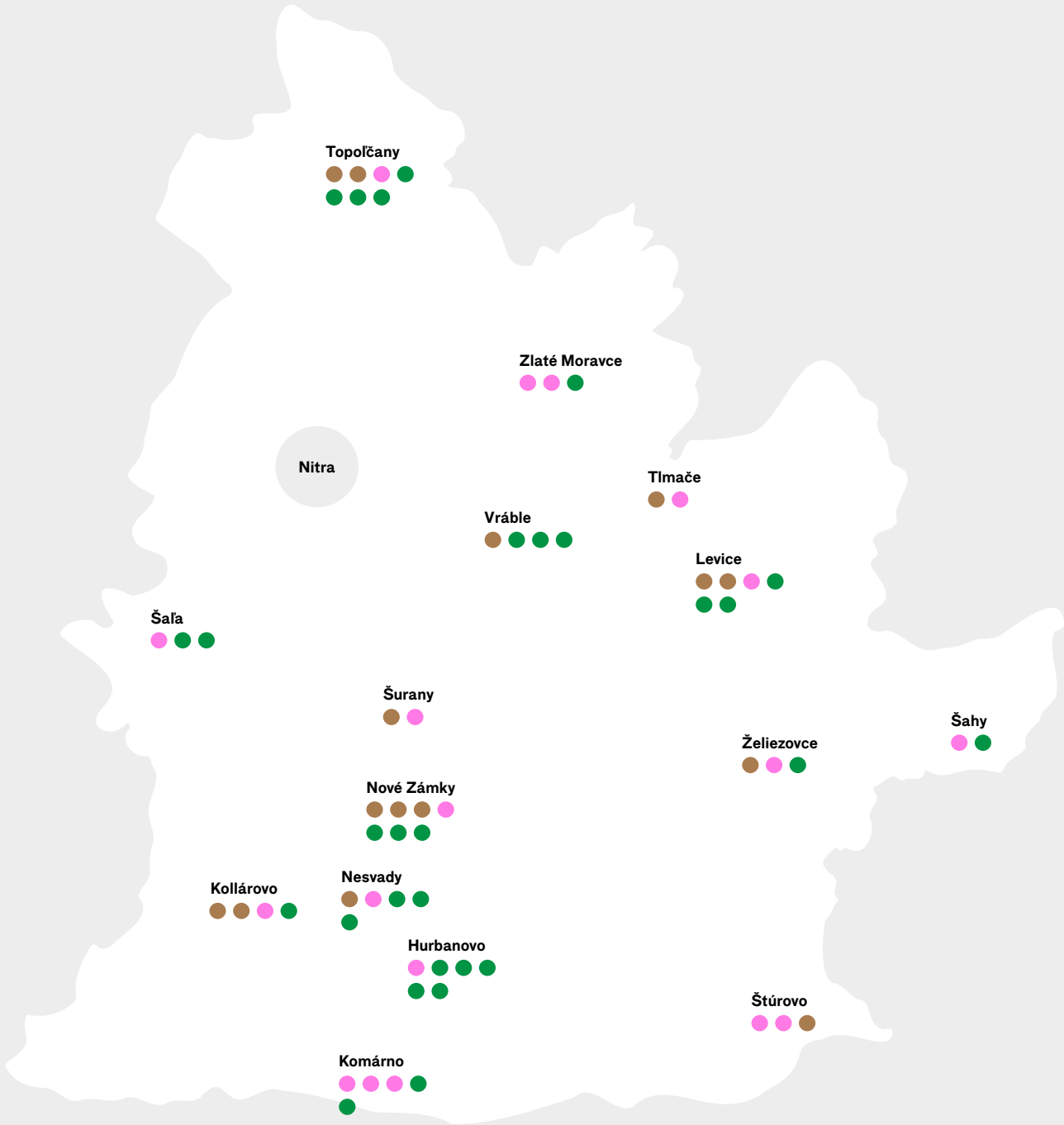
From the very beginning of creating **Nitra 2026**, we envisioned it as a regional project that will strengthen

the ties between Nitra City and Nitra Region. During 2020 and 2021 we held dozens of online sessions with municipality representatives and institutional or independent cultural actors from all over the Nitra Region, many of whom became a stable part of the Nitra 2026 Team or our working groups.

In summer of 2021 we embarked on a **week-long tour we called Tour de Region spending 7 full days in a van, visiting personally all 15 municipalities within Nitra Region that have city status**. We met local representatives, citizens, creatives and cultural actors and talked about their cultural particularities, traditions, current work, future plans and presented them the vision of the Breaking Point. As a result, we had enthusiastic buy-in from all 15 municipalities to expand our projects into all the corners of Nitra Region. Often they were interested in learning how to implement similar projects by themselves.

Here are examples of projects that will be co-implemented along with the local municipalities, cultural players or organisations:

city / county / town	projects
Hurbanovo	<div><div></div> Break The Ice Festival (local ice swimmers)</div> <div><div></div> Wandering for Miracles (Hurbanovo Observatory)</div> <div><div></div> The Self-Preservation Society (local food producers)</div> <div><div></div> Imaginarium Un-limited (local art schools)</div> <div><div></div> Nitra: Future_climate (Hurbanovo Hydro-meteorological Station)</div>
Kollárovo	<div><div></div> The Stillwater Currents (Kollárovo Mill)</div> <div><div></div> The Theatronauts</div> <div><div></div> Divadelná Nitra_Polycentricity</div> <div><div></div> The River and Its People (workshop)</div>
Komárno	<div><div></div> Nitra_diverse</div> <div><div></div> New (b)Orders</div> <div><div></div> Inter-gen</div> <div><div></div> Take Over The Institutions</div> <div><div></div> Imaginarium Un-limited (local art schools)</div>
Levice	<div><div></div> The Stolpersteine 2.026</div> <div><div></div> The Theatronauts</div> <div><div></div> The View From The Cheap Seats</div> <div><div></div> Wandering for Miracles (led by Pôtoň Theatre in Bátovce)</div> <div><div></div> Imaginarium Un-limited (local art schools)</div>
Nesvady	<div><div></div> The Theatronauts</div> <div><div></div> Break The Ice Festival (local ice swimmers)</div> <div><div></div> Gardens of Nitra (shared know-how)</div> <div><div></div> Imaginarium Un-limited (local art schools)</div> <div><div></div> The Self-Preservation Society (local food producers)</div>
Nové Zámky	<div><div></div> The Theatronauts</div> <div><div></div> Nitra: Lost. Possible. Future. (co-curated by Ernest Zmeták Gallery)</div> <div><div></div> The Lost City (shared know-how)</div> <div><div></div> Divadelná Nitra_Polycentricity</div> <div><div></div> The River and its People (workshop)</div> <div><div></div> The Self-Preservation Society (local food producers)</div> <div><div></div> Umeňje (co-curated by Ernest Zmeták Gallery)</div>
Šahy	<div><div></div> Divadelná Nitra_Polycentricity</div> <div><div></div> Gardens of Nitra (shared know-how)</div>
Šaľa	<div><div></div> Divadelná Nitra_Polycentricity</div> <div><div></div> The Self-Preservation Society (local producers)</div> <div><div></div> Wandering for Miracles</div>
Štúrovo	<div><div></div> The View From The Cheap Seats</div> <div><div></div> New (b)Orders</div> <div><div></div> The River and its People (workshop)</div>
Šurany	<div><div></div> Refined Solution</div> <div><div></div> Divadelná Nitra_Polycentricity</div>
Tlmače	<div><div></div> A Case for Crafts</div> <div><div></div> The View From The Cheap Seats</div>
Topoľčany	<div><div></div> Nitra: Lost. Possible. Future. (co-curated by Platform 1-12)</div> <div><div></div> The Theatronauts</div> <div><div></div> Sauna on Wheels</div> <div><div></div> Fields of Multiculture</div> <div><div></div> Gardens of Nitra (shared know-how)</div> <div><div></div> The River and Its People (workshop)</div> <div><div></div> Imaginarium Un-limited (local art schools)</div>
Vráble	<div><div></div> The Stillwater Currents (Mašek Mill)</div> <div><div></div> The Self-Preservation Society (local producers)</div> <div><div></div> The River and Its People (workshop)</div> <div><div></div> Imaginarium Un-limited (local art schools)</div>
Zlaté Moravce	<div><div></div> Divadelná Nitra_Polycentricity</div> <div><div></div> Sauna on Wheels</div> <div><div></div> Gardens of Nitra (shared know-how)</div>
Želiezovce	<div><div></div> The Theatronauts</div> <div><div></div> Divadelná Nitra_Polycentricity</div> <div><div></div> Wandering for Miracles (Hurbanovo Observatory)</div>



# Q7

## Choosing projects for the Breaking Point

The Nitra 2026 artistic programme is a **result of a rigorous and thoughtful process of 18 months long research, talks, meetings, workshops, sessions** and... lots and lots of convincing potential partners and earning their trust. From the start our aim was to come up with a coherent **programme that grows organically from our local soul yet speaks of issues and topics that are reflective of a bigger European contemporary story.**

The Breaking Point concept means constant re-examination for better and healthier outcomes. That's why **we are ready and willing to add more projects and improve the existing ones to keep the artistic programme broad, relevant and forward-looking.** The presented programme accounts for around 60% of the programme we envision to take place in 2026 and its cumulative budget amounts to 9.9 m euros. We have reserved 5.7 m euros of the overall programming budget for the opening and closing ceremonies and projects to be added in 2022–2025.

### Our strategy: Staying true to the Breaking Point principles

The projects selected for the Breaking Point artistic programme have to stay true to at least a few principles that drive our artistic vision and strategy. They should be:

**Open...** opening Nitra to Europe and promoting European values. Involving European partners is a must! Opening Europe to Nitra is a nice collateral damage to have, too.

**Participative...** making consumers into creators and helping us with reactivating the cultivation gene in all the people of Nitra and Nitra Region and reminding some of our fellow Europeans that culture comes from cultivation.

**Sincere...** breaking preconceptions and dogmas, embracing critical thinking and self-reflection. We need honesty driving our creators to pick up some rotting fruits that aren't quite right in our community.

**Synthetic...** cross-pollinating different fields, sectors and genres to create unique experiences through interdisciplinary projects. Because we cannot each live in our own silo any longer.

**Ubiquitous...** breaking the culture out of its usual confines into public spaces, natural environments, people's homes or their own pockets. So that those who don't go looking for it, stumble right over it.

**Edgy...** pushing boundaries and challenging the traditional perception of what art is, and what it isn't to transform our society into a more creative and curious one. And yes, sometimes that means gently pushing ourselves out of our comfort zone.

Also, projects will have to adhere to our three Breaks, revolving around issues of **Identity, Dialogue and Sustainability.**

As we did with the pre-selection one, **we will publish the final Nitra 2026 bid book online straight after the hand-in deadline in November 2021.** We will distribute it widely to the public but also to relevant local and international partners for them to share and give feedback on, so anyone who has an interest can participate in the preparation and implementation of the programme. In case we are designated as ECoC, we will hold sessions and meetings with local, regional, national and international partners **to reassess the programme's content to identify genre, thematic and target group gaps.** In 2022–2025 we will organise specific open calls and hackathons to address them. And based on the example of Nitra city's independent culture funding scheme in 2021 that tied into our three Breaks, it is time to find other partners in crime in this endeavour. We are in talks with cities across the region to open **thematic calls** for local projects, participatory budgeting programmes for complementary community projects and even with universities to align running contests for

student projects with the Breaking Point concept. This way when everything starts to break out, **no one falls through the cracks.**

Several of the projects already presented in our bid are designed to include **open calls** as a way of pinpointing partners and artists to work within them such as **New (b)Orders, Outside the Boxes, The Calls From Behind the Wall or (me)identity – (EU)identity.** Open calls will mostly be shared internationally and targeted at cultural actors with relevant experience. The Artistic Director and Artistic Team of Nitra 2026 Association will have the final responsibility on selecting the projects and agreeing to contracts. For specific calls it might seem advisable to invite a jury to select from the applications. The Advisory Board will also have a role in setting up the calls and advising on scale, scope and criteria. Most certainly we will work closely together with the respective project leaders who definitely need a vote when it comes to calls within their projects. The implementation of the projects will be required to be coordinated with the Nitra 2026 Association all along the way to ensure the integrity and quality of the Breaking Point programme.

# Q8

## How we combine local cultural heritage and traditional art forms with innovative and experimental cultural expressions

With our programmes, we use various **innovative and unexpected ways to present cultural heritage, make it appealing** for visitors and locals and turn it into an inspiration for future generations. On the one hand, we are involving museums, galleries, archeological sites, historic monuments and libraries. On the other, we integrate intangible craft techniques, language, scripts, traditions and memories of the inhabitants in the projects. We're interested in the **artistic and creative approach** to our cultural heritage using innovative methods such as VR, AR, 3D rendering, but also soft presentation methods, such as storytelling. We don't want to be limited by time or space. And we want to make it **accessible for disadvantaged communities too.**

It seems hard to preserve the current forms of **traditions in the ordinary life of the community.** But a young generation is picking them up again and discovering that many of these traditions

and the heritage is actually quite in sync with the **UN sustainable development goals.** All the more reasons to **protect cultural heritage in its authentic forms** and contribute to its development.

In the first bid book, we did not pay as much attention as we should to **the archeological heritage and the oldest history of the Nitra region.** In the meantime, the Danubian Limes, together with the Roman Castellum Celemantia in Iža gained a prestigious place in the UNESCO World Heritage List. So yes, in the second round **we broke our cycle,** crossed the borders of the 20th century towards the more remote past and made our scope wider. **In this second bid book, the local heritage plays a much bigger role.** At the meetings with the Institute of Archeology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, we agreed that we need to be more innovative in presenting archeology and find the balance between an artistic and a scientific approach. We will **open our archeological heritage to contemporary artists** from all over the world and create a new place for experimentation. And it is not just artists who take an important place in our programmes. Archeologists, historians, ethnologists and scientists give us professional guidance too. The residential programme **Diggit** will, together with innovative artists, craftspeople, designers, animators, video-game designers and intermedia creatives, carry out an experiment in the presentation of an already digitised

ICARUS – A performance facing themes of borders and freedom co-created by teenagers from Nitra and Prague in 2020 and 2021





local archeological heritage by the Institute of Archeology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Nitra. Based on studying history they will try to find the answers to the repeating problems of our society, such as gender equality, economic sustainability, integration of migrants and ethnic conflicts.

A literature project under the **New (b)Orders** programme will commemorate two Roman military camps on the opposite sides of the borderline between the Roman Empire and the Danube river: Celemantia – Brigetio.

The two projects **What Would the Brothers Say?** and **Hlaholica Neue** transform the legacy of the Great Moravian Empire and St. Cyril and Methodius to the present day. Five participatory performative pieces overlap the traditional theatre forms, while also moving to the digital world. In **Hlaholica Neue**, graphic designers from Slovakia and abroad ask about the past, present, and future purpose of typography in the development of European civilisation, following the legacy of the first Glagolitic alphabet. Moreover, international progressive artists will experiment with writing systems by inscription in technologies, posthuman recording mechanisms and AI in textuality or xenowriting.

Our **Break the Cycle** programme line does not talk only about the old, washed-up stories and values, but also tries to discover something deeper, something remaining hidden if you don't take a closer look. We cannot rely only on archive materials. Partly because of fires in a regional archive, partly because of the political regimes in the 20th century that "dictated" the past. For example, due to the clearing out and rewriting of the information on the landowners in connection with collectivisation in the 50's, we have to dig into the memories of Nitračans who represent living archives for us. But we can't do it alone. Local communities will be engaged and will help us bring light to the stories of the region.

The flagship project **Nitra: Lost. Possible. Future.** will elaborate themes of the past with a contemporary multidisciplinary approach and futuristic visions, incorporating up-to-date formats, such as LARP. In the project **Torn Apart**, Japanese artist Chiharu Shiota will create a unique installation using correspondence provided by people whose families were separated as a consequence of Beneš Decrees. In the **re:remembered** project, Nitračans, lead by a Czech curator Kristýna Jiráťová, will put together a live exhibition and an online catalogue using their family history, providing personal objects such as photos, homevideo VHS tapes or family recipes.

The unique international project **Stolpersteine 2.026** will be executed in Nitra using new forms of live performances, site-specific objects,

interventions and murals, with the intention to commemorate Jewish victims of WW2 and to celebrate the regional heritage, of which a large part is connected to the Jewish community.

**A Case for Crafts** focuses on the past and the future of crafts in the region. Through ethnological field research, it will look back at the traditional crafting techniques, such as embroidery, corn leaf basketry, willow basketry, pottery, glass painting and bobbin lace knitting. With the Centre for Folk Art Production and Slovak Design Center we will embark on our way to finding their new use in the concepts of contemporary crafts or craft design.

The **Re-folk** project creates an online hub for folklore heritage, including UNESCO-labeled bagpipe traditions, and connects regional folklore with electronic music, translating it to younger generations. Together with the Nitračans we will also bring the old city anthem (project **Nitra, dear Nitra\_Rework**) into a modern-day version.

The **Museum of Parallel Culture** project will present the everyday reality of the generations of the past regime in the form of various digital outputs, such as online galleries, podcasts, blogs, documents, interactive games, online discussions and an online open library.

In the grand finale, a new contemporary opera (project **Imaginarium Un-limited**) looks at the history of agriculture up to its neolithic era and by doing so, it redefines our relationship with soil. The Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra, together with kids from Nitra and Oulu, will work with scientific materials and prepare a unique contemporary opera piece.

In **Survivors?!** we initiate artistic works based on cutting edge immersive theatre that will utilise historical technical monuments, such as a decaying mill, a sugar refinery or the Slovak Agricultural Museum in Nitra. For example, the projects **The Rite of Spring & The Harvest Festival** bring back two of the most important events of traditional culture. In two site-specific performances and using a folkloristic approach, the local folk groups Zobor and Ponitran create movements connected with the farmers' work, accompanied by original music experimental compositions using the museum's objects and electronic music production tools.

The water mills on the Žitava river will get in the spotlight in the most progressive way, with the help of sound and video designers from Europe in **The Stillwater Currents** project. Whilst the cultural heritage of "sugar" cities in our region will be tackled by innovative artistic ensemble Odivo, with the involvement of the local biker scenes and using oral history methods and urbexing. The revitalisation of the Slovak Agricultural



A theatre performance in the Nitra Synagogue

Museum in Nitra will, through the **Story of the Seed** project, help to bring back knowledge of the ecological cultivation and the use of old plants that are typical for the region. It will restart the cultivation of Nitra and European inhabitants.

**The Upper Town Funk** project opens the Nitra Castle and Upper Town complex to Nitračans and tourists, and aims to attract them with film screenings, site-specific installations and concerts of contemporary artists.

Among the cultural heritage programmes, **Memory Cultivation** is a special one, as it points out the importance of cultural institutions for social inclusion following the topic of memories. We chose to work with people with dementia, as well as with their family care-takers who are often also isolated.

**The Theatronauts** project will start with research of urban legends and stories of the Nitra region. The most popular theatre group of

Nitra, Teatro Tatro, will adapt it in a humorous theatrical guided tour that happens above our heads in a balloon. For the first time they dive into digital technologies to broadcast for those who stay home.

Our effort with the **Break the Ground** line is to bring current green and sustainability issues together with the natural and agricultural tradition of the region by providing it with the space for growing fruits and vegetables in urban areas in **Gardens of Nitra** project, as well as connecting it with nature itself in **The Fields of Multiculture, The River and its People**.

Some of these authentic expressions make our region really special and contribute to the cultural diversity in Europe. Some of them even teach us to live more sustainable lives. All the more reason not to lose them. We translate them into contemporary approaches for our present generations and into inspiration for the next ones.

# Q9+Q10

## Local artists' and organisations' involvement

There is no real participation without transparency. That is why we published and distributed our pre-selection Bid Book online – along with its Slovak translation – in January 2021. We invited over 100 individuals and organisations to **give their feedback** and subsequently held dozens of meetings with them. **We listened, explained, took notes and co-developed a final Bid Book that we truly believe is a long term commitment we all can stand behind.** To let the ideas, strengths and potential of our local cultural operators and actors **break free** was our motto from the very start. Who else could ensure that the Breaking Point cultural programme is organic, realistic and sustainable, creating a long-term legacy?

**The working groups (created in 2020) continued to meet on a bi-weekly basis throughout 2021 and were approached by even more people willing to join the Nitra 2026 project.** We held extensive individual meetings with the leaders of the selected projects of the cultural programme to help them develop their concepts, ensure their links to our themes and help them build European connections. These leaders have also devised often very detailed production plans and calculated the projects' financing. All cultural institutions from the city, many from the region, and many important independent cultural actors are part of the programme. We were really surprised and pleased to see so many regional players enthusiastically asking to be involved in projects like **Divadelná Nitra\_Polycentricity** or **Sauna on Wheels** when we went on our regional tour of 15 municipalities. Several of them want help and some capacity building to implement their own **Gardens of Nitra** projects. This is actually the best sign. We have not even been designated but the seeds we put out there are breaking out and starting to grow.

Openness – one of the principles of our artistic vision – did not only materialise with our regional partners but also in an open participation call for projects called **NITRO** launched in summer 2020, where we received over **50** proposals. We selected several of these – such as **Nitra: Future\_climate, Tired Attires, Bits & Beats Camp or The River and Its People** – for our artistic programme, and their creators will play a crucial part in implementing these projects. Several other ideas were developed further or revised and incorporated into other projects.

In 2021, we changed the NITRO open call for projects into the **NITRO NETWORK** – an open call for any individual, institution, organisation or company, to become a part of the Nitra 2026 project as possible producers, partners, participants or volunteers. By October 2021 we received more than **300 applications** and the number of those wanting to join the Breaking Point is still growing!

All the work done in 2021 was a seamless continuation of what we had initiated in the first round. **Our bottom up approach started back in March 2020 with open meetings.** 76 stakeholders from CCI, public sector, civic society, universities, other relevant institutions and various active and interested individuals attended 2 days of round-tables, brainstormings, focus groups, discussions and networking exercises. After these joint meetings, 8 working groups each representing a specific cultural sector emerged. These were: **Performing arts; Visual arts; Music; Film; Literature and Pop-Culture; Cultural heritage; Communities; Architecture, urbanism and environment and Sport.** These comprised **80 representatives** of the most important stakeholders and cultural players in Nitra and Nitra region. The working groups were coordinated by us, the members of **Nitra 2026 Team** (from the independent scene of Nitra ourselves) and spent over **250 hours** on various sessions, mostly online, during 2020 and 2021.

The overall concept was subject to an open call for the presentation of ideas during a public workshop that took place in May 2020 and where **10 individuals and groups** presented their ideas. **Breaking Point** is a synthesis of many of the presented concepts and the 3 Breaks come directly from the most voiced themes and topics.

Apart from the artistic programme, this unprecedented conjunction of local and regional cultural and creative sector also provided an invaluable insight into the process of creation of the new Strategy for Culture and Creative Industry in Nitra – **NK31**.

**The table on the following page shows examples of local artists and organisations closely involved in the development and implementation of our cultural programme.**

## Cultural and artistic content

Project	Artist / Organisation
BREAK THE CYCLE	
● <b>Nitra: Lost. Possible. Future.</b>	The project was envisioned and will be curated by <b>Zuzana Novotová Godálová</b> , art curator and the head of independent cultural centre Platform 1-12 in Topoľčany. Zuzana is an alumnus of University of Sheffield and has 15 year of cultural experience from the UK and US.
● <b>The Alley of Unsung Heroes</b>	<b>Omar Mirza</b> , a Slovak-Lebanese art curator from Nitra Gallery has developed the project and will curate it.
● <b>Museum of Parallel Culture</b>	The project was created by <b>Juraj Malíček</b> , a well-known Nitra-based pop culture guru and university professor. It will be implemented by the <b>University of Constantine the Philosopher</b> and the <b>Nitra Regional Museum</b> .
● <b>Hlaholica Neue</b>	A journey of Central European typography from the middle-ages to today was co-created by an award-winning graphic designer from Nitra, <b>Andrej Barčák</b> .
● <b>Re-folk</b>	Ethno-musicologists <b>Jana Ambrózová</b> and <b>Marián Jarek</b> (also a folk music ensemble Ponitran leader) from the <b>Department of Ethnology and Folklore at the University of Constantine the Philosopher</b> will advise the project that fuses traditional music heritage with electronic music heat-waves.
BREAK THE SILENCE	
● <b>International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra '35</b> ● <b>(me)dentity – (EU)dentity</b>	The festival and the international residency will be produced by the biggest and most experienced independent cultural force in Nitra Region – <b>Divadelná Nitra Association</b> .
● <b>Break The Ice Festival</b>	The project, festival and the accompanying activities will be co-produced with the <b>Zobor Polar Bears</b> , a local ice-swimming association.
● <b>New (b)Orders</b>	The project exploring new and old borders will be co-produced by <b>Regional Library of Karol Kmetko</b> and <b>Andrej Bagar Theatre</b> .
● <b>We/Us</b>	The colourful portrait of contemporary society will be produced by <b>Nitra Gallery</b> .
● <b>Protesta Festival and Conference</b>	The celebration of protesting will be co-produced by <b>Creative Centre Nitra, the Regional Educational Centre, Mareena Nitra</b> and <b>Hidepark</b> .
● <b>Inter-gen</b>	<b>The Karol Spišák Old Theatre</b> will work on bridging the gap between generations.
● <b>The Theatronauts</b>	The regional tour of travelling theatres will be produced by <b>Teatro Tatro</b> , a Nitra-based travelling theatre and their head, director Ondrej Spišák.
BREAK THE GROUND	
● <b>Gardens of Nitra</b>	The project is a brain-child of <b>Attila Tóth</b> , a renowned landscape architect and the head of the <b>Institute of Landscape Architecture at the Slovak University of Agriculture</b> . The implementation of the series of community gardens along with the participative process of their creation will be coordinated by Attila, the institute, newly created <b>Creative Centre of the Slovak University of Agriculture</b> and local community garden pioneers <b>ČUKETA</b> .
● <b>The Self-Preservation Society</b>	Cultural worker and artisan gin maker <b>Natália Vargová</b> has developed and will coordinate the project. Local restaurants and farms will join. The accompanying Umeňje exhibition produced by <b>Ernest Zmeták Gallery in Nové Zámky</b> will feature well-known artists from Nitra region such as <b>Andrej Dúbravský, Ester Šabíková</b> or <b>Kati Décsi</b> .
● <b>Tired Attires</b>	One half of the project developer – <b>kunerakt fashion collective</b> – is <b>Linda Straková</b> , a creative director and innovation specialist from Nitra with vast international experience.
● <b>Bits &amp; Beats Camp</b>	The music camp connecting technology and arts will be co-produced by the team of Nitra-based multigenre festival experiment <b>Flaam Festival</b>
● <b>Nitra: Future_climate</b>	Multidisciplinary designer and activist <b>Juraj Kusy</b> has developed and will coordinate the project where the invisible threat becomes striking.
● <b>Take Over The Institutions!</b>	<b>All cultural institutions</b> operated by the city and the region in Nitra City will open their arms to the young. We plan to develop a regional extension of the project in 2022.
● <b>Imaginarium Un-limited</b>	<b>The Elementary Art School of J. Rosinský</b> with their dedicated team will coordinate the creation of the opera and the creative camps for children and teenagers. <b>Tomáš Blažek</b> , a professional bagpipe player and a senior member of the <b>Slovak Bagpiper Guild</b> from Nitra will join the creation of the opera.
● <b>The River and Its People</b>	The series of architectural-design workshops are being led by a talented young architect <b>Jakub Samuel</b> .
● <b>Wandering for Miracles</b>	<b>Divadlo Pôtoň</b> led by husband-wife duo of creators and cultural managers Ivetta Ditte Jurčová and Michal Ditte will produce the project in which art connects with nature.



# European dimension

## Q11

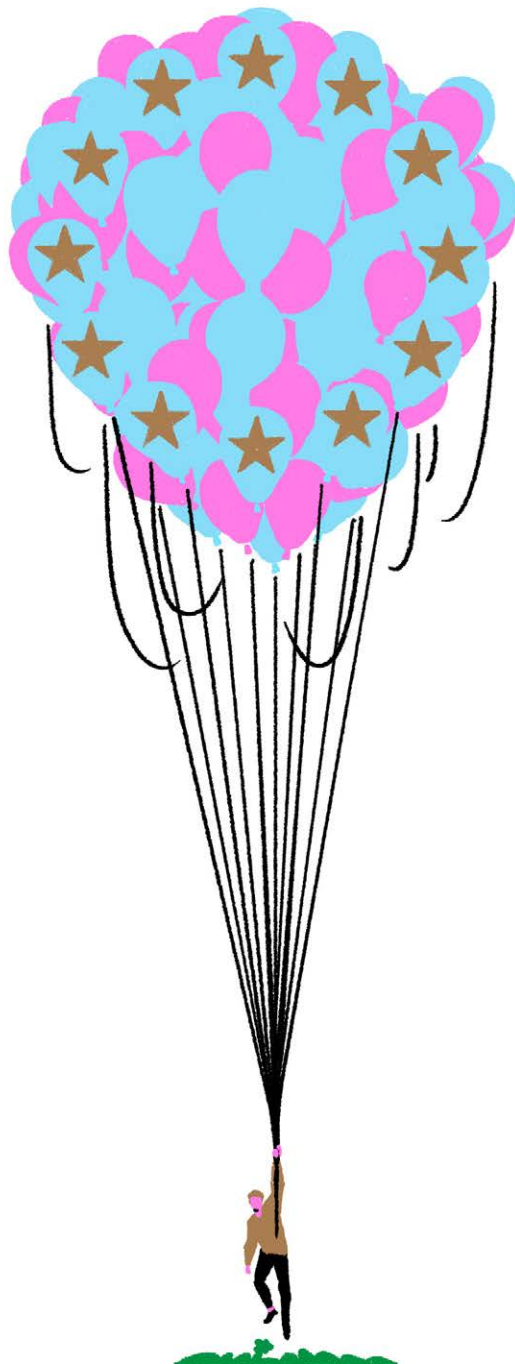
### European themes and cooperation partners

In our preliminary bid book we expressed the hope that Europe would move from breakdown to break free from the pandemic which had us in its strongest grip at the end of last year. Thankfully, or at least hopefully, we can at last see a route to some kind of freedom. **A real breakthrough.**

At both national and European levels, vaccination passports are allowing us to meet up, attend events and to travel. A shared trust in a jointly-developed, pan European system has brought us a huge step forward. For us this is a sign that when we collaborate, trust and share, the outcomes are all the stronger, more effective and more sustainable. **Inspired by that hugely positive example of European collaboration, we thought about how such collaboration might be applied to some of the challenges of cities like Nitra.** Passionate to find “the answer”, but sometimes blocked by selfishness or suspicion (just like with the vaccine). The result is that our cities and regions are held back because too many of us are afraid of what change might bring, of “otherness” or are stuck in a rosy glow of a past that maybe wasn’t all that rosy after all. That’s really at the heart of Breaking Point, and we are increasingly sure that what we are working towards, has a real European relevance as we described in Q1.

#### So what if we designed a cultural vaccine?

A **3 jab process** which would empower you as a person or a place or an organisation to explore the features of an open and inclusive approach to culture in Europe’s cities and regions. The 3 jabs you need to be issued correspond to the three European themes that form the starting point from which we built our concept and programme: **Identity, dialogue and sustainability.**



Looking at Nitra as an example of the European microlevel or looking at the EU, the surrounding European countries, the big players in the world and the many small: The main issues here and there revolve around

- **how we include or exclude people**, history, stories, heritage, to be “us” or “them” (identity)
- **how we talk and especially listen** to each other, the post-factual and conspiracies we manage to break (dialogue)
- **how we are tackling climate change** as a European but especially as a human community through Green Deal, Sustainability Goals and local placemaking (sustainability)

So all of us Europeans need a vaccine that helps us build a resilient system. The three jabs we offer to Europe equate to the 3 Breaks in our artistic programme:

**Jab #1 – Break the Cycle:** The critical and curious exploration of the past and present through honesty and self-reflection.

**Jab #2 – Break the Silence:** The creation of a healthy dialogue which replaces the toxic with healing and humanity.

**Jab #3 – Break the Ground:** A deep commitment to sustainability in the way we treat our natural and built environment.

Developing a 3 jab process will involve the kind of collaborative partnerships which brought us out covid vaccines at breakneck speed. And it also invokes the spirit of experimentation and the testing of new ideas that have been at the very heart of the best ECoCs. That’s absolutely our own approach to Breaking Point. More on this is developed in our plans for Nitra’s communities in the Outreach section.

At the European level, we are taking the same approach of cooperation. **244 international Cooperation partners.** We have worked hard to select them. And we know how we want to work with them. They are equally committed to working in open, participative, sincere and edgy experiments which try to find the answer to the city of possibility.

**Our transnational partnerships** are equally strong and ready to go. We have **40 partners** confirmed from our naturally closest ally – Czech Republic – and another **40 combined** from Ukraine, Hungary, Poland and Austria. We plan to develop these even more to act as a true connective cultural tissue of Central Europe.

Here, linked to the key European themes of identity, dialogue and sustainability, are our 3 jabs which you need to take to be part of our future European story.

# 244 confirmed international partners

# 45 countries

Break the Cycle

Lost. Possible. Future. What does the city of possibility look like? **An exploration of our, sometimes troubled, past can help us unlock the puzzle.** Because it leads to a shared understanding of where we came from and to reframe an exciting vision of future possibilities.

The past was often more modern than we think. How many of our Central European cities can look back on a past that was more comfortable with diversity and difference than today? Lots. We all speak of Slovaks, Hungarians, Germans, Jews coming together to trade and to live and work side by side. Stories of craftspeople, food, the heroes of yesteryear, old factories which were communities as well as workplaces. When we were developing this programme break, we also thought back to the time when this current configuration of Europe came into being. The euphoria which greeted the fall of totalitarianism. A Europe which, with its fusion of western know-how and eastern enthusiasm for freedom heralded a new dawn. The old continent of Europe would have a new energy and purpose. Nowadays it doesn't always feel like that. But that can, surely, change. Seven international artistic teams will examine mutual European heritage, its current transformation and identity in **(me)den-tity – (EU)den-tity** residency; **East of Eden?** will give architects, urbanists and artists a platform to deeply think about urban narratives of Eastern Europe; while **Museum of Parallel Culture** will showcase the presence of cultural unity of Europe even at its darkest hours. Break the Cycle gives

us a chance to revisit our history together with our European partners. It provides a potent way of capturing the way we see ourselves today by re-evaluating our past. It brings out the first value from our Artistic Vision: Openness.

Our flagship project **Nitra Lost. Possible. Future** is a powerful exploration of where we came from and what we could be in the future. We stand at a crucial crossroad as we face our futures. Moving swiftly from one existential threat to another. This project allows us to reimagine Europe's past to gain a sense of new perspective about our common future. That future MUST include many of the traditions which forged our past but don't need to be stuck there: Craft, Folk, Travelling Theatre, Writing. And the impact of the **Unsung Heroes** like the front line staff on whom we so depended during the pandemic. History is often built around the warlike exploits of so-called "great" men. Yet the **Museum of Parallel Culture** shows that great culture often comes from outside the establishment, reflecting what real people are interested in rather than what they are "given". That's a real lesson on audience development! And our future depends on (not so) ordinary people recognising that our greatest strength is our unity, which needs to be nurtured. Even Bowie told us we could be Heroes, even if for one day. That's the message from the vaccine jabs, our cultural jabs and from Break the Cycle.

**Here are some examples of how we are connecting it to European partners and which contribution the projects make towards a European dimension.**

Break the Silence

For us, Break the Silence is fundamentally about rediscovering our humanity. The shared values which lead us to **a healthy dialogue rather than a toxic one.** A true intercultural dialogue in which everyone's view is treated with respect. It is also about learning to listen, really listen, to the views of others rather than dismissing them so that it is a true dialogue rather than a monologue of "correct opinion". Ultimately, as stated in one of our five goals, it's about creating cities worth caring for. Where people care deeply for their city and look after each other.

**We/Us** is just one example of our ability to explore fundamental questions about belonging in our cities and the challenges which minority communities face on a daily basis. As does **Nitra\_diverse.** We want to share with Europe a vision that plurality and diversity are features of real strength in our cities, bringing colour, vibrancy and life. Otherness is challenging in a really good way as it makes us think about our own insularity. It's hard to hate anyone up close and that's why we are putting so much emphasis on projects which encourage intercultural dialogue. **Prison Break** is, we think, a particularly unusual but highly valuable way of showing that people need the support of the community around them.

**Our values of Sincerity, Participation and Synthesis are explored with our European partners as in the examples shown below.**



Slovak University of Agriculture complex with its famous Aula Maxima from the 1960s by acclaimed architect Vladimír Dedeček

Break the Cycle project partner	Project	Contribution
Kristýna Jirátová (CZ)	re:membered	European cultural diversity, shared heritage, European integration
Laurent Binet (FR)	What if...?	Common aspects of European history and heritage
Past / Future / Art Cultural Memory Platform (UA)	Past Continuous	Common European themes, political heritage
Project COAL (FR)	We'll Be What We Eat	European themes: sustainability, future of farming
Kulturodrogerie (AT), Scenocosme (FR), Lise Autogena & Joshua Portway (DK/UK)	The Alley Of Unsung Heroes	Contemporary art, Eastern European history, European themes
Elisabeth Kostova Foundation (BG)	What Would The Brothers Say?	Shared Eastern European heritage, European cultural diversity
Terraforma festival (IT), Het HEM (NL), Gravity – Network of Electronic Music Venues (EU) Oopus (EE), Marie Kalkun (EE)	Re-folk	Shared European folk music heritage, European cultural diversity
Pochen Biennale (DE)	The Museum of Parallel Culture	Eastern European heritage, European cultural diversity
Marie Gourdain (FR)	The Rite of Spring and The Harvest Festival	Reactivating the cultivation gene in Europeans, sustainability
Judit Böroc and Bence György Pálincás (HU)	Play Out!	Empowering children, shared heritage
International Festival of Contemporary Art 4+4 dny v pohybu (CZ), CAMPO (BE), BALTOSCANDAL Festival (EE), Noorderzone Festival (NL), POGON – Zagreb Centre for Independent Culture and Youth (HR)	(me)den-tity – (EU)den-tity	Mutual heritage of Eastern and Western Europe

Break the Silence project partner	Project	Contribution
Tampere Theatre Festival (FI), Oulu Theatre (FI)	Divadelná Nitra '35	Connecting to our partner ECoC in Finland, showcasing European themes of contemporary theatre
Alexandra Pianelli (FR), Zoe Chantre (FR), Bar Altaras (IL), Greg Thomas (UK), Roni Katz (DE), Maciej Bohdanowicz (PL), Karolina Kubik (PL)	We/Us	European themes like minorities and migration, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, intercultural dialogue
Ésacto'Lido (FR), Cirk La Putyka (CZ)	The View from The Cheap Seats	Intercultural dialogue, empowering citizens
IWSA – International Winter Swimming Association, Wim Hof (NL)	Break the Ice Festival	Shared heritage and European cultural diversity, cooperation
Soundczech (CZ), Hungarian Oncoming Tunes (HU), Austrian Music Export (AT)	European Musical Marathon	Showcasing European diversity in music, cooperation
Eddie Stevens (UK)	Nitra, Dear Nitra_rework	Intercultural dialogue, empowering citizens
National Museums Liverpool – House of Memories (UK)	Memory. Cultivated.	Know-how and methodology sharing across Europe
ASA-FF e.V. (DE)	Outside The Boxes	European values and themes, migration, tolerance, integration, intercultural dialogue



Break the Ground

After learning to deal with covid, our next challenge is there to be met head on. Saving our planet. Hottest, wettest, driest, windiest, weirdest. All of these features have happened somewhere in our world this year. **We all need to take responsibility for the sustainability of our lifestyles.** Rethinking everything from our food to our clothes.

Break the Ground for Nitra returns to the very heart of our existence, the fertile soil which makes us our country’s “breadbasket” as we tell the **Story of the Seed**. Returning, literally, to our roots will help us – and our European partners – to find the antidote for the throwaway society that we have become like in **Tired Attires**. And give now meaning and purpose to a shared future. But it’s more than that. Much more. We talked about our value of Ubiquity. Break the Ground isn’t just about nurturing nature, crucial as that is. It’s also about nurturing people. **Gardens of Nitra** is a good example for that. Our famous cultivation gene comes from our fusion of agricultural heritage and an important University which has a strong focus on agriculture.

At the European level, Break the Ground is about growing our own. Things and especially people. The point about cities like Nitra (and many like us) is that we all have talent. **Talent is Ubiquitous**, to use another of our values. But opportunity is much more difficult to find, especially in smaller cities like ours. Break the Ground is absolutely about creating new opportunities for liveable, sustainable cities including fashion, food and art. But especially people.

Examples for exciting project collaborations are shown below.



KOZA Community Garden in Nitra, one of the first and largest community gardens in Slovakia

Break the Ground project partner	Project	Contribution
BOKU – Institute for Landscape Architecture (AT), LE:NOTRE Institute (NL)	Gardens of Nitra	European themes: placemaking, sustainability, community building and empowerment
Benedikt Rejt Gallery (CZ) Alexandre Ralston Bau (FR)	Fields of Multiculture	European themes: Biodiversity, breaking monoculture, sustainability
David Zilber (CA), Sandor Ellix Katz (US), Læsk (DK)	The Self-Preservation Society	European cultural diversity, European themes: sustainability
University of the Arts London (UK), The Swedish School of Textiles (SE), VIA University (DK)	Tired Attires	European themes: sustainability in fashion, cooperation
Chris Messina (US), Halldór Eldjárn (IS)	European Bits & Beats Camp	European themes: art & technology, digitalisation
Numen (AT/HR)	The Story of the Seed	European themes: art & technology, sustainability; European shared heritage
Mood for Wood (PL), Nomad Architects (LV)	River and its People	European themes: river cities, sustainability, blue infrastructure, placemaking, participation
id22 – Institute for Creative Sustainability (DE), ACT – Art Climate Transition (EU), Project COAL (FR)	Nitra: Future_Climate	European themes: sustainability, art & technology

Q12

Strategy to attract the interest of a wider European audience

A year on, Nitra still isn’t yet a tourism magnet. No surprise there. But maybe we sense an opportunity – the pre-pandemic growth of hyper-tourism contrasted by a more or less total ban on international travel since March 2020 (from which our vaccination passports are allowing us to emerge) have given us much food for thought. Many tourist spots have effectively endured “3 winters” and even this year have been operating at 50-60% capacity at best. Yet tourism is an incredibly resilient industry and will inevitably find new ways to rebuild their product, making it more sustainable and spread over a longer period. That’s where culture can come in.

Here in Nitra, we’d like to make our contribution to thinking differently about cultural tourism. Essentially it’s about:

- Having an attractive offer
- Getting people here physically or virtually
- Really looking after people when they connect

We recognise that Nitra’s previous offer was a little uninspiring (we are not alone in Europe in this). But we genuinely believe we can offer something new and attractive to people from all over Europe.

Our offer is a move away from the traditional “City Break” and instead offers very different “Breaks” which are built around our exciting 2026 programme and some aces up our sleeves in communication and marketing. We believe that we can become an exciting example of a smaller city break based around the “golden triangle” of creative industries, (agri)culture and tourism which is central to our NK31 cultural strategy.

The breaks we offer are:

Break out of Bratislava

Less than an hour from Bratislava on a good traffic day and a couple of hours from Vienna. Always part of central Europe, we have a real chance to embed our city on the European map. So we will work on people coming away from the capital to see the real Slovakia. Additionally, in line with our cultural strategy NK31 **we will cooperate with the city and region to diversify the cultural and touristic offer** for new segments of visitors, linking tourism products to regional, national, international tourism projects and cultural

tourism routes. So that we can ween international visitors away from the usual and trodden paths e. g. by offering a dynamic and new interpretation of central European history and heritage in our projects. But also by showing that cutting edge contemporary art does not only happen in the capitals of Europe. Like in our multi-faceted project **Nitra: Lost. Possible. Future.** or in the art exhibition **We/Us** featuring Slovak and European artists looking at the “otherness” in our societies. The Austrian-Croatian collaborative collective Numen will build a giant site-specific installation called **Wicker Basket** by Slovak Agricultural Museum. If that does not make people from far away come out to play...

Break out to the Region

Nitra 2026 is the opportunity to break out to one of the least known cultural diversity pixels of Europe: The Slovak countryside. **Nitra region offers some of the most exciting projects of our programme ready to open this hidden gem for a European and international audience.** For example through the land art project **Fields of Multiculture** or the **Stillwater Currents** where renowned light-artists will make the disused mills of the region shine bright to create a unique experience of art in rural settings. Interesting and quirky nooks and crannies of our cities and villages will be opened up, to liven up and extend the stays of our more adventurous visitors. Best of all, local communities in five cities of the region (so far, and we are aiming at six more) plan an exciting series of weekend theatre festivals under the **Divadelná Nitra\_Polycentricity** project.

Break out of the theatre

Theatregoers of the world unite... and come to Nitra! Together with people trying it for the first time. We plan Central Europe’s biggest theatre festival for 2026 to celebrate the 35th birthday of Divadelná Nitra. As we explained earlier, this festival grew out of opposition to abuses of power in the 1990s. **In 2026, it will be a genuinely European theatre experience with over 20 great works showcasing European themes and being performed over a fantastic summer season.**

Then, the **Theatronauts** brings a new approach to travelling theatre, one of our very favourite cultural forms from the past. Given Nitra’s pedigree as a famous theatre city, this is a call out to many of Europe’s theatre lovers to follow this exciting theatre trail around the region where the theatre balloon will fill visitors and locals with wonder. As with our key value of Ubiquity, great theatre will be everywhere in Nitra 2026 – even up in the sky. This also goes for our favourite saints in **What Would The Brothers Say?** where performance artists of the New Theatre will cooperate with historians, whilst the Karol Spišák Old Theatre work on inter-generational dialogue in their work **Inter-Gen**.



## Break out the music

**How better to attract crowds than with unusual music projects.** Our music programme **European Music Marathon** will bring together over 200 musicians from all over Europe for the audience to enjoy a true 100 h marathon. In **Bits & Beats Camp** 20 music producers from Europe will create previously unheard sounds and noises and perform them in front of a live audience whilst **Re-folk** is to translate folklore music and bring it closer to new generations – and a European crowd that does not hear the traditional in those pieces as we do.

## Break out Europe's cultivation gene

It is high time for Europeans to break out their cultivation gene along with us. **So that citizens everywhere become co-creators, place-makers and city-shapers** like us Nitrančans – taking care of their cities and villages. And we know that it takes the “pollinators” to go out into the world and bring back the inspiration home. With our conferences we invite the pollinators to carry the inspiration back to their home flowers.

**Protesta Festival** concludes with a two-day conference where media experts, activists and philosophers along with students and youth will look at the threats to our European democratic values in the face of the post-factual pull. For **Futur.eu** we invite scientists, climatologists, sociologists, futurists, philosophers, visual artists, writers, AI and IT experts for a three-day conference to look at the future of the EU as we head deeper into the 21st century.

## Break out without breaking out

Almost all projects have digital elements, presentation forms, archives or live streaming. With our series **NR26.digital** spread through all our programme lines we invite Europeans and beyond to join us from afar. Whether you are into archeology and fancy the virtual elements in our project **DiggIt** or visit the online exhibition of the **Museum of Parallel Culture**, the digital library of the literature project **Celemantia – Brigetio**, or chip into the rework of the Nitra anthem in **Nitra, dear Nitra**, develop your cultivation gene by watching the digital docuseries of the **Self-Preservation Society** or get into fashion-making with 3D avatars in **Tired Attires** – we will virtually congratulate you on saving the planet by minimising your carbon footprint.

## Looking after our guests

Our outreach strategy does not only cover the local population, but we aim to build direct connections with our European visitors. **Break The Ice Festival & Sauna on Wheels** and **Cozytown**. **Population: Anyone** are projects designed with this goal in mind. Ever wished you visited a

city and could share time with locals in a living room? **Cozytown**. **Population: Anyone** will be a community space in the city centre that is just that – a big public living room with all its classic equipment and warm comfort. An always open part of the Nitra 2026 Office, it will be a place where anyone can spend the whole day playing, working, reading without having to consume or find out more about Nitra 2026.

And finally, a major feature of our build up years will be a **volunteers and training programme to reach out to each and every person in Nitra who is likely to encounter an international visitor**. With the happiest and healthiest dialogue whatever the conversation covers.

The Sirene by Tibor Bartfay



# Q13

## Connections with other ECoC cities and candidates

**WORK The Network?** Conventional wisdom is that professional ties nowadays are all about networking. But do our European networks actually WORK? Or are they just an empty net? Nitra has made many ECoC friends from right across Europe during our bidding process and established a successful cooperation on the European level. Kaunas, Tartu, Oulu, Nova Gorica/Gorizia – just to name a few as a warm-up. We were hoping to do a lot more physical zooming around Europe and meeting face to face with the people we had zoomed with during the pre-selection phase. But the second wave put an end to that and we continued to wave to Europe from our living rooms and zoom cubby holes.

Our discussions with other ECoCs focused on:

- **artistic programme connectivity and potential partnerships**
- **learning about the practicalities of ECoC experience from candidacy to implementation**

We started close to home with **Košice 2013**. We met with some of the guys who worked on the first Slovak ECoC. We covered the whole ECoC project, both candidacy and implementation and also about the legacy of their continuous capacity building organisation CIKE (Creative Industries Košice). And our **Gardens of Nitra** is to an extent influenced by Košice's SPOTs project, along with some of the other ECoC projects which have tried innovative ways to bring culture to the heart of our communities.

Across the border, with **Plzeň 2015** our discussions helped us connect with relevant European and Czech partners, mostly those connected to the Plzeň 2015 artistic programme – such as the new circus for our projects **The View From The Cheap Seats** or **The Theatronauts**.

With **Plovdiv 2019** we share a lot of our traditional “Slavic” topics with Bulgaria. So we're excited to cooperate with the Plovdiv legacy organisations on adapting the **What Would The Brothers Say?** for their audience. Specifically this will be done through the Elisabeth Kostova Foundation which organises literary residencies.

What we liked about **Matera 2019** was the way they presented their incredible cultural heritage through innovative forms. We are ambitious to



do the same through Break the Cycle. Success for us would very much mean that we have used our past to learn how to build a successful future. We would also be very happy if Nitra became the key location for a future Bond movie. Maybe here a bike chase through the fields than a car chase. A bit slower than a car chase but definitely more sustainable (and similarly scenic!).

With **Novi Sad 2022**, we plan **Bridge Novi Sad – Nitra** – a project of integration for the Serbian migrants in Nitra by presenting its culture and art, especially at the **Nitra\_diverse**. We also share an interest in work with young volunteers.

Former candidate city of Cluj Napoca inspired us how high you can reach when you get dealt the losing cards. We have joined their **Culture Next Network**, made friends with many of its members and are looking forward to exchanges in capacity building and sharing know-how.

Our **Museum of Parallel Culture** will include partners from artists / institutions / collectives and experts from the former Eastern Bloc and Balkan ECoCs dealing with the topic of “underground culture during totality” or “cultural life during totality”. For example, **Chemnitz 2025** partnered us up with Pochen Biennale – the curators of their Eastern State of Mind line – with whom we will prepare the pop-up bus museum.

**The Self-Preservation Society** – will include ECoC cities working with communities to provide their special techniques and recipes, also encouraging food producers from their regions. Along with the **Gardens of Nitra** and **Tired Attires** it's one of our ways to make the urbanites into proud producers that their ancestors were – and we share the same goal with our friends from **Tartu 2024** (Curated Biodiversity, Growing with Your Food) and **Nova Gorica/Gorizia 2025** (Ecotreads and Bien). Tartu's Estonian Agricultural Museum will also help us with the **Story of the Seed** revitalisation of our own Slovak Agricultural Museum in Nitra.

**Imaginarium: Un-limited will involve** elementary art schools from other ECoCs (mostly our twin ECoC – Oulu) for developing cooperation projects, residencies, and summer camps and to share experiences of good arts education practice within our “cultivation gene” line.

**Kaunas 2022** has inspired us especially through their exploration of identity and memory. Nitra is a city recognised as the oldest Slovak city, but we need to develop more contemporary perspectives on our heritage and identity as set out in Break the Cycle. Identity (collective amnesia), brain drain, university city are all topics we'd like to share with fellow ECoCs, many of whom are interested in these topics. Kaunas's **Centuryans** project also inspired our

**Take Over The Institutions!** and we are happy they will share their know-how for how to prepare the younglings to overthrow the cultural life in the city for a while. We also want to **refresh our museum model** to make them more attractive to new groups of visitors. We share that aim with **Kaunas 2022** (Wake it, Shake it) and **Bad Ischl 2024** (Inside Out).

And the **Sauna on Wheels** will connect us to the **2026 Finnish ECoC, Oulu**. We also see good parallels between **Gardens of Nitra** and Oulu's Creative Villages programme and Divadelná Nitra Festival will work with their Hybridise Your Festival network, while Oulu's Deep Space project connects to our Future.eu. We also hope that Tampere and Savonlinna will continue with the projects we have identified for joint development.

As we were approaching the end of our candidacy process, a narrative arc of sorts came to a close. While in 2020 we went and asked for help around Europe, now we were the ones being asked. We were approached or visited personally by **all the Czech candidate cities for the ECoC 2028**, with which we gladly shared our know-how and made valuable connections. We also met in person with the team of **Skopje 2028** (with which we share the tradition of The Brothers!) and held calls with most of the **Portuguese and Latvian 2027 ECoC** candidates talking about our process but also thematic overlaps and possible future partnerships.

On reflection, this networking business has a lot to recommend it. We've learned a lot already. And we realise we still have a long way to go. A good example is **Veszprém**, which is both our twin city and a successful ECoC pal – and our collaboration has been more than mutually enriching so far.

We will come up with new collaborations, such as artist exchange and international projects, to make this network rise and shine again. Also, we shall not forget about other allied ECoC cities and further deepen our relationship by incorporating them into our cultural events.

● Countries with confirmed partnerships (no. of confirmed partners)  
● Countries with partnerships to be developed



# Outreach



## Q14

### Involvement of local population and civil society

**Breaking Point is a long-term vision.** An important contributor to this vision is the broader public along with groups with specific diversity profiles. This year not only did we learn more about our local groups and their needs – but we also looked more at how participation and involvement could work for our European and international visitors.

In the first round we did a lot to reach and learn from Nitra's local communities. It included 1,234 (!) respondents to our ECoC questionnaire, a graffiti wall on the main square, qualitative interviews, our special "Communities" working group. 15 representatives of organisations working with specific diversity profile groups also assisted us every step of the way (see Q15).

We jump started the conversation on the most pressing topics people raised with us starting with an online **series of 5 public debates** from April to July 2021 under the title **Nitra 2026 for All**. They informed not only our Outreach strategy, but also influenced how we foresee the long-term impacts of the Nitra 2026 ECoC. More than **200 people** shared their insights, ideas, recommendations and concerns.

**Debate 1** presented the **plans for Nitra 2026** in detail as well as examining ways that local people could participate in the process. **Debate 2 – Foreigners in Nitra** identified a language barrier, almost non-existent sources of information on cultural and leisure opportunities in English and lack of inclusive spaces to socialise. **Debate 3 – Nitra as a Transit Station** brought up similar issues talking to our younger expats and young Nitranchans still living in Nitra. Both groups from debates 2 and 3 are keen to participate in inclusive cultural activities. They prefer the activities outdoors in multifunctional, open and greener public spaces, revitalised pedestrian and recreational zones that would *"connect them to other people, communities and interesting spaces from Nitra's centre to its periphery"*. The **Gardens of Nitra** flagship project will provide just that. Language barriers will be broken down with our marketing strategy stocked with tailor-made inclusive initiatives (e.g. **European re:union** with our expats). Question 15 provides more examples. **Debate 4** was on the topic of **Nitra and its Identity** with local historians. It was instrumental in lighting the path on our way to become a community of re:members. **Debate 5** looked at **Ecology in Culture** with representatives of cultural institutions and environmental organisations. This is where programme initiative Green Culture and monitoring initiative Carbon Inventory was born.

We were happy with Nitra's public coming to us, but that wasn't enough. So, after the lifting of restrictions, we were itching to go to them. And we didn't go empty handed! During July 2021 we organised a string of concerts with local musicians – **Nitra 2026 on the Road: Culture under your Windows**. We visited two of the biggest housing estates, Chrenová and Klokočina, performing the concerts at Social Services Facility "Nitrava" for the elderly, Nitra's bus station and fair in Nové Zámky City. But it wasn't just about bringing culture to unusual spaces. We had a hidden agenda! During the concerts we conducted **focus groups** with attendees and people walking by. Our topics were diverse – we talked about what they were missing in their communities that Nitra 2026 could bring them, the role of culture in their lives and issues of accessibility to cultural amenities and events. Most **housing estate dwellers** were hungry for more culture and community activities anywhere. Public spaces, green areas, streets and even roofs... and one called the cops on us! Heeding their warning that some of our fellow Nitranchans value their peace and quiet, projects like **Gardens of Nitra** will be co-designed and co-managed by local communities working with the city management, university researchers and NGOs.

We are inspired by our conversations with Nitranchans. We are passionate about using Nitra 2026 to transform Nitra into a

truly human-centred city and our citizens into place-makers and city-shapers. And in many of our projects they will become active participants and co-creators. For example, in our flagship **Nitra: Lost. Possible. Future.** local communities will bring their memories, dreams and alternate pathways to life. Our oldest living Nitranchans will rediscover forgotten layers of **Nitra: Lost.** through testimonials of families that were **Torn Apart** by the previous regimes and **re:membered** mementos, customs and old recipes of families still living here. Our local historians will ask **What if?** in **Nitra: Possible.**, our pre-schoolers, pupils, teens and university students will dream of **Nitra: Future.** Our local urbanists and architects (e.g. Architects of Nitra Association) will help artists to look for the city of possible in **East of Eden?** Local citizens and communities are also co-creators of **Survivors?!** project as witnesses of our region's agricultural heritage. But to preserve it for future generations project **Play Out!** brings together local children and youth, craftspeople and ethnologists to co-design playgrounds across the region using traditional technologies and materials. Some of our neighbours will even become the art themselves in **The Alley of Unsung Heroes**, while stories of our former neighbours from emigrant families will be immortalised in the project **The Calls From Behind the Wall**. All of them will have a unique opportunity – to become composers of our revamped local anthem through a live and an online collaborative process in **NR26. Digital – Nitra, dear Nitra\_Rework**. Lastly, given our strong orientation towards agriculture, even the local farmers and landowners will find themselves working on **Fields of Multiculture** and along with local artisans, producers, experts and our seniors sharing their wisdom within **The Self-Preservation Society**.

To ensure the sustainability of our user-centric approach, at the heart of Nitra 2026 will be our **Communities** and **NitroLabs**. These **living labs**, although in their infancy, informal and with fuzzy borders have a great potential, which we are already tapping into. To maintain and further develop these ties, our Regional Coordinator and Outreach Officer will cooperate with **30 Community Activators** embedded in local and regional communities to strengthen user engagement and utilise advantages of participatory marketing approaches. 15 of those will cover regional communities beyond the City of Nitra and the rest will build relationships with our local communities in the city (of those, 7 will be chosen from each city district committee and 8 will represent groups of citizens with specific characteristics – Roma, seniors, persons with disabilities, students, migrants, children and youth, etc.).

This is the **who, when and where**. The **how** is described through our audience development strategy in Q16.



# Q15

Opportunities for vulnerable groups to attend or participate in cultural activities

## City of parallel lives

Many fault lines run through the city. There are those that are apparent, but some are still invisible to the naked eye. Some were formed over a longer time period, others are just emerging with the increasingly changing sociotope of the city. Some we share with our European neighbours, some are unique to us. But most of them became even more isolating with each new wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. We developed and tested several initiatives that ensure that **inclusivity is driven deep into the heart of all facets of the Nitra 2026 ECoC**.

## Breaking the physical barriers

There are around **9,650** people with severe disabilities in the Nitra district. Architectural, transport, information and other barriers that prevent people with special needs from accessing the resources and commodities, including the cultural infrastructure available to the intact population are still present in the city. The City of Nitra and the Union of the Blind and Visually Impaired of Slovakia developed an **Accessibility Strategy: Nitra City for All**. Building on these efforts we are working with **strong partners in this mission** – especially E.F.F.E.T.A (organisation for deaf people), Sports Club of Physically Handicapped Persons, and cultural stakeholders implementing projects (f.e. New Theatre, Association Divadelná Nitra). Strong digital components under the **NR26. digital** umbrella initiative open a new dimension of cultural space and take physical distance out of the equation. Projects such as **re: membered or radio plays as a part of the Museum of Parallel Culture, Divadelná Nitra\_Polycentricity** provide full-value and active experiences connected with co-creation for people who are stuck at home. In the **empathy volunteering programme** we use the potential of the student community for tandem volunteering either live or using digital means.

## Breaking the Age Barrier

You're never too old to enjoy your life! – is the lesson we learned from the active senior club in Levice. But we don't want to end with already active people. Our intent is to engage seniors staying behind the walls of their houses or

retirement homes as well. Our secret tool to reach them is active engagement and inter-generational connection. We have at least one common topic for dialogue – their memories and experiences. Our **Nitra 2026 on the Road** outreach initiative has shown us that seniors above all like to have a chat. They would rather call you than text you. Speech is their favourite medium. So let's give them an opportunity to discuss. And chip in some art too. During 2021 and together with Post-Bellum, we have already started to document their **testimonies of the 20th century** connected to or remembered from living under a totalitarian regime. 10 documented stories of the Nitra region will be presented to the public in October 2021 live and online. Similar methodology will be used in the project **Play Out!** – in which children will be given the role of investigators of the agricultural past, mediating stories of seniors in the region. The **Project Inter-Gen** provides a connection with the senior generation in the Old Theatre – connected predominantly with kids and youth. Memory is the centre point of the unique project **Memory. Cultivated**. It is devoted to those who live with different forms of dementia. By developing a methodology for memory cultivation in cultural institutions in the Nitra Region we try to prevent the disappearance of these people's ability to enjoy cultural experiences. Inhabitants of Nitra's retirement homes had the chance to be the first ones to experience our break-the-walls approach. Its mission will be followed by **The View from the Cheap Seats** project, as well as the AD project **Art-Breaks**, providing co-creation experiences in homes for the elderly.

For those who want to be even more active, we provide **art classes for seniors and special intergenerational classes**, connecting children and (grand)parents (**A Shoulder to Crayon**) as well as tandem volunteering with young people (live or online). Our digital projects focused on IT skills, critical thinking workshops and IT equipment for retirement homes will start to work with these groups in 2022.

## Breaking the cultural barriers of new settlers

The total number of registered migrants currently living in Nitra district is **5,143** (48% of them coming from EU/EEA countries and 52% from non-EU/EEA countries). They are seen as a symptom of recent changes that some of our fellow Nitranchans didn't want. But for Nitra 2026, their mere participation won't cut it. We aspire to bring those who have been side-lined for too long to centre field as co-creators.

Looking forward into the future, **Outside the Boxes** and **pop-up folkekokken kitchens** will join our new minorities with Nitranchans for a meal and one common goal: to overhaul the grim looking spaces of the industrial park that jail the

## Outreach



One of the Nitra 2026 on the Road concerts at Social Services Facility Nitrava for the elderly

former and remain an eyesore for the latter. We also plan to integrate the activities of the newly established **Community Centre for Work and Knowledge Mobility in Nitra (COMIN)**, aimed at supporting social inclusion of foreigners living in Nitra through their participation in preservation and restoration jobs and cultural heritage education.

## Breaking the barriers towards the Roma community

There is a minority in Nitra that many do not want to see at all. The intensified negative attitudes towards the **Roma community** have led to an increase in residential segregation and gradual emergence of three exclusively Roma schools. Incidentally, these will be our point of entry into the community. Well, less incidentally and more intentionally. To devise our outreach strategy, we consulted with the **Director of the Regional Coordination Department of the Government's Plenipotentiary for the Development of Roma Communities**, teachers and social workers working in Roma neighbourhoods and communities themselves. We conducted a **focus group and an interactive workshop** exploring topics of segregation, participation in cultural activities and their role in the lives of Nitra's Roma people. **Roma schoolchildren** aged 12-15 told us they visit cultural venues only as a school activity and are *"mostly bored there"*. They frequent and feel happiest in shopping centres, clubs, by the water and listening to music. This is how we found the people for **The River and its People** project

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and decided to follow them into the shopping centres with **guerilla cultural events** that are a part of our marketing strategy. The audience development project **Art-Breaks** providing active theatrical, musical and visual art experiences in schools with Roma majority was also designed with active participation of relevant local stakeholders. We paint a nice inclusive picture of the future, but there is not a moment too soon to start the ball rolling. To break ground, the city with the ECoC team entered an **URBACT project OnStage** starting in 2021. The project aims to introduce a new model of music school that uses music as a building block to create a space for social cohesion and change, tackling issues such as exclusion, youth unemployment and school dropout rates.

## Breaking the barriers of Hungarian-speaking islands

Segregation doesn't end at city borders. Venturing beyond, we find several **Hungarian-speaking** islands across the region. The involvement of both Slovak Hungarian theatres (Thalia Színhász in New (b)Orders, Jókai Theatre in Nitra\_diverse) will help us build their bridges to the "mainland". The project **New (b)Orders** will take a sore topic of shifting national borders from the political arena onto the theatre stage, where Slovak and Hungarian historians, civic associations and local communities will take part in an effort to break the cycle of hurt and rabble-rousing public discourse. On a lighter note, the **Art-Breaks** project ventures to Hungarian

## Outreach



speaking schools as well! We also banded together with local NGOs, institutions and cultural actors to bring all of these communities together. For therapeutic art workshops in **The Upper Town Funk**, community-oriented activities in **Nitra\_diverse** and just to chill in **Cozytown: Population – Anyone**.

### Breaking the literal bars

During the Covid-19 pandemic, we all got our taste of isolation and its multifaceted impact on our wellbeing and mental health. But there are those for whom isolation is just life. The **only Slovak women-only prison is located in Nitra**. It houses minimum, medium and maximum security female prisoners along with juvenile convicts. The youngest prisoner is 18 years old, the oldest is 76. With its 354 inmate capacity, it's bursting at the seams. We wouldn't be true to our sincerity principle and the Breaking Point concept, if we didn't think about those who experienced it in the harshest meaning of the word. We can't break them out literally, but we can break their life stories with a **Digital Living Library** project. While pondering the gender aspect of our inclusion strategy, we decided to make the Living Library all about women – convicts, migrants, Roma women, single mothers and widows, who all face prejudice and exclusion in society. The Living Library will uncover and fight prejudices and stereotypes about these groups of women or the life situations they experience. The project will be a great tool in our arsenal that will bring people closer and teach us to respect human dignity and individuality. Digitised content of the Living Library will be an input for the **I-solated** residencies. Its artistic adaptation will be presented at the recreational facilities of the prison, retirement homes, Roma quarters, etc. completing the full circle.

### Breaking all kinds of barriers

Members of the team, under the baton of the Hidepark community and researchers from the Slovak University of Agriculture organised an afternoon walk along the Nitra River **with 13 representatives of diverse communities** (local inhabitants, migrants, people with disabilities, the elderly, students, representatives of cultural institutions and civic society etc.). We talked about their views of culture in public spaces, their accessibility for disadvantaged groups and possibilities of revitalisation and reuse of untended spaces along the river. This will tie into the project **The River and Its People**. The architect Jakub Samuel will involve diverse local communities in co-designing and revitalising the river into a functional public space again. **Open Pasta Kitchen** is an integration project that offers marginalised groups (homeless people, the deaf, physically disadvantaged etc) employment in a sheltered workshop focused on the production of homemade Nitra pasta – slíže.

### Mending the broken hearts

Acceptance of sexual minorities in Slovakia is amongst the lowest in the whole of Europe. And while culture is generally inclusive and safe space to be in, we think we can still do more to break the status quo of LGBTQ+ community not only in Nitra Region. That's why one of the important topics of **We/Us** project by Nitra Gallery is the inclusion of art that is breaking the hetero-normative standards and shining light on the brave ones who manifest their sexual identity or preference freely – which should not be an act of bravery at all. Supporting this message will be interventions in public spaces, performances complementing the art pieces or discussions with the authors and performers from sexual minorities.

### No barriers to break for volunteering

Due to the presence of Nitra's universities the basis of volunteering is relatively strong and we are sure that we can activate those and more volunteers for the Nitra 2026 programme. In an additional **empathy volunteering programme**, students gain a chance to burst their bubble of "normal" life by creating tandem with seniors (as described above), Roma people, labour migrants, blind or deaf people. A line of the volunteering programme will be developed through digital technologies and non-contact forms, so we can also reach those who have to stay home.

Volunteers helping with a reconstruction of a functionalist bank in Nitra City centre into an independent cultural centre bod.K7



# Q16

## Audience development, education and the participation of schools

### Reactivating The Cultivation Gene

Our audience development strategy is aimed at the re-activation of the **cultivation gene of Nitra's inhabitants** – an engine not only driving agriculture but artistic creation, too. The cultivation gene is a need for creation, the need to make things grow, develop, improve, and benefit people, that we carry as descendants of former agro-generations of European civilisation. Reawakening the cultivation gene will work through reactivating our relationship with the soil and cultural participation activities that are based on...

- Long-term engagement, not just one-time contacts
- Audience encouragement to becoming co-creators as well as spectators
- Connection with diverse groups as a source of inspiration
- Multidisciplinary approaches developed between our cultural partners Polycentric model and spreading the strategy through region
- A solid base gained by regular research of the audience.

### New challenges that have arisen due to COVID-19 pandemic:

- To secure active contact with art and community in a time of limited contacts, to experiment with digital technologies, hybrid forms and other epidemic ways at all levels (at audience development, too);
- To provide special attention to those who were affected by COVID the most, such as seniors or people with weaker immune systems, and to battle with the negative effects of COVID on mental health.

### Goals of the Cultivation Strategy

- The goals of reactivating the cultivation gene and implementing an audience development scheme are:
- To interlink different groups into one active community of Nitračan re:members who bring new impulses for the city and its cultural development
- To encourage citizens to develop new relationships towards culture and arts, but also towards community

- To invite citizens to develop dialogue about cultural heritage, local identity, contemporary society
- To help not to repeat mistakes of previous generations, to learn from the past
- To encourage interest in agriculture and ecology
- To break barriers that prevent cultural experience for specific groups and allow them to be part of the wider community
- To develop critical thinking and to stop conspiracy theories and hoaxes, to support IT knowledge and skills among civic society
- To research and to gain information about existing and potential audiences and specific groups.

The AD strategy follows the **Strategy for the Development of Culture and Creative Industries in Nitra NK31**, especially its specific line **Everyone for Culture! Culture for Everyone!**

### Existing Good Practice

**We do some good things already. And we want to build on them.** For example, a pioneer of audience engagement in the field of performing arts in Nitra is the Divadelná Nitra Association – main organiser of the International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra. The Association works with volunteers, organises a wide range of local and international participatory projects and provides non-formal education for secondary schools and university humanitarian departments. Every year the Association organises an international residency for young European critics, provides year-round art and integrational activities for blind children across Slovakia and is a member of the European network Be SpectACTIVE! In 2021, the Association founded point.K7 – the first year-round centre for culture, creativity and community situated in the main pedestrian zone of Nitra. In addition, the **Andrej Bagar Theatre** and the **Old Theatre** provide some audience development activities, mostly focusing on schools. **Nitra's Gallery and Museum** is focused mostly on creative workshops during school holidays. A pioneer of AD projects in the region is the **Pôtoň Theatre** focused on themes of regional identity, cultural memory, ecology, and cultural understanding.

### Our Audience development strategy at schools

Relics of the Cultivation gene in the youngest generations suffered from the abolition of school gardens and practical farming lessons in the 2000s. Gardens of Nitra in its school edition will revitalise this relation as will the Slovak Agricultural Museum in Nitra in the framework of its **Seedlings** project. In relation to schools and universities, our AD strategy is focused on the **reawakening of active contact with art for the pupils and students as a strong initiator of**



**further interest in culture and society.** We created the project **Art-Breaks**, a community project focused on elementary and secondary schools and seniors, taking place in schools and retirement homes. Displays of artistic production will be accompanied by creative workshops. Special focus will be devoted to schools with Roma and Hungarian minorities children and seniors.

As the ECoC works a lot with digital content, we will get kids at school ready for it by our AD project **Neo-Critical Revolution**. It provides lectures, discussions and workshops to support digital responsibility and literacy. Vila K and other partners bring the memories of witnesses of totalism to different audiences. The project is aimed at children and young people (especially teenagers), middle-age groups and seniors, marginalised and disadvantaged groups (Roma and Hungarian children and youth). Unable to wait, we have already launched an **outreach initiative “Nitra of the Future”**, challenging schoolchildren and students to express their opinion on how our city should look by means of drawings, essays or poems. **83 works from 17 schools** were submitted. Some of them ignited discussions in our team and an idea “to connect with a senior” of 10-year old Kristína found its way into our outreach strategy as the **empathy volunteering** initiative. We plan to make this approach a permanent feature of Nitra 2026 and ask the youngsters for advice on various topics regularly.

**Nitra as Univer(se)city**

The AD strategy mediates the active experience of culture also for a part of 13,000 students at Nitra’s university. They are mainly targeted in our capacity-building programme. Additionally, university spinoffs as folklore ensembles (Zobor and Ponitran), the VYDI Theater, the Osmička Theater, the UKF Creative Studio, other leisure and sports clubs play a firm role in our artistic programme as e.g. in the project **The Rite of Spring & The Harvest Festival** or in **Take Over The Institutions!**

**Cultural Education**

After finishing education participants are confronted with a sudden loss of opportunities for artistic activities that they have between age 4 and 25 in 30 art schools which 15,000 young people are enrolled in. They also face other barriers to involvement (careers, family etc). Unless they enroll in expensive art classes, the result is that after age 25 many become passive users or non-users. Our strategy is to develop Nitra as **a life-long culture education platform** for professionals and active amateurs. It starts with two crucial steps that help in the cultivation of creative potential for children Firstly, to supplement a needed infrastructure (infrastructure project

**Imaginarium.** ) And secondly, to fill it with un-limited programme (artistic project **Imaginarium: Un-limited**).

The project **A Shoulder to Crayon** provides art-classes for young adults, seniors and special intergenerational classes – children and (grand) parents. It enables continuation with non-professional artistic education after age 25 at a much reduced cost and 1-day workshops in cooperation with KOS – Centre for Amateur Culture and Elementary art schools.

**Audience Development Research Base (2021 – 2031)**

In order to close existing gaps we plan a major practice-oriented research programme with an international research team (University of Constantine The Philosopher and University Montpellier – the CEPEL). This research will not only help us design better experiences for our audiences. It will also contain capacity building workshops for audience development, participation and volunteering for the cultural operators and NGOs in Nitra region. The project will happen in cooperation with the Creative Centre Nitra and Iuventa.

**Cultivating our audiences across Nitra**

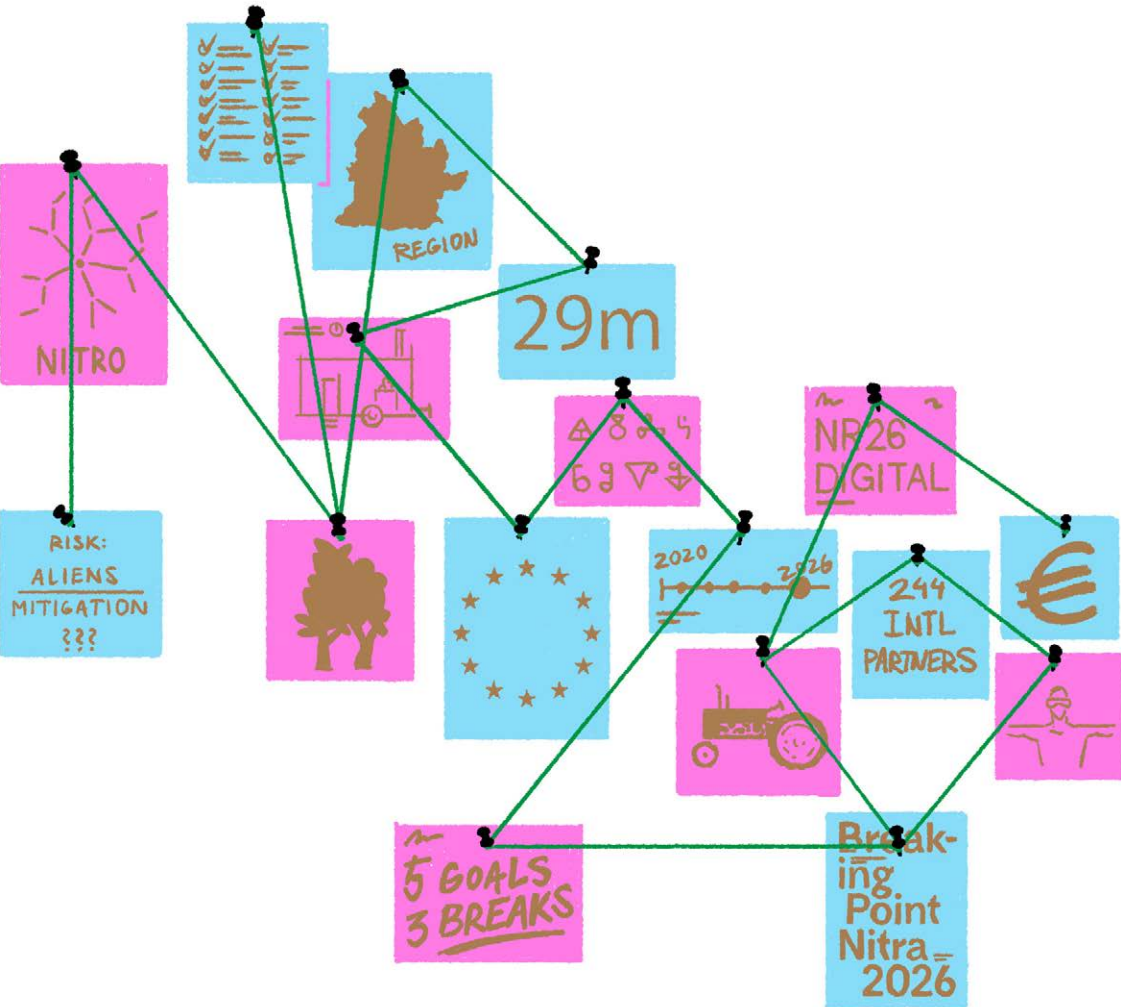
During the selection phase we have had the opportunity to test some of our audience development plans and we gained more insights through contacts with citizens and partners. What we see is mainly openness of people to be seen and heard and get a forum for participation. **This is what the reactivation of the Cultivation Gene is all about. With our AD strategy we provide the soil, the water and the sunshine.**

The table on the following page sets out a comprehensive summary of the groups we plan to address through our audience development strategy and the key strategies to achieve our goals. It shows how we will **reactivate the cultivation gene to embrace all of our communities, including – perhaps especially – the more marginalised.**

Most of the projects mentioned in the table are described in our artistic program and are marked with a hashtag **#audiencedevelopment**.

Who?	Group features	Barriers	Our reach-out strategies	Main projects
Children and young people (0-25 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Includes a large group of students</li><li>● Lots of free time</li><li>● Attracted by new ideas and playful content</li><li>● Easy to reach children through school partnerships</li><li>● Huge potential audience for the future – we can’t ignore that</li><li>● Interested in cinemas, theatres, concerts and festivals (19 – 25 years)</li><li>● Only average interest in museums, low interest in galleries</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Limited regular contacts with culture and arts</li><li>● Passive cultural experience</li><li>● Disinterest from parents and families</li><li>● Negative experiences with “boring obligatory” cultural visits</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Close cooperation with schools and universities</li><li>● Stimulate mediators (parents, teachers, student parliament)</li><li>● Provide extraordinary, active and creative experiences</li><li>● Encourage and develop the need to create (cultivation gene)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Nitra: Lost. Possible. Future.</li><li>● The Alley of Unsung Heroes</li><li>● A Case for Crafts</li><li>● Play Out!</li><li>● Agora Trianon</li><li>● Story of the Seed</li><li>● Take Over the Institutions!</li></ul> <p><b>Extra Audience Development projects:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Art-Breaks (schools)</li><li>● Empathy volunteering programme</li><li>● Seedlings</li><li>● Neo-Critical Revolution</li><li>● Cozytown. Population: Anyone</li></ul>
Young adults and families (25 – 40 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Includes people who went to arts schools during their school years but then stop</li><li>● Group with existing potential for regional development</li><li>● Many of them leave (brain drain)</li><li>● Migration out of the region or leaving from regional villages</li><li>● Concentration on individual life, no emphasis on community</li><li>● Educated participants that face new barriers connected with finishing university (looking for jobs and starting a career)</li><li>● High interest in cinemas, concerts, festivals,</li><li>● Average interest in theatre and museums,</li><li>● low interest in galleries and debates</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Time limitations</li><li>● Irregular schedules, no routine</li><li>● Loss of “obligatory” contact with art at schools</li><li>● Concentration of culture in the city centre</li><li>● High fees of artistic schools for adults</li><li>● Pressure on parents with children</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Develop a wider and more flexible programme which can fit with different time demands</li><li>● Provide more active and exciting experiences and cultural offer</li><li>● Combined activities that parents and children can go to together</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Nitra: Lost. Possible. Future.</li><li>● What Would The Brothers Say?</li><li>● Nitra, Dear Nitra_Rework</li><li>● The Upper Town Funk</li><li>● Gardens of Nitra</li><li>● The Self-Preservation Society</li><li>● Fields of Multiculture</li></ul> <p><b>Extra Audience Development projects:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● A Shoulder to Crayon</li><li>● Empathy volunteering programme</li><li>● Seedlings</li><li>● Neo-Critical revolution</li><li>● Cozytown. Population: Anyone</li></ul>
Senior citizens (65+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Including elderly in seniors’ clubs, retirement home, also individuals</li><li>● Lots of free time</li><li>● Keen to be heard, bearers of the “living archives” tradition</li><li>● Lack of activities for this group in the core cultural offer</li><li>● High interest in theatre, low interest in cinemas, discussions</li><li>● Active participation in seniors’ folk, theatre and singing groups</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● More difficult financial circumstances</li><li>● Isolation of many individuals</li><li>● Physical vulnerability and fear -say of going out at night</li><li>● Decreased mobility combined with a concentration of culture in the centre</li><li>● Strong impacts of pandemic on this group</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Increased cooperation with seniors’ clubs and organisations</li><li>● Encouraging people to pass on their skills, knowledge, storytelling activities, recording of memories</li><li>● Increased focus on intergenerational exchange</li><li>● Building more opportunities for social contact, especially for people on their own</li><li>● Cross-regional activities that bring people together</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Nitra: Lost. Possible. Future.</li><li>● Play out!</li><li>● Nitra, dear Nitra_Rework</li><li>● The View From The Cheap Seats</li><li>● I-solated</li><li>● Memory. Cultivated.</li><li>● Gardens of Nitra</li><li>● The Self-Preservation Society</li><li>● Fields of Multiculture</li></ul> <p><b>Extra Audience Development projects:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Art-Breaks (seniors)</li><li>● A Shoulder to Crayon</li><li>● Empathy volunteering programme</li><li>● Seedlings</li><li>● Neo-Critical Revolution</li><li>● Cozytown. Population: Anyone</li></ul>
Marginalised and disadvantaged groups (all ages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Disadvantaged and marginalised people of all ages especially those most affected by the pandemic</li><li>● Serious barriers to taking part in culture</li><li>● Heterogeneous groups with different needs</li><li>● Low contacts between these and other communities in Nitra</li><li>● Build on existing cultural workshops for small groups of disabled children</li><li>● See this group as a source of inspiration on diversity rather than a “problem”</li><li>● Including specif groups, f.e. women in the women prison, labour migrants in factories</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Social, cultural, physical and mental barriers</li><li>● Language barriers for Roma, Hungarians, new minorities</li><li>● Impacts of pandemic on ability to integrate</li><li>● A group of people with strong epidemic barriers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Cooperation with experts for new ideas and strategies</li><li>● Using contact with professional organisations and initiatives</li><li>● New and regular events to encourage participation</li><li>● Promoting the therapeutic function of art for people who need support</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Nitra, dear Nitra_Rework</li><li>● Nitra_diverse</li><li>● I-solated</li><li>● Gardens of Nitra</li><li>● Fields of Multiculture</li></ul> <p><b>Extra Audience Development projects:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Art-Breaks (specific groups)</li><li>● Empathy volunteering programme</li><li>● Seedlings</li><li>● Neo-Critical Revolution</li><li>● Open Pasta Kitchen</li><li>● Cozytown. Population: Anyone</li></ul>
Amateurs (AD to keep people connected to art)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Students of elementary and secondary art schools, amateurs in drama clubs, folk groups and active seniors, students’ group at universities</li><li>● Big potential within this group</li><li>● Additional need for other development and growth, especially for active kids</li><li>● Large group are students of elementary arts schools</li><li>● Active drama clubs around the city Zlaté Moravce</li><li>● Active seniors’ clubs – folk, drama, signing and leisure time and crafts</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Already active and regular contact with culture and art</li><li>● Need more contact with international culture and artists</li><li>● Insufficient contact with professionals and multi genre cooperation projects</li><li>● Risk of new barriers blocking participation (ending education and busy work and family pressures)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Increased co-production with professionals, local, national and international artists</li><li>● More multidisciplinary projects and opportunities</li><li>● Keeping contact with art and culture after finishing education.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● The Upper Town Funk</li><li>● The International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra 35’</li><li>● Imaginarium Un-limited</li></ul> <p><b>Extra Audience Development projects:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● A Shoulder to Crayon</li><li>● Cultivator Capacity Building</li></ul>

# Management



## Q17

Total operating budget

Total income to cover operating expenditure (in euros)	From the public sector (in euros)	From the public sector (in %)	From the private sector (in euros)	From the private sector (in %)
29,000,000	27,500,000	95	1,500,000	5

## Q18

Income from the public sector to cover operating expenditure

From the public sector to cover operating expenditure	In euros	In %
National Government	15,000,000	55
City of Nitra	5,000,000	18
Nitra Region	5,000,000	18
Regional cities	1,300,000*	5
EU (with exception of the Melina Mercouri Prize)	1,200,000	4
Total	27,500,000	100

\*based on current state of negotiations with regional cities as explained in Q19

The Government of the Slovak Republic has not yet made an official decision on how much it intends to allocate to ECoC 2026 for operational expenditure. Since preselection phase we have slightly reduced the expected funds from the national government because we could add some funds from the regional cities. We aligned

the presented contribution from the national government with the two other shortlisted Slovak candidate cities. The EU funding we indicate here reflects the estimated influx of funds from EU programmes for the Nitra 2026 cultural and artistic programme. More in Q20.

## Q19

City/region/state financial commitments to cover operating expenditure

Nitra City Council had already approved in November 2020 the self-financing proposal for the city budget of 5 m euros for ECoC 2026 operating expenditure. In June 2021 an updated proposal was approved which included a timetable for operating expenditure for the 2022 – 2027 period. The approved budget is intended as a direct contribution to the Nitra 2026 Association.

In August 2021, Nitra Self-governing Region Council approved the region’s self-financing proposal for the regional budget of 5 m euros for ECoC 2026 operating expenditure. The approved budget is intended partially as a direct contribution to the Nitra 2026 Association and partially as a contribution to institutions

operated by the Region for implementation of Nitra 2026 projects.

Under current legislation, the city and the region must approve the budget for the following year each year (not several years in advance), so these ECoC budget decisions need to be approved again each year by their respective councils.

Nitra 2026 has a vast support from the regional cities as well. The City Councils of 14 cities (out of 15) in the Nitra region have approved and signed memorandums with Nitra 2026 Association about cooperation and intent to join the partnership in case we are designated as ECoC. As indicated by Nitra 2026 Association by-laws their financial contribution towards operating expenditures is voluntary and decided in bilateral negotiations. During those we have come to an agreement to base their contributions on their number of inhabitants and scope of their involvement in the project. Thus we are estimating a cumulative contribution of around 1.3 m euros from the cities in the region. As stated in Q18, the allocation of the national budget for operational expenditure is not as yet clearly defined and decided on.



Fundraising strategy for EU funds to cover operating expenditure

For our EU funds oriented fundraising strategy we are leveraging experiences of many of our partners. The table below shows a sneak peek of our planned EU fundraising tied with the Nitra 2026 planned projects and some of the ongoing ones our future activities will benefit from.

Nitra 2026 planned projects

EU Programme	Nitra 2026 Project/Initiative	Implementing organisation and/or partners	Description	Status
Creative Europe CULTURE European Cooperation Project (medium scale)	(me)dentity – (EU)dentity	Divadelná Nitra Association and partners	International cooperation and co-production projects supports transnational creation and circulation of European artists and works,(8 co-producers, 3 years). The project disposes with a strong networking and innovative approaches.	2024-2026
Creative Europe CULTURE European Cooperation Project (medium scale)	Survivors?!	Nitra 2026 Association and partners	International cooperation and co-production project (approx. 20 partners from Slovakia and abroad) provides cross-genre activities that works with agrarian cultural heritage. It includes capacity-building programme in light, sound, video design at transnational level – by which support capacity of culture and creative sector in Europe. It meets a specific sectorial priorities in the Reinforce the capacity of cultural heritage professionals.	2024-2026
Creative Europe CULTURE European Cooperation Project (large scale) or platform (tbc)	Divadelná Nitra_Polycentricity	CapoTrave, Divadelná Nitra Association and other partners	Third edition of a large-scale European cooperation project (19– 24 partners) focusing on the field of performing arts, where it endeavours to foster audience engagment in creative processes by means of artistic production and other participative activities. The project develops two lines of focus (production and research). In the frame of the Divadelná Nitra_Policentricity it brings capacity building, realisation and running of regional spectators councils for the Nitra 2026.	2022-2026
Creative Europe CULTURE Circulation of European Literary works	New (b)Orders, project Celemantia – Brigetio	Nitra 2026 Association	The project mediates and promotes contemporary literary authors among 8 countries by methology of engaged poetry. Translation of the pieces into 8 European languages is part of the project. The project experiments with digital contents. The project addresses the cross-cutting issues of inclusion and cross-borders relations.	2025-2026
Creative Europe CROSS-SECTORAL Innovation Lab	Diggit	Nitra 2026 Association, Creative Centre Nitra, Slovak Academy of Sciences – Institute of Archeology and partners	Co-creation project between animators, video-game designers and intermedia creatives with local historians and archeologists. Outcomes consisting of video games, digital installations and new-media experiences presented digitally or right on the selected archeological locations in the Nitra region.	2024-2027
Creative Europe MEDIA	What if...?	Nitra 2026 Association	A series of international workshops for literary authors, screenwriters and filmmakers reflects on and presents European past and present through an interesting alternative history approach.	2026
Visegrad Fund (Visegrad+ Grants)	Divadelná Nitra ‘35	Divadelná Nitra Association and partners	Co-production with partners from V4 countries and especially non-EU member states in the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership countries	2026
Visegrad Fund (Strategic Grants)	Monitoring & Evaluation	Nitra 2026 Association and external evaluation partners	A joint research project to make it possible to correlate ex- ante, ongoing and ex-post monitoring and evaluation efforts across four European Capitals of Culture (HU, SK, CZ, PL)	2024-2025

EEA Norway grants	Wandering for Miracles	Pôtoň Theatre and partners	A series of activities leading to the implementation of a unique model of an international site-specific art festival in Nitra's countryside and the area of Ponitrie. Eight teams of independent artists and theatres will tailor twelve works inspired by the local environment. Part of the project is a special programme of creative residencies in Nitra's countryside for Slovak and international artists.	2024-2026
CERV Promote citizens' engagement and participation in the democratic life of the Union	Protesta Festival & Conference	Nová Cvernovka (SK), Goethe Institute (DE), Creative Centre Nitra (SK), other European partners tbc	VR installation of historical rallies and protests and organisation of final conference with participation of students, youth, journalists and media from across Europe.	2022-2024, 2026
CERV Promote equality and rights	Outreach & Audience development	Nitra 2026 Association and partners	Co-financing our audience development initiatives Art-Breaks and Neo-Critical Revolution.	2023-2025
Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnerships	Audience development	Nitra 2026 Association and partners	Dissemination of best practice examples tested within audience development project Neo-Critical Revolution abroad.	2026-2027
Erasmus+ KA1 Learning Mobility for Individuals	Take Over The Institutions!	Nitra 2026 Association, Iuventa – Slovak Institute of the Youth (SK), Studentski Kulturni Centar Novi Sad (RS)	Special capacity building camps teaming CCI professionals with students under the Youth Participation Activities – Transnational Projects section of the Erasmus+ K1 programme.	2024-2025

Ongoing EU funded projects that Nitra 2026 projects will benefit from

EU Programme	Project/Initiative	Implementing organisation and/or partners	Nitra 2026 relation	Status
URBACT	OnStage (Music Schools for Social Change)	City of Nitra, Nitra 2026 Association	Best practice transfer activities will serve as a capacity building for projects Nitra_diverse and Nitra, dear Nitra_ Rework and audience development initiative Art-Breaks	Ongoing 2021-2022
Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnerships	LeLa (Learning Landscapes)	Slovak University of Agriculture	Capacity building initiative in participatory methodologies aimed at landscape architects that ties into projects Gardens of Nitra and The River and its People	Ongoing 2020-2022
Creative Europe European Cooperation projects	Be SpectACTive!2	Divadelná Nitra Association and partners Be SpectACTive!2	Experiences in the project informed the strategy for creating model of participatory spectators councils around the region for the Divadelná Nitra_Polycentricity project and principles of co-creation in performative arts	Ongoing 2018-2022
Horizon 2020	IN-HABIT (INclusive Health And wellBeing In small and medium size ciTies – Co-creation of Reversible Multifunctional Open-source Urban Landscape)	City of Nitra, Slovak University of Agriculture, Cultural Centre Hidepark	Capacity building aimed at marginalised and disadvantaged groups for projects The Upper Town Funk, Nitra_diverse, Open Pasta Kitchen. Testing of participatory approaches to public space revitalisation for projects Outside the Boxes, Play Out!, Gardens of Nitra, The River and its People.	Ongoing 2020-2025
	SPOT (Social and Innovative Platform On Cultural Tourism and its Potential Towards Deepening Europeanisation)	University of Constantine the Philosopher	Testing the use of innovative and digital technologies for application in our Monitoring & Evaluation strategy.	Ongoing 2020-2022
	PoliRURAL (Future Oriented Collaborative Policy Develop-ment for Rural Areas and People)	Slovak University of Agriculture, City of Nitra, Agroinstitute, Rural Parliament	Developed online HUB of regional rural traditional craftspeople, producers and artisans houses for our future participants in projects A Case for Crafts, Play Out! and The Self-Preservation Society.	Ongoing 2019-2022

# Q21

## Timetable for income to cover operating expenditure

Sources of income for operating expenditure	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Later	Total
National Government			800,000	1,900,000	4,000,000	8,300,000			15,000,000
City of Nitra	200,000	250,000	400,000	550,000	1,100,000	2,100,000	300,000	100,000	5,000,000
Nitra Region	20,000	280,000	400,000	600,000	1,200,000	2,100,000	300,000	100,000	5,000,000
Regional cities			130,000	215,000	220,000	535,000	170,000	30,000	1,300,000
EU (with exception of the Melina Mercouri Prize)			100,000	180,000	300,000	500,000	50,000	70,000	1,200,000
Private sector	5,000	20,000	55,000	70,000	400,000	880,000	50,000	20,000	1,500,000
Total	225,000	550,000	1,885,000	3,515,000	7,290,000	14,415,000	870,000	320,000	29,000,000

# Q22

## Fund-raising strategy to seek support from private sponsors

In spring 2021, we started the conversation with potential private partners and actively approached many of the local, national and international big and small companies. We have received a lot of positive reactions which resulted in several personal and online meetings. Five major progressive companies with strong ties to the region have already shown us support.

Categories of private sponsors and what happened since pre-selection:

### 1. The Big Hitters

As mentioned above, five major progressive companies have already shown us support: Foxconn, multinational electronics contract manufacturer, A.EN, an international energy corporation aimed at renewable energy solutions and batteries, Agro Tami, one of the largest national dairy food producers, Transdev, a multinational transport company that will start

operating buses and bike-sharing in Nitra City from January 2022, and Inovato, the unique network of 32 companies across 20 countries who aim to support innovation, technology and new ideas by sharing their know-how. And we spoke to others like Heineken and Jaguar Land Rover who are some of the key employers in the region.

Except seeking financial and in-kind support, we aim to directly engage these entities in our activities and artistic programme. Some of the approached Big Hitters already confirmed active participation in specific artistic projects such as:

- IKEA and Textile House confirmed much needed in-kind support for **Tired Attires**
- A.EN offered their specialists and know-how for **Nitra: Future\_Climate**
- Foxconn their industrial park premises and cooperation on **Outside the Boxes**
- Agro Tami and many local food producers will be engaged in **We'll Be What We'll Eat** and **The Self-Preservation Society**
- Experts from Inovato will co-curate **Future.eu Conference**

In September 2021 we actually tried this co-creation in practice. As Nitra 2026 Association we partnered up with the Slovak branch of **dm-drogerie markt** to raise money for an ecological public space intervention called **Public Greenhouse** (to be built in spring 2022) that was

chosen from three ecological projects online and during a new branch opening by local citizens.

Additionally, founders of Inovato who are from Nitra established the first Slovak festival of innovation Inofest aiming to connect Slovak businesses, entrepreneurs, and international guests to discuss creative solutions for the future. We plan to incorporate Inofest to the ECoC programme.

### 2. The Local Heroes

From summer 2021, we started a **#weareni-tra2026 campaign**, and we met with local business owners to talk about the main values of our project and a thorough look for intersections with their own values and long-term plans. We believe that through mutual benefit local SMEs can become co-owners of the Nitra 2026 brand. Furthermore, we see a lot of opportunities in their in-kind support by providing spaces for events, accommodation, advertising or product merchandise.

So far, we have had a very positive response and were stunned by the companies' creativity bringing their own ideas on how their brand, products and premises could be incorporated into the programme. Examples are two unique brands in the region both producing award-winning products that weren't typical for the country in the past – artisan chocolate and nut butter manufacturers Lyra and Slowlandia. Lyra's premises in the village close by Nitra including a café in the park will be used for the artistic programme, they will do tours around the chocolate factory and finally they can create a personalised chocolate collection co-designed with artists chosen with Nitra 2026 Association.

Similarly, Slowlandia's new café inside the factory building allows visitors an extraordinary experience.

### 3. The Power of Individuals

Our participative approach to the Nitra 2026 project aims our crowdfunding strategy not only at specific financial goals but also at in-kind support from local citizens. We believe that in order to ensure sustainability of the projects such as Gardens of Nitra, their users and operators must become both their co-creators as well as co-investors. Everyone from the communities that these projects will be built in will have an opportunity to contribute finances, materials or specific skills to their implementation. The approach will also result in more equitable distribution and co-ownership of the benefits generated.

### Reaching out beyond...

To boost national and international support, we approached the largest banks (Tatra Banka, Slovenská sporiteľňa), telecommunications companies (Orange, Telekom, O2) and IT companies such as Eset. Their response was very optimistic but given the fact that the ECoC will only be selected later this year, concrete arrangements have not been set. Furthermore, we spoke to the Rotary Club having international ties and a long tradition that could help us access foreign private funding opportunities, particularly across individuals.

**Our fundraising strategy is based on the same core themes and values that together make up the Breaking Point project – Identity, Dialogue and Sustainability.**

Morning at the Nitra City Market





Identity

We are building Nitra 2026 as **THE identity brand of the region** in the forthcoming years. We firmly believe that local employers are an important part of our local identity and their financial or in-kind support of the ECoC project is the best way to **strengthen their brand**. The companies we talked to agreed that ECoC is a great occasion to give the Nitra region a new look of a modern European city that provides opportunities and is worth investing in.

Dialogue

Private partners will have the opportunity to become involved as **cultural co-creators** – e.g. in activities like Outside the Boxes, Fields of Multiculture or The View From The Cheap Seats. Banners and product branding will always be a must – but our goal is to build synergic partnerships between culture and the business sector. Therefore, together with the city council we have started planning the establishment of a long-awaited **Business Hub**. Nitra is missing a platform that would gather local businesses together and work as a conversation-starting point not only between the businesses themselves but also between them and locals. Major companies including Jaguar Land Rover are fond of this idea. In addition, we also intend to build upon the **employee volunteering** trend emerging in Slovakia, thus involving major venture employees in the implementation of the artistic programme.

Sustainability

Currently, many companies are not aware that this prosperous cultural ecosystem of capability can positively affect their businesses and their ability to attract skilled labour. We want to change that. Through their participation in ECoC, businesses will help make Nitra a better and more sustainable social and cultural environment not only for temporary visitors, but for Nitra’s potential new citizens. The legacy of Nitra2026 might slow down brain drain and

benefit businesses by **retaining and attracting qualified workforce** in and to the city and region.

Going for the long-term change

Our plan is to raise a 1.5 m euros financial contribution from the private sector. Given the scope of the project, the figure may not sound ambitious, but it is realistic since the tradition of private sponsorship for the cultural sector in Slovakia is still in its infancy. The value of the **creative economy is underestimated** which results in the lack of sponsorship law that would allow companies to declare sponsorship contributions as expenses, thus they can only invest in the culture and arts sector in the form of marketing investment. Therefore, most of the co-operations between business and culture are perceived as marketing operations. The current **Minister of Culture** has indicated an intention to change this. However, our aim is to encourage a faster change to this current situation and to explore new models (for us anyway) in developing relationships between profit and non-profit organisations and culture. Simply put – we need to change the strictly financial relationship between business and culture of today to a synergic **value-based relationship** of tomorrow.

Hence, we believe that by raising awareness about Cultural Corporate Responsibility and developing a better understanding of the crossover between creative and other sectors, we can build partnerships that result in mutual benefits for all involved parties.

Next steps

We intend to continue our conversations with companies over autumn to get the most realistic vision on all collaborative and funding possibilities. In addition, we have started promoting partnerships with the local brands on our social media through the #wearenitra2026 campaign with interactive competitions for mutual promotion as well as celebrating the wide spectrum of our unique local businesses.

Fundraising breakdown

Partner category	Cumulative amount in euros
The Big Hitters	1,100,000
The Local Heroes	300,000
The Power of Individuals	100,000
Total	1,500,000

Q23

Breakdown of the operating expenditure

Operating expenditure	in euros	In %
Programme expenditure (incl. audience development, outreach and capacity building)	17,730,000	61
Monitoring and evaluation	600,000	2
Promotion and marketing	5,120,000	18
Wages, overheads and administration	5,550,000	19
Total	29,000,000	100

Q24

Timetable for spending the operating expenditure

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Later	Total
Programme expenditure (in euros)	20,000	120,000	550,000	1,430,000	4,020,000	9,125,000	280,000	100,000	15,645,000
Programme expenditure (in %)	8.89%	21.82%	29.18%	40.68%	55.68%	63.30%	32.18%	31.25%	53.95%
Audience development, Outreach and Capacity Building (in euros)	20,000	35,000	220,000	470,000	500,000	700,000	100,000	40,000	2,085,000
Audience development, Outreach and Capacity Building (in %)	8.89%	6.36%	11.67%	13.37%	6.93%	4.86%	11.49%	12.50%	7.19%
Monitoring and Evaluation (in euros)	4,000	30,000	98,000	80,000	121,000	192,000	55,000	20,000	600,000
Monitoring and Evaluation (in %)	1.78%	5.45%	5.20%	2.28%	1.68%	1.33%	6.32%	6.25%	2.07%
Promotion and Marketing (in euros)	21,000	70,000	344,000	580,000	1,450,000	2,435,000	180,000	40,000	5,120,000
Promotion and Marketing (in %)	9.33%	12.73%	18.25%	16.50%	20.08%	16.89%	20.69%	12.50%	17.66%
Wages, overheads and administration (in euros)	160,000	295,000	673,000	955,000	1,129,000	1,963,000	255,000	120,000	5,550,000
Wages, overheads and administration (in %)	71.11%	53.64%	35.70%	27.17%	15.64%	13.62%	29.31%	37.50%	19.14%
Total (in eur)	225,000	550,000	1,885,000	3,515,000	7,220,000	14,415,000	870,000	320,000	29,000,000

# Q25+Q26

## Income from the public sector for capital expenditure Financial commitments for capital expenditure

Income from the public sector to cover capital expenditure	In euros	In %
National Government	8,200,000*	15
City of Nitra	5,000,000*	5.5
Nitra Region	5,000,000*	5.5
Regional cities	2,000,000*	2
Other institutions eligible to apply for funds	526,000**	0.5
EU (with exception of the Melina Mercouri Prize)	54,994,000	78
Total	75,720,000	100

\*Including co-financing towards EU funds  
\*\*Including co-financing towards EU funds and private sector

At the same time as **Nitra City Council** approved and re-approved the city contribution to the operating budget it also did so for the capital expenditure of 5 m euros connected to the ECoC 2026 and specific infrastructure projects. The same is true for the contribution to capital expenditure of **Nitra Region**. To embed our infrastructure development plans into a wider regional context and related strategies, the bidding team took part in participative planning of Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) in Nitra region for the new programming period, that ECoC 2026 related infrastructure interventions are a part of. Additionally, between June and August 2021, we reached out to all **15 cities in the Nitra region**. During those one-on-ones we agreed on the regional distribution of capital expenditures. According to the official statement of the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatisation of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic from August 2021, the input for ECoC Slovakia 2026 from EU funds will be 40 m euros **including the national government contribution towards the capital budget** which will be allocated to cultural infrastructure related to the ECoC 2026 in the new programming period 2021-2027 from European Structural Funds. The 75 m euros stated in the table above includes this contribution and other infrastructural projects of the city, the region and the regional partners from 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 programming periods from European Funds.

Former military barracks from the 19th century at Martinský Hill, a part of the planned Creative Centre Nitra



# Q27

## Fundraising strategy for Union funds to cover capital expenditure

The City of Nitra is currently drawing Eurofunds for the construction of the Creative Centre Nitra in the amount of 11 m euros. The project is a reconstruction of the former Palace Cinema in the city centre into a multifunctional cultural space. The Creative Centre also includes an extensive reconstruction of four former military barracks on Martinský Hill into creative spaces, workshops and gallery space.

The Slovak University of Agriculture is drawing Eurofunds from the same call for the construction of another Creative Centre (SUA) in the amount of 5 m euros. The project is a reconstruction of the University library into creative spaces and workshops.

Currently, most of the capital expenditure planned and indicated in the table in Q25 is based on EU Structural Funds which have been announced to be redistributed by the Slovak government to whichever city is designated as ECoC 2026.

The city and the region are ready to apply for the renewal of additional cultural infrastructure through Norwegian funds and cross-border cooperation Interreg.

At the heart of all our projects is sustainability with an emphasis on ecology, communities and accessibility for all, so we will be able to attract European funds for blue infrastructure and the revitalisation of brownfields. The city has successfully drawn funds for the construction of new bike paths and green infrastructure in the city, and is a leader in the field of smart cities and innovations in public space, in the development of sustainable and eco-mobility. In the new programming period, the Nitra Region Self-Government is responsible for mapping the needs in the region and for the effective redistribution of EU funds.

Thanks to the connection with the regional municipalities in the ECoC candidacy, all cities in the region are coordinated and have clearly defined priority areas and synergies.

# Q28

## Timetable for income to cover capital expenditure

Sources of income for capital expenditure	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
EU (with exception of the Melina Mercouri Prize)		10,330,000	14,614,000	14,400,000	15,150,000	500,000	54,994,000
National Government		1,281,400	2,283,600	2,250,000	2,335,000	50,000	8,200,000
City of Nitra	500,000	880,000	1,030,000	1,300,000	1,190,000	100,000	5,000,000
Nitra Region	200,000	1,200,000	1,230,000	1,085,000	1,085,000	200,000	5,000,000
Regional cities		382,500	485,000	485,000	567,500	80,000	2,000,000
Other institutions eligible	25,000	155,000	278,000	33,000	25,000	10,000	526,000



# Q29

## Spending for new cultural infrastructure to be used in Nitra 2026

Infrastructure	Planned cost	Planned timetable	Funding sources
Creative Centre Nitra	11,000,000	2021 – 2023	City of Nitra, European Union, Slovak Republic
Imaginarium Blackbox at J. Rosinsky Elementary art school	2,200,000	2022 – 2024	City of Nitra, European Union, Slovak Republic
bod.K7	300,000	2021 – 2024	Slovak Republic, EEA

# Q30

## Planned governance and delivery structure

It takes a village! Well actually, in our very specific Slovak conditions, it will take more than one. To implement a project of the magnitude of the European Capital of Culture, the City of Nitra will be partnering with almost all of the cities in the Nitra region along with several smaller municipalities, the regional self-government and other institutional stakeholders.

We heard from other ECoC cities that establishing the organising body after designation is a challenge. **We decided to break ground while it is still workable and established the organisation that will implement the ECoC if we are designated.** The **Nitra 2026 Association** is a multistakeholder association of legal entities founded by the City of Nitra and Nitra Tourist Board in March 2021. After Nitra Self-governing Region joined the association in June of 2021, we now have all key stakeholders under one institutional roof and are ready to start preparing and implementing our plans. The participatory atmosphere of preparing

$$\text{Votes Ratio}_{xy} = \frac{50}{\text{No. of association members}} + 50 \cdot \frac{\text{Member Xs membership contribution cumulatively for 2021 – Y}}{\text{Cumulative sum of all membership fees for 2021 – Y}}$$

the application and the spirit of the Breaking Point concept inspired us to break away from the traditional hierarchical top-down approach to governance typical for Slovakia. Our aim in terms of governance structure is to ensure the participation of **all stakeholders**, from institutions that provide funding to the marginalised groups we identified, from local actors as well as those on the periphery of our region.

Although the establishment of the Association was a significant turning point in

our quest to become the European Capital of Culture, this is just the beginning. The big players will be joined by cities and municipalities from across the entire region. The Councils of **14** (out of 15) **cities in the Nitra region** have approved and signed a memorandum with the newly established Association about cooperation and intent to join the partnership if we are designated as ECoC. Along with representatives of the public sector, the University of Constantine the Philosopher and the Slovak Agricultural University also joined the ranks of future members of the Association by signing the memorandum of cooperation. We expect many others to follow.

Bringing many diverse stakeholders from all corners of the Nitra region behind the steering wheel of Nitra 2026 also increased the stakes. On one hand, with our multistakeholder approach to delivery we ensure there are direct communication channels with all invested parties. On the other hand, we have to keep actors – big and small, close and distant, and those used to being on the “opposite side” – happy, committed to the vision of Nitra 2026, and effectively cooperating under one roof. With respect to decision making, to level the playing field between bigger and smaller stakeholders and to maximise commitment – both increasing interest in joining our ranks and willingness to open their coffers, we literally had to solve an equation:

**The power distribution** within General Assembly is divided as follows: 50% of the votes are redistributed equally among all members of the Association (to leave space at the table for smaller municipalities with lesser budgets and those stakeholders that cannot afford to contribute financially) and 50% of votes are redistributed among the members of the Association in proportion to their share of cumulative membership fees for the entire duration of their membership in the Association (as a motivation to invest their own funds).

# Q31

## Organisation of the Nitra 2026 Association at management level

We aim to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and accountability as well as high quality of the artistic programme and professionalism in the process of its implementation. To tie in these two priorities and the top-down and bottom-up processes, we based the Nitra 2026 Association on our take of the three-dimensional biomatrix model of organisational structure. This dynamic approach allows for more open communication, collaboration, skills sharing, greater employee motivation and professional development, resulting in maximisation of resource use. It also builds the processes around the programme, events and activities, rather than organisational units.

The **General Assembly** is the highest body of the Association and consists of all members of the Association, with each having one representative. Currently consisting of representatives of City of Nitra, Nitra Tourist Board and Nitra Self-governing Region, upon obtaining the ECoC title it will grow to include all financial stakeholders of Nitra 2026 as well as representatives of relevant civil society actors without financial stakes in the project. Potential crossovers between General Assembly members and organisers of events will not constitute a conflict of interest because its supervisory domain does not cover the artistic programme. The General Assembly approves the by-laws, general guidelines, policies and procedures of the Association, as well as the budget, financial statements and activity report. It also elects and dismisses the Board of Directors and members of the Advisory Board following the adopted recruitment guidelines and decides on new member admissions.

The **Supervisory Board** is the auditing authority of the Association. It supervises the management of the Association and compliance with its by-laws with access to all accounting, business, organisational, corporate and other documents of the Association. The Supervisory Board consists of an unspecified number of members (but at least three), of which a part is appointed by the representative body of each self-government member of the Association, one member is appointed by the Ministry of Culture of Slovakia and one by the Commission Representation in Slovakia.

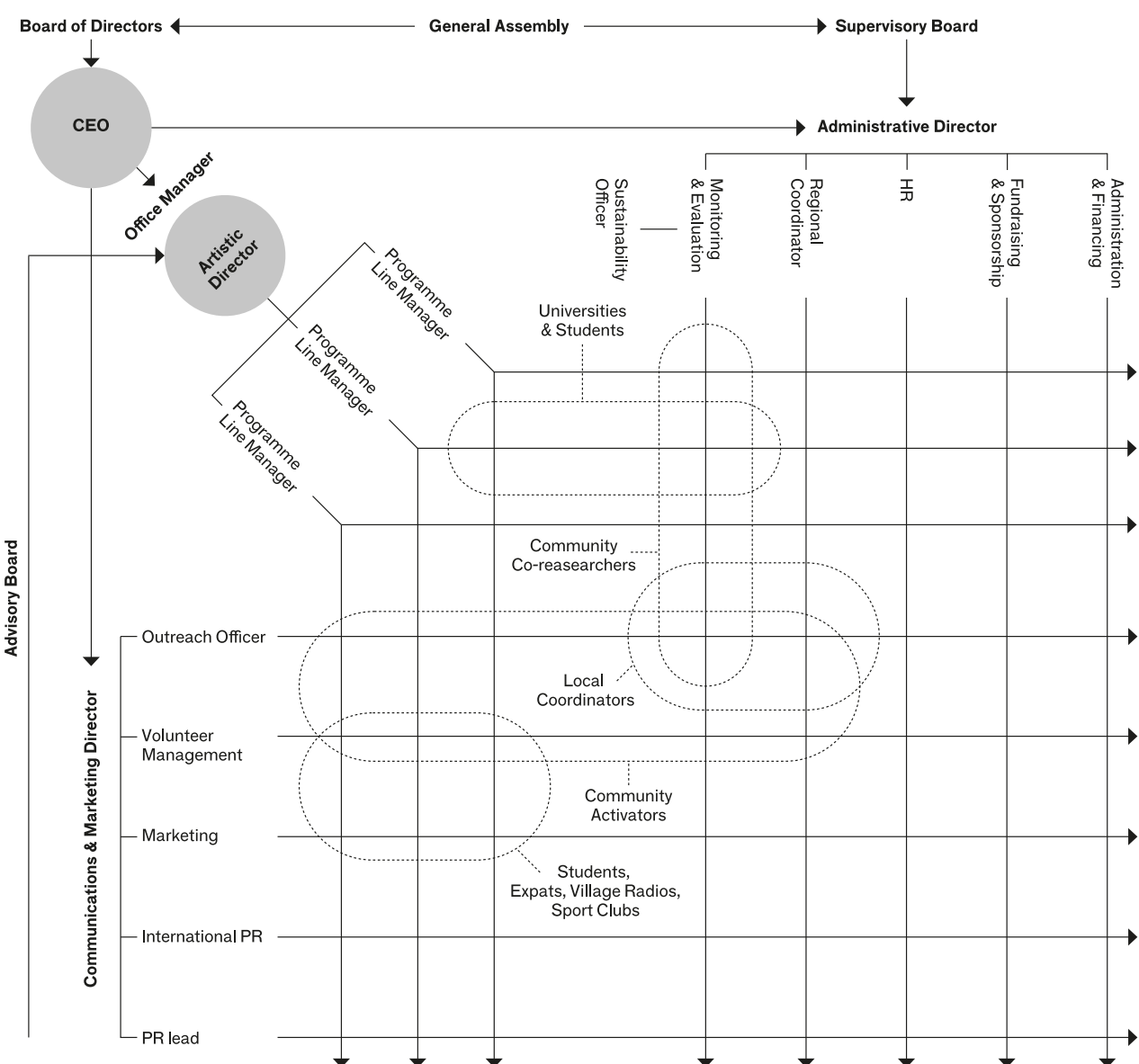
The **Board of Directors** is the executive body of the Association and deals with the immediate daily management issues. It consists of

at least three persons, elected by the General Assembly, one of which is also **CEO** and one is also a Deputy CEO of the Association. The CEO and their deputy are the executive and statutory representatives of the Association, who act on behalf of the Association with final responsibility for the project.

The **Artistic Director** is independent and responsible for the overall quality of the artistic and cultural programme in accordance with the high standards of the ECoC. S\*he works within the general financial, administrative and logistical framework set up and safeguarded by the CEO/ Board of Directors and approved by the General Assembly, but acts conceptually independently. Organising and coordinating the work of the creative team and teams of experts, working closely with the CEO, Administrative Director and Communications Director to ensure successful project preparation and implementation.

The creative team under the Artistic Director prepares the artistic dimension of the ECoC project. Their work is aided by the **Advisory Board**, a committee of eminent professionals composed of experts from different fields of culture and arts including architecture, urbanism, tourism, sports, education, science, environmental science, or other areas that are relevant to the ECoC project, both Slovak and international. With their expert opinions they help by providing advice on conceptual approaches, content and delivery of activities and programmes and response to different societal issues linked to the project implementation.

Horizontal support activities are managed by the **Communications Director**, responsible for development and implementation of the marketing strategy and management of ECoC-related campaigns. The **Outreach Officer** will be the main point of contact between the Association and our communities. Vertical processes are governed by the **Administrative Director**. Since sustainability plays a pivotal role in our concept, within the evaluation and monitoring team the specific role of ensuring environmental, social, economic and cultural sustainability will be assigned to a **Sustainability Officer**. S\*he will be responsible for the evaluation of programmes, projects and events as well as processes within the delivery structure in terms of their impact on key sustainability dimensions, governance issues and compliance with ethics standards.



# Q32

## Recruiting staff with appropriate skills and experience

During the bidding phase persons in key positions were appointed directly by the General Assembly for operational purposes. Their term of office, however, shall end no later than one year after the establishment of the Association. We have inserted this “break” in order to allow for maximum transparency in the appointment of the best people for the jobs. We are aware that there is a thin line between continuity and transparency. We want both. This is why we are opening up the senior management positions to open

calls – but those who built the content and plans of this bid book will most likely continue working within the organisation. **The staff number and positions that we foresee for the coming years are shown in the table on the following page.**

The people we need to grow our team are just around the corner. The corners we will look around to find them are:

The **vast network of actors** representing the cultural and creative industries, local and regional administration, universities, innovation sector and experts, activists that we already worked with. They were with us every step of the way developing the Breaking Point programme and we want them to help us make it happen. In this group we have our Nitrancans, but many come from all across Slovakia, even from beyond borders.

Speaking about borders...during the Nitra as a Transit Station debate, we found that many of **our expats**, young and older, are itching to come back to Nitra. Our ambition for the Nitra 2026 Association is to be their breakthrough point. At the same time, we will leverage their skills and contacts acquired abroad.

But the most promising future staff “hunting grounds” are in our own backyard. Specifically on the campuses of **two universities** that produce skilled labour in fields of: management of culture and tourism, marketing communication and advertising, journalism, archeology, and music, art and literature education. Most promising local

source of **young blood** is our newly established **Creative Centre Nitra**, the greatest asset for capacity building for CCI with its incubator and accelerator labs for the development of entrepreneurial skills and international residencies, exchanges and internships.

Lastly, **capacity building will be insourced** by the Association itself. Our delivery structure is designed to grow organically, with staff starting to work part-time in the ramp up years. They will get into the rhythm of the Nitra 2026 team, whip their organisational, managerial and creative skills into shape and gradually move into full-time positions as 2026 approaches.

		bidding team 2021		2022		2023		2024		2025		2026		2027	
total		15		25		26		27		37		41		11	
total		5	10	14	11	16	10	20	7	31	6	39	2	7	4
		full time	part time	full time	part time	full time	part time	full time	part time	full time	part time	full time	part time	full time	part time
Management and Artistic Team	CEO	1		1		1		1		1		1		1	
	Office Manager & Staff			1		1		2		2		3		1	
	Artistic Director & Supporting Staff			1	1	1	1	2		2		2			
	Programme Line Managers & Producers		5	3	3	3	3	3	3	10	2	12		1	3
Vertical Coordination	Administrative Director	1		1		1		1		1		1			
	Administration & Financing	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	3	2	5		2	1
	Fundraising & Sponsorship		1	1		1		1		1		1			
	HR			1		1		1		1		1			
	Regional Coordinator	1		1		1		1		1		1			
	Evaluation and Monitoring		1		2	1	1	1	1	2		2		1	
Horizontal Coordination	Communications & Marketing Director			1		1		1		1		1			
	Outreach Officer		1	1		1		1		1		1			
	Volunteer Coordinator				1	1		1		1	2	1	2		
	Marketing	1		1		1	1	1	1	2		5		1	
	International PR				1		1	1		1		1			
	PR lead				1		1	1		1		1			
Additional contract based personnel	Local Coordinators*			5		5		5		5		5			
	Community Co-researchers**					15		15		15		15			
	Community Activators***					30		30		30		30			
	International Interns****							9		9		9			

\*explained more in detail in Q33    \*\* explained more in detail in Q4    \*\*\* explained more in detail in Q15    \*\*\*\* explained more in detail in Q39





Platform 1–12, an independent space for contemporary culture in the underpass beneath the Topoľčany bus station, Nitra Region

# Q33

## Cooperation between Nitra 2026 Association, City of Nitra and Nitra Region

While developing the programme, those of us who previously weren’t, became quite familiar with the halls of the municipal building. Even the lobby receptionist knows us by our names. What we mean to say is that developing relationships with local authorities is a must. And by **collaborating closely with members of several departments of local self-government during the bidding phase**, we already broke the way.

Social services departments of both the city and the region helped us design and test some of our outreach programmes, the department of Chief Architect of Nitra and Department of Environment were on board during development of infrastructure targeted interventions, and the Department of Education was involved in activities aimed at schoolchildren. And of course we are in contact with the Project and Strategic Management Department and the Department of Culture almost on a daily basis.

Nitra 2026 Association will further develop relationships that we have built. Making already established rapport a permanent and systematic feature in the implementation phase, the

management, artistic team and support staff will **meet with their institutional counterparts at least once a month** starting in 2022, and even more frequently in the years following or if called for. Even if there is nothing pressing that requires a joint decision, we will still drop by for a coffee, chat and to keep everyone in the loop.

Compared to the pre-selection stage, the territorial extent of Nitra 2026 ECoC expanded beyond what we could hope for. With 14 cities and many other new regional stakeholders on board it needed to be reflected in the delivery mechanism as well. Hence, we introduced the position of **Regional Coordinator** that will co-manage day to day affairs in projects and activities planning and deployment with **5 Local Coordinators**. They will be recruited from the staff of Regional Development Agencies, Local Action Groups and Regional Tourism Organisations operating in the Nitra region. Meaning people who are familiar with many a receptionist of municipal offices all across the region. They will work with the Association on a part-time basis and will be our boots on the ground.

Additionally, according to the by-laws, the General Assembly, Board of Directors and Advisory Board meet at least once in four months. Minutes of the meetings are distributed among all members of the Association along with their relevant departments and published online. All financial operations of the Association are conducted through a transparent account for easy monitoring of all transactions and effective use of public resources we will be entrusted with.

# Q34

## Selecting the CEO and Artistic Director

CEO and Artistic Director will be chosen through an **international open call**. The entire process of management personnel selection will be governed by the adopted **guidelines for transparent open calls and selection procedures**. The Association adopted the newly established Directive 4/2020 of the Ministry of Culture for the selection procedure for posts of senior executives who are statutory representatives of a budgetary organisation or a contributory organisation operating in fields of culture and arts. The selection procedure will consist of both public and non-public hearing and...

our...	CEO	and Artistic Director
who have <b>final responsibility</b> for...	...the implementation of the Nitra 2026 ECoC and ensuring the reaching of Nitra 2026 key goals	...independently carrying out the artistic vision of Nitra 2026 and overall quality of the artistic and cultural programme
will be <b>appointed by</b> a Selection Committee composed of...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● an external expert with a reputation and long-term experience in managing a public organisation appointed by the Minister of Culture</li><li>● internationally recognised eminent professional in fields of culture and arts appointed by the Commission Representation in Slovakia</li><li>● an external expert with a reputation and long-term experience in the fields of culture and arts from the academic or scientific sector appointed by the General Assembly</li><li>● external expert with a reputation and long-term experience in independent culture appointed by the General Assembly from at least two nominees proposed by the non-public members of the Association</li><li>● external expert with a reputation and long-term experience in established culture appointed by the General Assembly from at least two nominees proposed by the public sector members of the Association</li><li>● external expert with a reputation and long-term experience in managing a public organisation appointed by the General Assembly from at least two nominees proposed by the local and regional self-government members of the Association</li><li>● representative of the staff of the Association.</li></ul>	
based on <b>common criteria</b> ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● organisational and management skills</li><li>● conceptual and analytical thinking</li><li>● excellent communication and presentation skills both inside the institution and towards the media and the public</li><li>● a proactive and flexible approach to solving complex tasks and the ability to think in a broader context</li><li>● command of English</li><li>● the ability to work independently and with a team</li><li>● experience and ability to lead and inspire and develop employees</li><li>● and last but not least displaying ethical behaviour in all circumstances</li></ul>	
and <b>specific criteria</b> ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● knowledge of regulations pertaining to implementation of European structural and investment funds</li><li>● planning and budgeting processes in general and within project management processes</li><li>● at least basic orientation in the field of management and financing of culture in Slovak and the EU</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● overview of current cultural and social trends in Europe and beyond</li><li>● understanding of discourses in cultural policy and in the sphere of established and independent cultural institutions</li><li>● experience in management or coordination of projects in culture, arts or creative industries</li></ul>
<b>no later than</b> ...	April 2022*	September 2022

\*when the term of current interim CEO expires

# Q35+Q36

## Risk assessment and mitigation plans

Risk assessment was an integral part of the entire application preparation process, bearing in mind that we have to stack the dominos in such a way that when we push the first row, they all fall in the direction we need them to.

We identified several bad cards we were dealt out, but also ways to win the game nonetheless. Most of the “fixes” are already built in within our concept and its delivery, ironing out issues of...

### Internal Affairs

Our governance and delivery structure is up and running. But building on it from this point forward, we may still encounter a few bumps on the road...

Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation measure
Filling key management positions with personnel with required profiles and experience	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Senior management positions will be filled via an international open call, in a transparent selection procedure</li><li>Recruitment follows set of qualitative criteria</li><li>Composition of selection committee ensures transparency, competency and minimises political pressure</li></ul>
Securing staff with sufficient skills and capacity to implement project of ECoC magnitude	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Drawing staff from vast network of actors from CCI and other fields already part of the bid development</li><li>Upgraded NITRO NETWORK garnered more than 300 applications</li><li>Strong capacity building initiatives</li><li>In-house capacity building</li></ul>
Staff continuity from bidding to implementation phase	Low	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bidding team will most likely continue</li><li>Members of bidding team are part of various projects in the artistic programme</li></ul>
High rates of staff turnover and burnout	High	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Our matrix model of organisational structure is dynamic and offers more open communication, collaboration, skills sharing, greater employee motivation and professional development</li><li>Wise distribution of responsibilities</li><li>Employee Health&amp;Well-being guidelines to battle frequent burnout and manage blurred work/life boundaries, regular team-building activities, encouraging open discussion between employees and top brass, individualised task balancing and remote work, with mandatory daily offline coffee breaks and physical exercise opportunities</li></ul>
Engaging sufficient number of volunteers	Low	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Tradition of volunteering in the city and region with over 700 registered volunteers in over 60 organisations</li><li>Cooperation with Nitra Volunteer Centre, Iuventa, students and researchers at both universities</li></ul>

### Ships in the Night

To reach the Breaking Point, and come out better and stronger on the other end, requires every segment of the society on board and working together, addressing...

Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation measure
Not enough experience and reluctance of local cultural actors to engage in international collaboration	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Artistic programme and accompanying initiatives were built in cooperation with local field</li><li>Preparing the Nitra 2026 programme has been a one big networking experience</li><li>Capacity building initiative for cultural managers</li></ul>
Nitra 2026 not reaching or engaging specific marginalised and disadvantaged groups	High	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Outreach and audience development strategy built in consultation with NGOs, educators and public authorities working with specific disadvantaged groups and their representatives</li><li>Selected outreach and capacity building initiatives aimed at closing the gap between cultural actors and disadvantaged groups already launched</li></ul>

### OUR problem is EUR problem

Let’s be honest – becoming a truly EUROPEAN Capital of Culture is a difficult task for a city like Nitra. We will have to build a lot of two-way bridges connecting Nitra to Europe and vice versa to overcome...

Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation measure
Low involvement of international partners and European and international artists in artistic programme	Low	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All the international partners mentioned in the artistic programme were consulted and confirmed in the bidding phase</li><li>Most of the new projects added to the programme in 2022-2025 will be required to involve relevant international partners</li><li>Nitra 2026 will serve as a matchmaker between existing local cultural actors and European partners</li></ul>
Communication that does not reach or engage wide European and international audience	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The usual – strong, carefully planned international communication supported by qualified and creative staff and adequate budget, but even then...</li><li>... breaking through is not an easy feat. That’s why we have secret agents on the other side – our expats as Nitra 2026 ambassadors and team of interns from across Europe who will find spots on our PR team for that customised approach</li></ul>

### Matters of State

Political support is a tricky thing. Nitra 2026 is more of a process than a project and expanding it to cover the region brings challenges in terms of effective coordination...

Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation measure
Most of the cultural infrastructure in the city and the region is “owned” by the Nitra Self-governing region and may lead to difficult access to venues if regional support wanes	Low	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Joint candidacy and accession to the Nitra 2026 Association was approved by the Council of Nitra Self-governing region</li><li>Nitra 2026 will continue to regularly confer with relevant departments of regional authorities and inform about the progress of the project</li><li>Nitra 2026 will continue to actively involve cultural institutions established by the Region and operating the venues directly</li></ul>
Weathering through two election cycles (2022 and 2026) that might endanger the support we gathered	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Support of Nitra 2026 is one of the strategic goals both in regional Development Program and Programme of Economic and Social Development of Nitra City being prepared for next programming period</li><li>Regular communication with local authorities through Regional Coordinator working with network of 5 Local Coordinators</li></ul>
Undue or one-sided political pressure on the team	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Artistic Director has the final responsibility for the artistic vision of Nitra 2026 and is free and clear of any political influence</li><li>Selection criteria for new projects are clearly defined and the process is led by the Artistic Director and artistic team aided by Advisory Board</li><li>Our multistakeholder delivery mechanism and distribution of power within General Assembly forces the bigger players to learn to “play well with others” and minimises one-sided pressure</li></ul>
Failure to procure planned budget for operational and capital expenditures from local, regional and state level	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Nitra 2026 anchored in important strategic documents both on local and regional level, that inform public budget distribution</li><li>Our partners are well versed in obtaining funding from national and EU sources</li><li>Nitra 2026 Association will provide assistance in application process from alternative sources</li></ul>
Planned infrastructure not finished according to the timetable	Medium	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Current timetable created taking into account standard delay times</li><li>Just in case, plan B prepared for all projects in terms of venues</li></ul>

### Hinterland Hinderance

Rural nature of the Nitra Region provides a unique cosy atmosphere, with seemingly untouched nooks and crannies open for exploration, but also brings specific set of downsides...

Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation measure
Spatial dispersion of some of the venues that will host events may lead to accessibility issues	High	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Transport infrastructure connecting the venues is well developed</li><li>Nitra 2026 will launch dedicated shuttle buses</li></ul>
Limited accommodation capacity in the City of Nitra	High	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Regional accommodation capacities and proximity of Bratislava supplement the local capacities sufficiently</li><li>Developed plans for provision of more diversified accommodation offer (e.g. camping and glamping, ApiHouses, hotels for dogs)</li></ul>
Increased complexity of coordination	Medium	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Building partnerships with institutional networks already in place (Nitra Tourist Board, Local Action Groups under LEADER programme)</li><li>Regional Coordinator working with network of 5 Local Coordinators and 15 Regional Community Activators</li></ul>



**Too Hot to Handle**  
Breaking Point is a bold concept, dealing with pressing issues in a quirky and edgy way, designed as an „instrument“ to stir the melting pot that is our city and region. But...

Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation measure
The quirk may be off-putting and the edge could cut too deep, especially to more conservative Nitrančans leading to bad publicity	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Good communication as set out in our marketing chapter with fun and inclusive activities</li><li>● Projects dealing with unpopular topics are built on the right combination of traditional and innovative approaches that feels organic and involves local artists and civic society</li></ul>
Potential rise of extremism as a threat to values of multicultural society integral to our concept	Low	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● If we had a ready-made solution, we would become rich by selling the concept. We will have to find mitigation measures that fit the individual situation, but...</li><li>● As we found out in our public debates line of outreach activities, adhering to our principles of participation and sincerity opens the minds even of the most reluctant of us</li><li>● We expect our tailor-made audience development strategy (e.g. Neo-Critical Revolution) to make a serious dent in issues of this kind</li></ul>

**Black Swans**  
COVID-19 proved itself as a formidable nemesis to the cultural sector. On the road to Nitra 2026 we could meet plenty of its close and distant “cousins” that might unexpectedly come-a-knocking and wreak similar havoc, like...

Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation measure
Pandemic 2.0	High	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Fully utilizing “ones and zeros” as underused dimension of cultural infrastructure – more than 60% of our projects have a digital component</li><li>● Creating contingencies for all projects during the preparation phase</li><li>● Not compromising on participation with digital volunteering initiative</li></ul>
Extreme weather conditions / Climate Change	Low	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Most of our projects have “dry” and “wet” alternatives in terms of venues, those working with outdoor space are timed taking local weather patterns into account</li></ul>
Alien invasion or zombie apocalypse	Low	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Our outreach strategy is tailored to current situation but flexible enough to ensure inclusion of any carbon-based lifeform</li><li>● Our comprehensive audience development strategy will reawaken – if nothing else – the cultivation gene in our zombie (hopefully) minority</li></ul>

**Cathedrals in the Desert**  
With projects of this magnitude, there’s always a threat that we will end up with projects or facilities that have no reason to exist come 2027. To make sure that Nitra 2026 doesn’t become a one hit wonder, we have to address...

Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation measure
Issues of post-2026 sustainability of developed cultural infrastructure	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Instead of building new monumental facilities, Nitra 2026 will reach as many neighbourhoods and communities as possible and revitalise and repurpose existing underused infrastructure that will be lived in and built upon long after the end of the title year</li></ul>
Issues of post-2026 sustainability of projects and events	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Capacity building initiatives aimed and cultural managers and creators will elevate local human and institutional capital to eye-level with current trends in culture and arts</li><li>● Gained experience in working with international partners and securing alternative sources of financing will enable local cultural actors to keep many Nitra 2026 project alive past the title year</li><li>● Crafty fundraising strategy may jump start the missing tradition of mutual beneficial partnership between private and cultural sectors</li></ul>
Post ECoC “exhaustion” of local cultural scene that could lead to dip in supply	High	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Timetables of projects is distributed along the ramp up and title year in a way that leaves space for supplementary capacity building activities and reasonable workload balancing</li></ul>
“Oversaturation” of cultural supply that could lead to post ECoC dip in demand	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● By bringing people on board as co-creators instead of consumers, they will break-away from viewing culture as a product to experiencing it as an integral part of their lives</li></ul>
Negative environmental externalities of tourism uptake and events	Medium	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Green Cutlure and CirculArch initiative will boost environmental sustainability of programme events, cultural actors and infrastructural interventions</li><li>● Carbon Inventory part of the monitoring process</li><li>● Guidelines and concrete plans for offsetting carbon footprint will be in place (e.g. ticket pricing – voluntary additional fee to cover travel related emisions)</li></ul>

# Q37

The slogan of our cultural programme

# Breaking Point



Flaam Festival in Hidepark Nitra

# Q38+Q40

Nitra 2026 marketing and communication strategy and mobilising our own citizens as communicators

Marketing strategies, campaigns and communication channels are all set up to attract audiences. To create a buzz. But at the end of the day, **it's the product that matters most**. Great stories, causes, and values won't buy someone into a brand that doesn't deliver. People expect brands to respond to their needs, contribute to local and international communities, stand for a cause, and support great ideas. That's why it's our responsibility to deliver Nitra 2026 as promised. As a meaningful, engaging and authentic experience with a lasting impact.

We have taken up this quest with joy and outlined several ways to engage audiences in all population groups possible: local, nationwide and international, across all ages and talents. We have agreed on several values that we apply to our artistic vision as well as communication guidelines: **Openness, Participation, Sincerity, Synthesis, Ubiquity, and Edginess**.

## Openness

Nitra 2026 does not belong to us Nitrančans – it belongs to all of us in Europe. Now it is time to crack the glass dome over the city and break free. We reach out to a European and international audience – in person and online. We want to share our narrative of Breaking Point with as many as possible near and far. We open ourselves to whatever our European audiences, partners and friends can offer us, too.

### European Themes

There's no time for self-delusion – Nitra is virtually unknown to international visitors. ECoC is an ideal opportunity to tell the story of Breaking Point to Europe. Our European themes – identity, dialogue, sustainability – will show our European values and help us contribute our diversity-pixels to the European culture mosaic.

### European Channels

The question is not whether we have an interesting enough programme, the thing is – how will Europeans hear about it? For example by:

- **Harnessing existing digital infrastructure and shaping marketing cooperation** – such as websites and marketing/tourism activities of the city (nitra.sk), region (unsk.sk), and Nitra Tourist Board (visitnitra.eu), participating operators (Nitra Gallery, Andrej Bagar Theatre, Chambers of Commerce etc.), National Travel Agency Slovakia.travel as well as their social media. Marketing collaborations with twin cities and other ECoCs.
- The players named above will also be the entry key to **international tourism fairs** to promote Slovakia as hosting the ECoC in 2026.
- **Inviting foreign Nitra-based companies** to promote Nitra 2026 in Europe via their e-channels – such as Jaguar Land Rover, Mitsubishi, etc.
- Taking advantage of our **cultural representative offices** in the world – Slovak embassies (35 of them in Europe) and Slovak Cultural Institutes (in 8 European countries), as well as Slovak Language and Culture Departments at universities and other institutions

### European re:union

Nitra-born expats – there are many of them out there in Europe, each of them with their own international network and also tight ties with family and friends at home. They have strong emotional connections to Nitra and some of them are excitedly contributing to this bid. Although Nitra is struggling with the transit station problem, now we can actually benefit from it and rally our bannermen to support our cause Europe-wide. We will invite them to spread the word about Nitra and its heyday to come, whether they are a successful researcher in Belgium or a crypto-anarchist in the Azores. And hopefully, when they come back to Nitra in 2026, they won't come alone!

- **I left Nitra but...** The “but” is always tricky so let's flip it around and use it to our advantage. We will reach out to Nitrančans all around the world and ask them to record a video containing the reason why they have left Nitra, but also to express why it is still in their hearts, no matter their current coordinates.
- **Xmas Comeback.** However strong the brain drain, everyone gets back home for Christmas! So let's turn the returning Nitrančans into ambassadors of Nitra's European story. From 2022 onwards, we will unite with them every year under one roof for a special Nitra 2026 edition Xmas party with a smart promotion of our ECoC project.

### Breaking the Nth Wall

Social media influencers are your best allies when it comes to promoting any type of content. Their charm is in a trick that film fans know as “breaking the fourth wall”. What if we invited them to help Break all the walls that Nitra needs to tear down? We will take these modern-day messengers on a round trip around the city; not just through the touristy places, but also the back alleys. We want them to peek over every “wall” in the city to cover (and uncover) everything: the dreary and the beautiful, the bizarre and the polished.

- We intend to invite all the top players on the e-field – both home and Europe based. A few names:
- GoGo, No. 1 influencer in the former Czechoslovak space with insane 1.8 m subscribers
  - Expl0ited, coming second with almost 1 m followers
  - EKIPA, a group of Polish influencers, together topping 10 m fans
  - Enji Night, a Hungarian costume artist, 1 m subscribers

And there are more to come. Our plan is to invite influencers from all allied ECoC countries and strengthen our friendships.

## Participation

Communication is all about dialogue. Although we often see it as a two-way channel, it requires perpetual multi-party talks with feedback, which then returns to the debate. Only if Nitra 2026 cares about what people have to say, will people care for what Nitra 2026 has to say.

### Co-creation and Word-of-Mouth marketing

If we want our audience to co-create the projects, we need to empower them. By them we mean ALL of them – from kids to their parents to their grandparents. Word of mouth is indeed humankind's oldest and most effective marketing tool, and yes, we intend to get the most out of it. Our challenge is to convince the locals that this European action is theirs, and it's not being decided behind closed doors or far away from them. With our projects and our audience development programme, we want to channel the energy of the Nitrančans' strong local patriotism into co-creation and the participation into word-of-mouth marketing.

At the regional and city level, there are projects that are “communication platforms” as much as cultural and artistic content like **Sauna on Wheels, What Would the Brothers Say, Gardens of Nitra, Nitra, dear Nitra\_Rework** or



**Theatronauts.** They offer space for encounters, chats and hands-on participation.

**We have millions of ideas on how to reach out to our audiences. Here are some of them:**

Giggerish

Gigs for kids are insanely huge in Slovakia, so why not organise a tour under our flag? The event will be synchronised with the **Play out!** programme, so that several gigs can take place in the newly built playgrounds. And let's not forget about the parents, which will be targeted via these events too.

Culture Fans

Our hockey and football fans are known as the most fervent in Slovakia. Can we channel this energy and enthusiasm into arts and culture? We sure think so. We intend to develop strong relationships with local sports clubs to cooperate on each other's marketing campaigns and brand building. We will create a series of events: one called **Culture Fans** that will bring music performances to the sport pitches at half-times and a smaller one called **Queue Culture** that will bring buskers, drummers and stand-up comedians to people waiting outside the stadiums.

Silver Aligning

Figuratively speaking, the European population is turning silver – **it's aging quickly**. And for cities like Nitra which suffer from a great outflux of young people, the trend is even more visible. The seniors will form a large-as-ever age group, thus aligning our communication policy to the Silver will be crucial for the years to come.

We propose several ways how to engage our seniors:

- **The Break(fast)ing point.** We were fed by our (over)caring grandmothers since we could munch on snacks. Now it's time to pay back our dues and break the ice too – we will throw a recurring Sunday picnic in the city park and senior houses for the elderly. Let them enjoy free sandwiches. And then have a pleasant chat about how the city has changed and which direction it should head towards in the years to come.
- **Free Ride – Free Play.** Did you know that seniors in Slovakia have the possibility to travel by train for free? This opens up a great opportunity to attract them to Nitra. The plan is simple: campaign through national media (TV, radio, print) and adapt the show times.
- **Call your Grandma!** Yes, we tend to forget about that, but this time we will make it up to them. As an extension of Free Ride – Free Play, we will challenge students born outside Nitra to invite their grandparents to spend a cultural



A village radio

weekend with them in the city, starting from the free breakfast to free gigs – for both the students and the elderly! The benefits are uncountable: kids and grandparents spending quality time together, promoting Nitra 2026 to two generations at once, and of course – great memories.

The offered activities for the elderly will be promoted by the media channels this target group prefers the most – selected TV and radio channels, as well as magazines popular among the seniors. We will propose a recurring **Nitra 2026 Break** running on the TV and radios to inform about the upcoming events in Nitra.

Nitra 2026 Open Office

Our Nitra 2026 office will be located right in the heart of the city. An open space serving as an office for the Nitra 2026 team, an information point to promote the Nitra 2026 project and local culture, and as a small cultural venue for evening events such as open-mics, talks, debates or literature readings.

**Sincerity**

Honesty and authenticity in the way we communicate make us and our dialogue partners break free, make us reflective, make us critical thinkers. We don't want followers who "believe" in artificially hyped content that is just hot air. We want active partners who enjoy the honest

**Management**

product that we create together – and speak about it on any channel they choose.

Beyond Image

On the national level, Nitra has to overcome some bad reputation due to right-wing attacks as well as the image of having little attraction beyond the theatre and the Agrokomplex EXPO. **Nitra on Tour** will be a series of one-day festivals in every Slovak regional capital as a roadshow to promote Nitra's ECoC with a realistic picture of Nitra projected on the background. We want to send a message that there is definitely a way to face the past, learn from it and rebuild your image.

BTS Tuesdays

Since March 2021 we have launched Behind The Scene Tuesdays – a tradition, in which every Tuesday a different Nitra 2026 collaborator will take over our social media feed. From members of the Nitra 2026 team, our Mayor and cultural partners, through volunteers and sound technicians to artists and members of our partner ECoC teams, the followers are getting a chance to see the ECoC process and the regular

life of cultural actors and creatives in action week by week.

The Shadows of Nitra

Many travellers seek the exact opposite of tourist traps. They want to see the crude, the controversial, the broken. Let's show them when Breaking Point turned into Breaking Bad. In cooperation with the Nitra Tourist Information Centre, we will prepare an honest tour about what's hidden in the shadows of our town (in cooperation with the Nitra: Lost programme), concealed from sights of both locals and outsiders.

**Synthesis**

Our communication aims at creating alliances between seemingly disconnected areas and people. Involving sponsors and businesses in cultural activities, fundraising (#wearenitra2026 campaign) and as activators of their employees, connecting art and science, culture and agriculture is a communication task first. As a result, citizens (whether from here, students in transit or migrant workers), visitors and the non-users of cultural offers can find an easy and fun access

International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra





point as our interdisciplinary communication breaks open the barriers of “artistic” or “cultural” to blend it with “my city”, “my project”, “my connection”.

### Old School – Still Cool

We are not afraid of using old-school methods. We love them ourselves... whether it is making preserves or reading the print City Hall News (40,000 copies each month), or engaging with TV, radio, and media outlets. Not everyone has to be addicted to their smartphones to get a good dosage of Nitra 2026.

### Village Radio 26

Our secret marketing weapon in the region is a peculiar remnant of the past – radio broadcast in the public realm in every single village. Used to announce local news (from football results to discounts at the grocer) or to play retro songs, it is a soundtrack of many of our memories of the times helping our grandparents in their gardens as kids... But still today, it is the most effective communication tool for small villages to inform their oldest citizens. By creating special content to be broadcast through this network, we can spread the word of Nitra 2026 to places usually forgotten and omitted.

### Sustainable Physical Marketing

As bearers of the cultivation gene, we aim to build the Nitra 2026 brand as **the Slovak leader of sustainable marketing**. Reusing and upcycling will be woven into each layer of the physical marketing. An appointed Sustainability Officer will work closely with the Nitra 2026 marketing team and suppliers to minimise the physical marketing ecological footprint. Partnering with the **Tired Attires** project we will upcycle banners into merch bags, flyers into postcards and art pieces, flags into T-shirts. We'll also use site-specific out-of-home green ads instead of traditional billboards. **The Fields of Multiculture** artistic project is the best example of this, serving as a massive outdoor invitation to Nitra 2026 visible from afar.

### Rural & Natural

Currently, the nature sought after by tourists is mountains and forests. But agriculture can be an immersive nature experience, too. We need to communicate the cool side of fields, gardens, villages, mills, creeks, and agricultural heritage through our programme. During **The Major Badger** project we will collaborate with regional tourist information centres and culture departments in the region and create a tourist achievement map. Not only will it contain all the relevant places connected with rural tourism – it will even reward you if you travel there! Visit a

water mill, a community garden or a winery, scan a QR code and **win an e-badge** that will appear in your **Nitra26** smartphone app. Rise up through the ranks from Private Badger to Major Badger and get a Nitra 2026 reward. An absolutely green way to take advantage of people's competitiveness to promote rural tourism. Will you catch them all?

## Ubiquity

Culture is everywhere. It's embodied in our greeting rituals, manifested in the shape of the buildings, or present in the way our dishes are prepared. Sometimes, though, we need some “translation” to see it. Communication should be a language that brings things closer, puts them into perspective, creates a link. Once we have our eyes opened to it, we suddenly see it everywhere. And the web makes it possible to make our Nitra 2026 experience literally everywhere at once in real-time.

### Pocket Nitra

Smartphones are the most ubiquitous gadgets in the world. Can we somehow utilise their ubiquity to culture's advantage too? **Nitra26 mobile app**, developed in cooperation with the popular international event portal **GoOut**, will be your pinboard with the latest news always at hand. It will contain all relevant information that a local or visitor needs. If you are desperately searching for food for thought and soul (or just food, for that matter), our app is the go to place.

### VR.NR

With emotional intensity unimaginable in traditional media, we believe that virtual reality will emerge as a winner amongst all the interactive digital marketing tools. That's why we intend to create VR.NR (Virtual Reality Nitra) – an initiative to help us explore ways of promoting Nitra 2026 in a revolutionary media and to let people all over the world experience the Breaking Point.

### **Nitra 2026 Digital Communication Channels:**

- Using our **website nitra2026.eu** as a starting point – currently in Slovak, English, Hungarian and Roma languages – to approach diverse audiences. Facebook and Instagram already launched, YouTube soon to come.
- **NR2026.digital** – artistic projects that will both offer full-fledged digital experiences and promote Nitra 2026 live activities.
- **Nitra 2026 Podcast** – a bi-weekly podcast related to Nitra 2026 and our themes Identity, Dialogue, Sustainability – available in different languages. We have started with the first 10 episodes which were released from September 2021 and are available on all streaming platforms.

## Edginess

Cutting-edge communication needs cutting-through participation. And this is a cycle we won't break. Communication is powerful, yet creative. Edginess lies far beyond being the loudest: the outreach will not be effective unless you find the right way to strike a chord in your audience. And we want this chord to be uplifting, touching, but also with a bit of quirk and disturbance. In musical language, think of A minor 7/9.

### Stay Up-To-The Minute

Unquestionably, marketing trends in 2026 will be different from those of today. The art sector might not be using them yet, but the future is turning into the present as we speak....:

- **Another App in the scroll.** There are already a bunch of social media apps, and we are witnessing the dawn of new ones. **TikTok, Twitch, Caffeine or Reels** will play a decisive role in the future and we definitely need to implement them in our marketing strategy.
- **Hi, I'm Cyril, can I help you?** Our team loves direct communication. However, we cannot be available at all times. Fortunately enough, **AI chatbots** do not have limited working hours and could assist our page visitors regardless of time when they feel the urge to get to know Nitra 2026 better.
- **Dataclysm.** The online world is all about collecting and using data properly. And precisely data-driven mechanisms will be able to use data about our audience preferences to offer them suggestions of other Nitra 2026 events and activities that would interest them.
- **Matrix.** Ever thought about what would happen if Neo refused the red pill? Now we have a chance to try what it feels like: augmented reality and VR can be used also for artistic purposes (for instance as a projection of the past in **The Alley of Unsung Heroes** or in **Nitra: Lost**), or even as a city navigation system.

### Fix the Mallfunction

Like it or not – the shopping centres became a meeting hotspot for crowds, who spend hours roaming along the corridors. However, many complain about how the malls have “broken” the way we behave in the city. We intend to add another layer of mall experience in various cities across Slovakia by doing guerilla cultural events – happenings, musical performances, installations and guerilla galleries. And we will have the best local artists to lead this project, such as acclaimed painter Andrej Dúbravský or a cosmopolitan drum orchestra led by Igor Holka.

### Paint It Blue

Did you know that Slovakia has the highest numbers of castles per capita in the world? And one of the oldest of them proudly stands on Nitra's castle hill, guarding the city from above. Let's paint the castles blue! Wait, castles? Sure – as many as possible!

There are over 700 castles, forts and mansions in Slovakia. Many of them are lit at night - and we intend to light them with our Nitra 2026 blue. The chain of blue-lit castles all around the country will definitely catch the attention of not only locals, but also of numerous European visitors, who simply cannot get enough of Slovakia's castles. The blue facade campaign will be covered by the media for all wondering people to find out what's going on.

### TRAIN them

Let's roll back to Nitra in the early 2000s. There used to be a vibrant street art scene, whose most skilled ambassadors survived until today. As a part of our deal with the national railroad company we will paint an assigned train car with Nitra 2026 motifs. And turn one of the compartments into a gallery with a presentation of our ECoC project.

Andrej Dúbravský, internationally known artist, who divides his time between rural Rastislavice in Nitra Region and New York





# Q39

## Media partnerships to ensure wide coverage of the event

There are 700 millions of potential fans of Nitra in Europe. The odds are really not in our favour: reaching out to them will be one of the biggest challenges of our mandate. But we never decline a challenge to break through. These will be our tools.

As for **Local Communication Channels**, we have already teamed up with all the relevant media from Nitra and Nitra Region, from local newspapers, through local televisions, web portals, local radio stations to Nitra-born or Nitra-based influencers. Consider the city and the region covered seamlessly.

### Team Engine

Nitra is home to several institutions, cultural events and initiatives with their own mostly national but also some international media partnership networks. Just to name a few: the-atre festival **Divadelná Nitra**, alternative music festival **Flaam**, drums & drummers festivals **Campana fest** and **Drumpoint Nitra**, organ music festival **Ars Organi** (all of the three mentioned have international ties and audience too), folklore festival **Academic Nitra**, rock festival **Slížovica**, and so forth. Luckily enough, some of their representatives are also team members of Nitra 2026 and so we can easily plug ourselves into their media matrix. We will also benefit from warm relations with the PR department of the Nitra City Hall and Nitra Region, from project partnership with major Slovak cultural events, such as the **Konvergencie** festival, the internationally acclaimed **Pohoda** festival, or the Slovak music showcase event **Sharpe** festival. The Team Engine has already been invented, let's move it!

Everyone has their own mailing lists database that reaches to local and national journalists across and PR masterminds in all types of media, from press through webs to TV.

### International Media LiEUtenants

The age of generic press releases is over. People look for specific media content that relates to them personally through its unique tone of voice. That's why we want to build long-term relationships and partnerships with the media at the international level. Along with the Department of Journalism and the Department of Marketing Communication at University of Constantine the Philosopher, we plan to develop a special internship programme to

form our own European media unit. Nine international internships will be open in 2024 for second year students studying at universities offering study programmes in cultural management and marketing across Europe (2 from Southern European countries, 2 from Central/Western European countries, 2 from Central/Eastern European countries, 2 from V4 countries, 1 from Balkans and 1 from Northern Europe and the Baltics).

### Press Enter

European journalists haven't had too many reasons to visit Nitra yet. Thanks to our candidacy we are granted a great chance to break this cycle too. In coordination with Slovak Press Agency and national press agencies in chosen European countries we will host a recurring international press excursion every year to give reporters a chance to witness and document not only the "anno ECoC" of 2026, but also its preparations. And yes, the national journalists will get the invitation letter too.

### InterEuropean Cable

Face it – TV is still the most popular media. The younger generation has mostly switched the screens for smartphones, but the largest population group – their parents and grandparents – sticks to the classic set. To connect with the TV public, we will reach out to international TV alliances, such as the European Broadcasting Union (representing 69 broadcasting channels in 56 countries) and the European Collection Project that major French, German and Swiss channels, broadcasting in 5 languages have initiated.

We will offer them the best slot for covering the opening ceremony and the best of our out-breaking projects, which will not only inform the Europeans what's going on, but will also serve as a teaser to visit Nitra and co-create the Capital of Culture.

### EU-collab

Every successful ECoC city had to face the same plight when engaging European audiences. The same can be said about our international partners involved in our projects. They already know the ropes – and we will turn to them and use their media contacts to promote our cultural year too. We are down-to-earth enough to simply ask what are the proven best practices to reach all possible groups of recipients in Europe, from children to the seniors, from blue-collar workers to top-class managers, from "old-time" settlers to immigrants. And of course, we will offer our existing and also newly established networks to future ECoC cities as a contribution to the longevity of this unique panEuropean project.

### Management

# Q41

## Highlighting the ECoC is an action of the European Union

Every European Capital of Culture is adorning themselves with an action and brand that is not their own. Yet every city seems to feel it very much their own. And then there is our own Nitra 2026 brand to communicate within a very short time and with a small budget to an immensely large audience. Looks like there is quite some complexity in the question. The whole Breaking Point concept is in a way aimed at chipping at the growing Euroscepticism in our society. So with presenting the ECoC Nitra 2026 as an EU action we opt for a bit of an unexpected way next to the more traditional:

### The traditional way...

- We will invite – as is generally done – the whole ECoC family network as well as representatives of EU institutions to the opening ceremony. Within the opening programme and with the help of the ECoC family and EU representatives we want to make the overall development of this largest European cultural project as an initiative of the European Union visible.
- The EU logo will be placed on all communication materials and platforms online and physical. Nitra 2026 will be presented as a project of the EU in media outputs by logo or verbally (TV, radio, periodicals), as well as visibly while opening individual programmes.

### The unexpected way...

As you could see in the artistic programme, we love the What if...? question. So, what would Nitra look like without EU membership? Our day-long guerrilla event will demonstrate just that. During one Saturday, specifically May 9, 2026 – a **(Without) Europe Day**, all of the infrastructure, buildings, elements or services that have been built with EU contribution will be either blocked, closed or covered with tarps. We will barricade roads, cordon off children's playgrounds, shut down public transport. For essential services, video mapping will be used to project their pre-EU state for an immersive experience of what our lives might have been like without the "unity."

In order to avert the potential counterproductive effect of shutting everything down, a rich cultural programme will fill the day, including events aimed at promoting the values and current topics of the EU through conferences, workshops and lectures. We will invite representatives of EU institutions and ECoC projects from sister cities to take part in the programme, portions of which will take place online to promote carbon footprint reduction.

The Fetishes of Today exhibition in Nitra Gallery



# Capacity to deliver

## Q42

### Political support and commitment

Nitra 2026 came a long way. From 76 people discussing Nitra's place on a cultural map of Europe during coffee breaks at the first stakeholder meeting in March 2020, to a **fully fledged regional project** with support from local governments and territorial partnerships spanning the entire region.

Unwavering determination of the **City of Nitra** to become the European Capital of Culture 2026 is evidenced by the City's Council approval to invest 5 m euros for preparation and implementation of Nitra 2026 in November 2020. A more detailed timetable for covering operating expenditure for 2022-2027 period was approved in June 2021 along with the vision and key goals of Nitra 2026. In March 2021, the City Council along with the Nitra Tourist Board approved the **establishment of the Nitra 2026 Association** as a current and future organising body if we are designated as ECoC. **Nitra Self-governing Region** soon followed. The Regional Council approved the accession to the Nitra 2026 Association in June 2021 along with their initial financial contribution. Regional support snowballed to much greater proportions from there. Local councils of **14** (out of 15) **cities** in the Nitra region (Nové Zámky, Zlaté Moravce, Šaľa, Levice, Vráble, Komárno, Topoľčany, Štúrovo, Hurbanovo, Kolárovo, Šahy, Želiezovce, Šurany and Nesvady) approved Memoranda on Cooperation and Support for the candidacy, with intent to join the Association. We are also supported by our **rural neighbours** Bojná, Mojmírovce, Topoľčianky, Belá, Bátovce, Oponice, Jelenec and Nitrianska Blatnica who expressed interest to be part of the project. Five **Local Action Groups** (LAG Cedron – Nitrava, LAG Vitis, Civic Association Radošinka, Civic Association Žibrica, Regional Association Dolná Nitra) jumped on board as well with 87 additional rural municipalities.



## Q43

### Infrastructure projects

Infrastructure	Description	Planned cost	Planned timetable	Nitra 2026 connection
Creative Centre Nitra	Reconstruction of vacant army barracks at Martinský Hill and Palace Cinema into multifunctional creative and cultural spaces	11,000,000	2021 – 2023	● Future.eu ● DiggIt ● Protesta Festival & Conference ● Take Over The Institutions! ● Cultivator Capacity Building
Martinský Hill Park	Revitalisation of the park as outdoor premises of the Creative Centre Nitra site at Martinský hill	2,000,000	2022 – 2025	
Svätopluk and Župné squares, pedestrian zone expansion into Radlinského street	Complete reconstruction of the city's main squares into functional public spaces / first ever thorough archeological research under the Svätopluk square with the findings serving as a basis for the architecture competition	7,500,000	2021 – 2025 (2021 – quick win interventions, 2022 – architecture competition / archeological research, 2023 – project, 2024 – 2025 – implementation)	● European Musical Marathon ● Divadelná Nitra '35 ● Protesta Festival & Conference ● Tired Attires ● Nitra 2026 Opening Ceremony ● Nitra 2026 Closing Ceremony
Old City Hall (Nitra Regional Museum Seat)	Complete restoration and reconstruction into representative cultural spaces and new technological equipment for the Museum and premises of Nitra 2026 Association Office along with the Cozytown project	2,620,000	2022 – 2024	● Museum of Parallel Culture ● Nitra: Lost. Possible. Future. ● Re-folk ● Memory. Cultivated.
bod.K7 – Culture and Community Point + Ponor.K Residency Centre	Reconstruction of a functionalist bank into a cultural and community point aimed at audience development activities and an old bar into a residency centre	300,000	2021 – 2024 (2021 – 2022 – Culture and Community Point, 2023 – 2024 – Ponor.K Residency Centre)	● Divadelná Nitra '35 ● Audience development activities ● Cultivator Capacity Building
Vila K	Reconstruction of a functionalist villa into a functionalist architecture museum and cultural hub	230,000	2021 – 2022	● East of Eden? ● What if...? ● The Stolpersteine 2.026 ● Nitra_diverse
Imaginarium Blackbox at J. Rosinský Elementary art school	A new multifunctional hall for J. Rosinský Elementary Art School + revitalisation of the outdoor premises with a prominent Nitra sculptor Tibor Bartfay's outdoor gallery	2,200,000	2022 – 2024 (2022 – architecture competition, 2023 – project, 2024 – implementation)	● The Conspiracy Festival ● Divadelná Nitra '35 ● Imaginarium Un-limited ● Audience development activities
Creative Centre SUA	Reconstruction of the library of the Slovak University of Agriculture (SUA) and creation of a creative centre focusing on architecture, design and marketing	5,000,000	2021 – 2023	● We'll Be What We'll Eat ● Hlaholica Neue ● Gardens of Nitra ● Nitra: Future_climate
Nitra City Park	Reconstruction and revitalisation of the Nitra City Park	6,000,000	2022 – 2023	● The Alley of Unsung Heroes ● Break The Ice Festival
Nitra Castle and the Castle Hill	Revitalisation of the Castle Hill premises, building a new art museum in the Castle's Southern Bastion, building of an elevator/ cable car connecting Nitra City Park with the Castle Hill, reconstruction of Kluch Palace to a cultural space	2,500,000	2020 – 2024	● The Upper Town Funk
Community and Free time centre Domino	Reconstruction, new functions and new technological equipment	2,000,000	2021 – 2023	● I-solated ● Audience development activities ● Cultivator Capacity Building
Nitra Synagogue	Refurbishment of the Synagogue – a cultural hub of Nitra Old Town and Jewish Heritage Museum"	500,000	2022 – 2023	● Torn Apart ● Nitra_diverse
Rolfesova baňa Park	Building of a new park with cultural infrastructure in an old dolomite mine	1,000,000	2023 – 2024	● Nitra: Future_climate ● Imaginarium Un-limited ● Nitra 2026 Opening Ceremony



<b>IN-HABIT / Horizon 2020</b>	Creation of a Reversible Multifunctional Open-source Urban Landscape along the 8 km long cycle route	350,000	2020 – 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>River and its People</li> <li>Gardens of Nitra</li> </ul>
<b>Nitra City Market</b>	Renovation of a National Heritage Site of the City Market, partially as a cultural and social hub	5,500,000	2021 – 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Self-Preservation Society</li> </ul>
<b>Andrej Bagar Theatre</b>	Green Theatre project – reducing the energy performance of buildings and modernisation of operating technologies compliant with modern environmental standards	500,000	2023 – 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(me)identity – (EU)identity</li> <li>Divadelná Nitra '35</li> <li>New (b)Orders</li> <li>Take Over The Institutions!</li> </ul>
<b>Karol Spišák Old Theatre</b>	Reconstruction of the workshops, offices and deposits	1,150,000	2020 – 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inter-gen</li> <li>Divadelná Nitra '35</li> <li>Take Over The Institutions!</li> </ul>
<b>Nitra Gallery</b>	Partial restoration of the Gallery spaces, new technological equipment	300,000	2022 – 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nitra: Lost. Possible. Future.</li> <li>We/Us</li> <li>Take Over The Institutions!</li> </ul>
<b>Regional Centre for Amateur Culture</b>	New technological equipment	110,000	2022 – 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Case for Crafts</li> <li>Nitra_diverse</li> <li>Nitra: Future_climate</li> <li>Audience development activities</li> </ul>
<b>Nitra Regional Library</b>	New Nitra regional library branch in the Chrenová housing estate	40,000	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hlaholica Neue</li> <li>Nitra: Lost. Possible. Future.</li> </ul>
<b>Slovak Agricultural Museum in Nitra</b>	Partial restoration of the premises and a new permanent exhibition	400,000	2023 – 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survivors?!</li> <li>Story of The Seed</li> </ul>
<b>Nitra Public Swimming Pool</b>	Revitalisation of the Public swimming pool	100,000	2020 – 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Break The Ice Festival</li> </ul>
<b>Sauna on Wheels</b>	30,000 € construction + 30,000 € operation	60,000	2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sauna on Wheels</li> </ul>
<b>River and its People</b>	Nitra and cities from the region plan to reshape the river banks into modern leisure zones	1,500,000	2022 – 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>River and its People</li> </ul>
<b>Gardens of Nitra</b>	A series of community gardens with basic cultural equipment in Nitra's city neighbourhoods	1,000,000	2024 – 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gardens of Nitra</li> </ul>
<b>Lipa Cinema and Community Centre</b>	Full renovation of an old cinema building and its surrounding public spaces	1,500,000	2021 – 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nitra: Lost. Possible. Future.</li> <li>Divadelná Nitra '35</li> </ul>
<b>Sandokan Centre</b>	Renovation of an old neighbourhood community hub along with a Nitra regional library branch	2,000,000	2022 – 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nitra: Lost. Possible. Future.</li> <li>Hlaholica Neue</li> <li>Divadelná Nitra '35</li> <li>The Self-Preservation Society</li> <li>Tired Attires</li> </ul>
<b>Diely Amphitheatre</b>	Renovation of an amphitheatre in one of the Nitra's housing estates	200,000	2021 – 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What Would The Brothers Say?</li> <li>The View From The Cheap Seats</li> <li>Divadelná Nitra '35</li> </ul>
<b>Zobor Ampitheatre</b>	Renovation of the city amphitheatre	800,000	2023 – 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nitra, dear Nitra_Rework</li> <li>Divadelná Nitra '35</li> <li>Nitra 2026 Opening Ceremony</li> </ul>
<b>Play Out! playgrounds</b>	4 playgrounds based on the eponymous artistic programme	60,000	2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Play Out!</li> </ul>
<b>Folk Culture House in Šaľa</b>	Refurbishment, technological equipment	400,000	2022 – 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Case for Crafts</li> </ul>
<b>Šaľa Mill</b>	Renovation and building of milling museum	1,000,000	2022 – 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survivors?!</li> </ul>
<b>Folk Culture House Nesvady</b>	Refurbishment, technological equipment	300,000	2022 – 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Case for Crafts</li> </ul>
<b>Rock dwellings in Brhlovce (residency centre)</b>	Refurbishment, technological equipment	100,000	2023 – 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Case for Crafts</li> </ul>
<b>Environmental centre in Zlaté Moravce</b>	Refurbishment	1,000,000	2022 – 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nitra: Future_climate</li> <li>Green Culture</li> </ul>
<b>Tesárske Mlyňany Arboretum</b>	Reconstruction of the manor	1,000,000	2022 – 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nitra: Future_climate</li> <li>Gardens of Nitra</li> </ul>

<b>Levice Castle</b>	Complete revitalisation of the Castle and the Castle Park	3,500,000	2022 – 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fields of Multiculture</li> </ul>
<b>Bojná, Fidvár, Iža, Nitriansky Hrádok and other archeological sites</b>	Revitalisation of the archeological sites	1,000,000	2023 – 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DiggIt</li> </ul>
<b>Hurbanovo Observatory and Planetarium</b>	Refurbishment and new technological equipments	1,000,000	2022 – 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wandering for Miracles</li> <li>Nitra: Future_climate</li> </ul>
<b>Nové Zámky Creative Centre</b>	Refurbishment of Matica Slovenská Building into a Creative Centre	1,500,000	2022 – 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nitra: Future_climate</li> </ul>
<b>Topoľčany City Park</b>	Revitalisation of the city park with a community garden	500,000	2023 – 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gardens of Nitra</li> </ul>
<b>Waterfront–bridge Gallery Štúrovo</b>	New connection of the Dunaj river waterfront to the Maria Valeria bridge with an art gallery and cultural space	1,000,000	2023 – 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New (b)Orders</li> </ul>
<b>Nitra Bicycle Network</b>	New bicycle routes around the City	5,000,000	2020 – 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Touristic and local mobility, making the discovery of the city easier on both foot and bike.</li> </ul>
<b>total</b>	<b>75,720,000</b>			

## Nitra of the Future

**Nitra. The place where I was born and which I love, but there's still a lot to improve. There are a lot of interesting places.**

**One of those is our majestic Nitra Castle, which I would change to a fairytale castle. I would paint it all pink and every weekend children could play there and be princes and princesses. Their parents could play their loyal servants. Near the castle there's a beautiful city park, where it would be nice to have a lot of carousels and roller coasters. Near the park we have a public pool, where there could be a lot of toboggans, giant cotton candy and a rich programme for children. What I miss in Nitra is a huge zoo, where there could be dinosaurs, but only the ones that eat plants, so we could walk among them. Tourists from other countries could come and see them, and they could come by plane and land at the Janíkovce airport. In fact, the zoo could be right by the airport. There aren't a lot of foreign pupils in primary schools, but if there were, it would be good for fast learning of foreign languages. A good thing to build in the future would be an underground metro, so we could travel faster to nearby villages and in the city. But an above ground metro would be good as well, which would also serve as a sightseeing route for the tourists, and most importantly, it could go above our zoo with dinosaurs. There used to be a cable car to Zobor. It would be good if that got renewed, and on the hill there could be attractions for kids, for example a bobsleigh track that would go all the way down from the hill. We can't forget about our older citizens of Nitra. It would be nice if children could spend time with them. They could adopt them as grandparents, visit them, take them on walks and help them. And finally, so that Nitra doesn't become a city full of concrete and towers, we would have many trees and flowers so that it's nice and colourful.**

**Our beautiful city is full of opportunities, but we still have a lot to improve and offer.**



**Breaking Point** is a space where habits, mechanisms and relationships are confronted, examined, thought-through and put back together better and healthier. Not for good, but always, continuously and systematically.

## **City of Nitra**

76,028 inhabitants (city)  
161,499 inhabitants (metro area)  
828 AD first mention  
2 universities  
13,000 university students  
767 registered volunteers  
259 national cultural heritage sites  
1 castle  
20 churches  
1 synagogue  
3 theatres  
5 libraries  
5 museums  
2 galleries  
4.08% unemployment rate  
37 km cycling routes  
700 ha industrial parks  
143 ha exhibition grounds  
140 m<sup>2</sup> of urban green space per inhabitant

## **Nitra Region**

671,508 inhabitants  
42.5% share of urban population  
7 districts  
354 municipalities (16 with a city status)  
29 elementary art schools with 13,833 students  
1,455 national cultural heritage sites  
1,323 km cycling routes  
73% agricultural land  
180,370 yearly theatre attendees  
3,793,662 chicken population

[www.nitra2026.eu](http://www.nitra2026.eu)