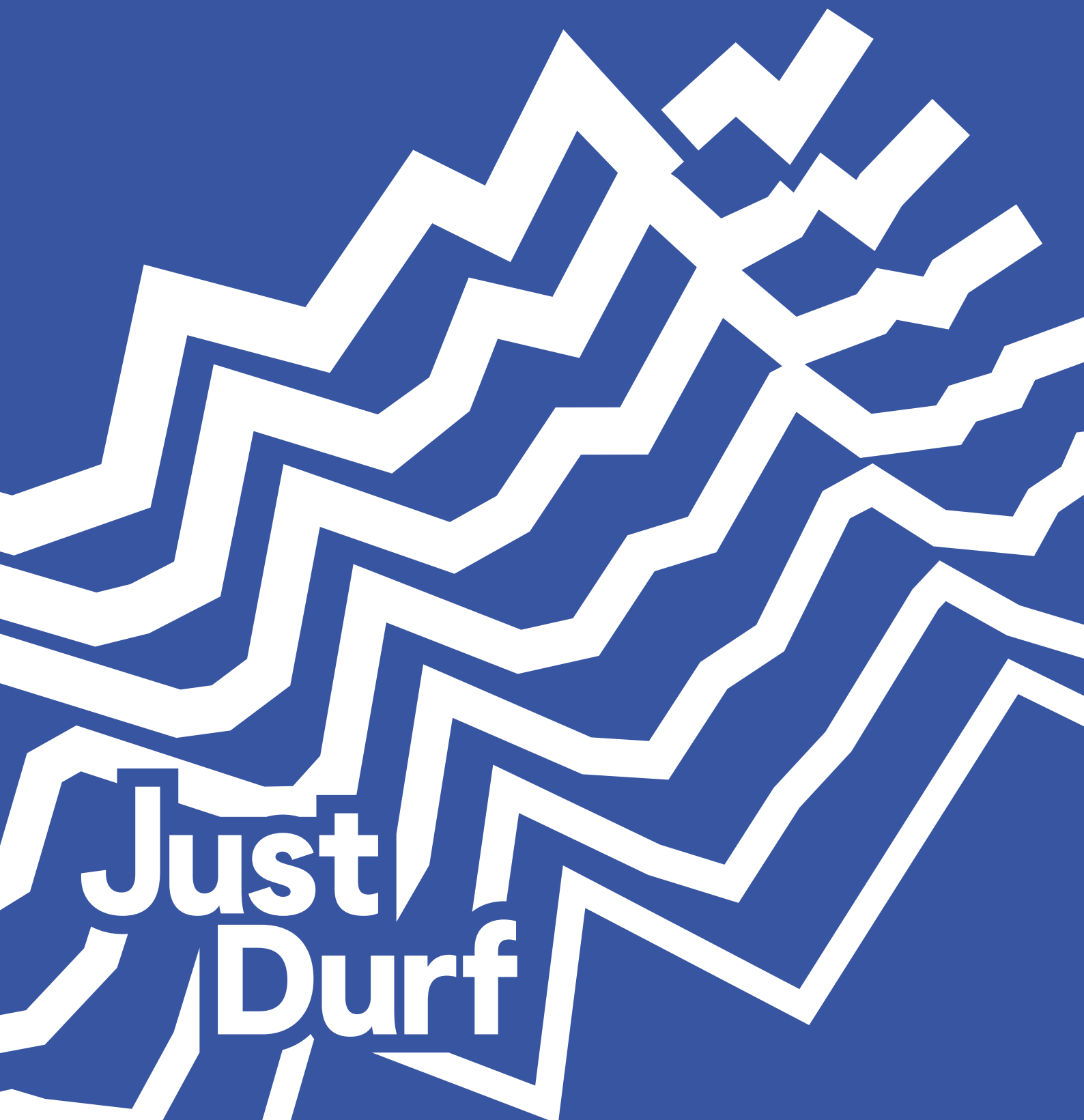




Just
Durf



Amsterdam 260km

UK

NL

London 290km

Bruges 50km

Ghent 50km

Brussels 90km

Kortrijk

Lille 30km

Paris 245km

FR

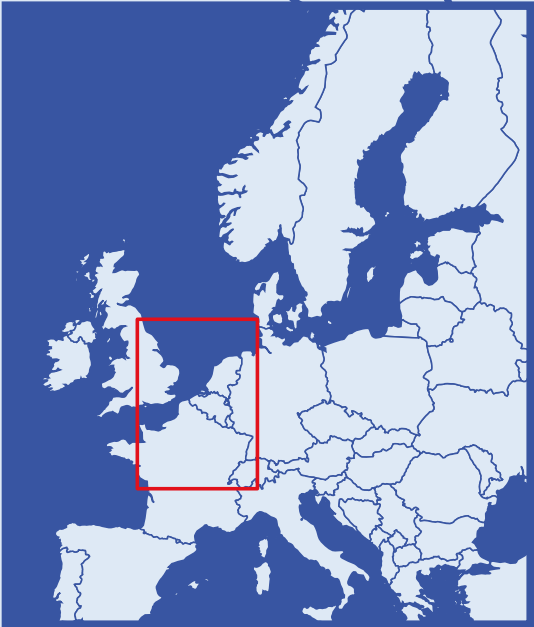


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Capacity to deliver

Just
Durf

0 . Introduction

Q1

Why does your city wish to be European Capital of Culture?

Really? Kortrijk?

How does Kortrijk dare compete for this title? Aren't we too ordinary for this? Why would we even need this? Let's just keep working, no crazy or expensive projects... how would that even help us? Please act normal. We are just Kortrijk.

Gulp... it really made us swallow for a moment when we heard things like this from people in Kortrijk. And also around Belgium. But we decided to dig deeper and consult with many people in our region about our challenges. Did they really think it was all nonsense? No!

By starting the bidding process for European Capital of Culture we finally found and can reveal our inconvenient truth. The display window of our store may still be beautiful, but ... when we scratch the surface a bit, something is definitely going on. Things are starting to crumble.

We can handle it, right? Or NOT!

The answer to most issues in West Flanders is simply to work harder.

While it is incredibly difficult to find the right employees in Kortrijk and the region, companies continue to advertise that they are looking for 'hard workers'. "Olsan deuredoen" (just keep going) is the motto for many West Flemish entrepreneurs.

The flax industry is the prime example of this and Kortrijk and our surrounding region have always been the cradle of this very labour-intensive industry. Flax was Kortrijk's golden product and helped South West Flanders to develop. Our farmers turned into entrepreneurs. A lot of these family businesses reinvented themselves in the 60s. By being innovative...

So this is how we are known in Belgium, as the Texas of Flanders. Just like the old-day Texans, we are loners who do it our own way. We are considered cowboys - although more in the sense of "pioneers" than cattle herders.

Kortrijk aspires to become a pioneering European Capital of Culture. Our deep dive into the city told us that people want help to confront the pressing, underlying challenges we experience today. As diligent workers, we no longer find solutions in our 'hard work' to move forward. Our mentality of just keeping going and forgetting about self-care has got us in trouble. The waiting lists in our numerous (youth) care institutions are longer than those for our most popular cultural events.

Belgium - and especially our region - is Europe's worst in class when it comes to mental well-being. Kortrijk and its region suffer from sky-high burnout rates, psychological problems across many layers of society. Suicide being the leading cause of death among young people in Belgium... and second in Europe. **We risk becoming the European Capital of Mental Breakdowns.** So we need to think and act differently. That's where ECoC comes in.

Really! Kortrijk!

Kortrijk is an urban village in the far reaches of Flanders, at only 15 minutes from the Walloon and French borders. In Europe, Kortrijk is relatively unknown, and even in Belgium, we are hardly a destination, often just a stopover.

A city and region defined by borders

We are part of the first ever EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation), called the Eurometropolis Lille, Tournai & Kortrijk, launched in 2008 to connect the three regions. And since Brexit, we even host an outside border of the European Union. There's no physical wall between our regions, but after 15 years of EGTC, the language paradigm and changed political context are creating a barrier greater than ever felt before. European Capital of Culture can be a door-opener to reignite what we— in all of Europe— have taken for granted for too long and worked too little towards: **the consciousness that peace, cooperation, and cohabitation across borders are things worth pushing for.**

However, we are also defined by our **internal boundaries**. When someone asks, "How are you?", we respond in no time with a nod or a simple "I'm fine." And then the conversation typically ends. We greet people we know, but it feels awkward when a stranger says hello. We tend to be quite reserved and closed off when it comes to discussing our inner thoughts and feelings. In a world characterised by bubbles and algorithms, and **in a Europe that is increasingly radicalised and polarised, we need to develop new skills to truly listen and talk to each other.** Day after day.

A city under pressure

With the help of the European Capital of Culture, we want to respond to the cries of panic of many individuals and (care) institutions in our region. More importantly, we want to focus on preventive measures rather than just curative responses. **We believe culture can provide the collective oxygen** – not by chance this is **the title of our Cultural Strategy** – that everyone needs. The oxygen that gives meaning to what we think, do and dream of.

The 21st century emphasises the significance of smaller cities on a human scale rather than megacities to find creative solutions to some of our pressing issues. Those cities, in particular, are under immense pressure, witnessing our hard-earned rights suddenly questioned and faced with crisis after crisis. Are we on the brink of losing everything?

And our kids are feeling it too! We've seen a big shift in the volume of antisocial behaviour from youngsters and even little children. Our school dropout rate is now almost 10%, and even children as young as 10 years old are not attending school anymore. As a result, some areas in the city centre have become hotspots that are becoming intimidating for citizens because of this growth in youth disassociation. ECoC can be a driver for our imagination, helping us find constructive solutions. The oxygen of culture can be a key to providing new opportunities for young people, and helping them to learn and contribute their energies to a warm and cohesive society.

A creative city in transition mode

We are a creative city that was and is constantly in transition. With hard work and innovation, we went from farmers to entrepreneurs, from textile to manufacturing (industry). But the industrial future of Kortrijk is **versatile and extremely digital**. The EU and the world are facing a revolution of AI and VR. We are facing a new era that needs a rebalance between the new technological developments and well-being. Thanks to innovative education at our universities, our status as a UNESCO Creative City of Design, and close collaboration with strong multinationals in the area, we are organising the Unwrap Festival, truly unprecedented in Europe. **Kortrijk is Flanders' gaming hub and we reach out to Europe and the world**, looking forward hopefully and ensuring that we are prepared for any future scenario that comes our way...

Just Durf!



So, are we 'just' Kortrijk? We dare to tackle our inconvenient truth, **the hidden crisis that has crept up on us**. Kortrijk dares to make a change. We embrace audacity. We just need to 'durf'! Durf in Flemish means **to dare**, to embrace challenges and boldly take risks.

'Just Durf' is how we aim to build mental resilience to tackle the challenges of our time. This urban village is the ideal playground to design a new social framework for Kortrijk and the region, and inspire Europe with it.

Listening to and learning from the conversations with the people of our city, we decided to create **a daring platform (DURF2030)** that acts as both an initiator and a matchmaker. Between cultural and other sectors, between individuals and collectives. Durf is about doing and experimenting to find creative solutions for local challenges with a European outlook. We dared to delve into the soul of Kortrijk and ended up touching the soul of Europe.

But it also takes courage to put ourselves out there, into a wider European context. To open our Durf-process up and leave the comfort zone that has become uncomfortable. We dare to propose our little Texas ways to the rest of Europe.

We strongly believe that we can make a difference on a European scale, reviving old connections to our neighbours and finding new ones around Europe and overseas. The ECoC title would be a catalyst to go from **a stopover city to an actual destination with a European mindset and outreach with a Just Durf attitude. A city where anything goes and everyone grows.**



Our plan to involve the Region

Kortrijk wholeheartedly chooses to bid along with our South West Flanders region, a densely populated region consisting of 13 cities and municipalities (12 + Kortrijk) with 321 000 inhabitants. Kortrijk is centrally located, with the other communities within a maximum one-hour bike ride. Involving the region in our 2030 story is a given.

South by southwest

We can't discuss our region 'South West' without looking at the Belgian map and its political structure. Located in Flanders in the southern part of the province of West Flanders, it is bordered by France and Wallonia. Call it the periphery if you want.

Cooperation is the region's DNA.

Local authorities have collaborated for more than 60 years across various policy areas (regional development, urban planning, economy, welfare, poverty, health, ...). In the mid-90s our regional cooperation started - the first in Flanders - to include culture and heritage. Since then, the inter-municipal cooperation Zuidwest (literally South West) has served as the cultural and heritage platform for the 12+1 cities and municipalities.

Over the years, we realised different cultural projects rooted in our shared heritage. Recently we celebrated our shared river Leie (2015), the 15th anniversary of writer Stijn Streuvels (2021) or 50 years of E17 in 2023 (yes, a celebration of a motorway). When Kortrijk joined the UNESCO Creative City Network (2017), it was not merely as a city but as a creative region.

Rivers before region

No flax production without water. Our waterways, especially the Leie and Schelde, define the region's territory and play(ed) a significant role in building its wealth. We are **the land of the golden river** since the water used to turn a shade of gold when the flax was soaked in the river to partly rot and become pliable. A true polycentric - we call it 'nebulous' - region with few physical boundaries and connected by the rivers as a continuous ribbon of villages and town centres. The relics of industrial heritage and the landscape provide an interesting playing field for cultural and creative actors, both past and present. Not only do the waterways define our territory. Also the motorways such as the E17 and E403 provided an economic boost but also split villages and landscapes.

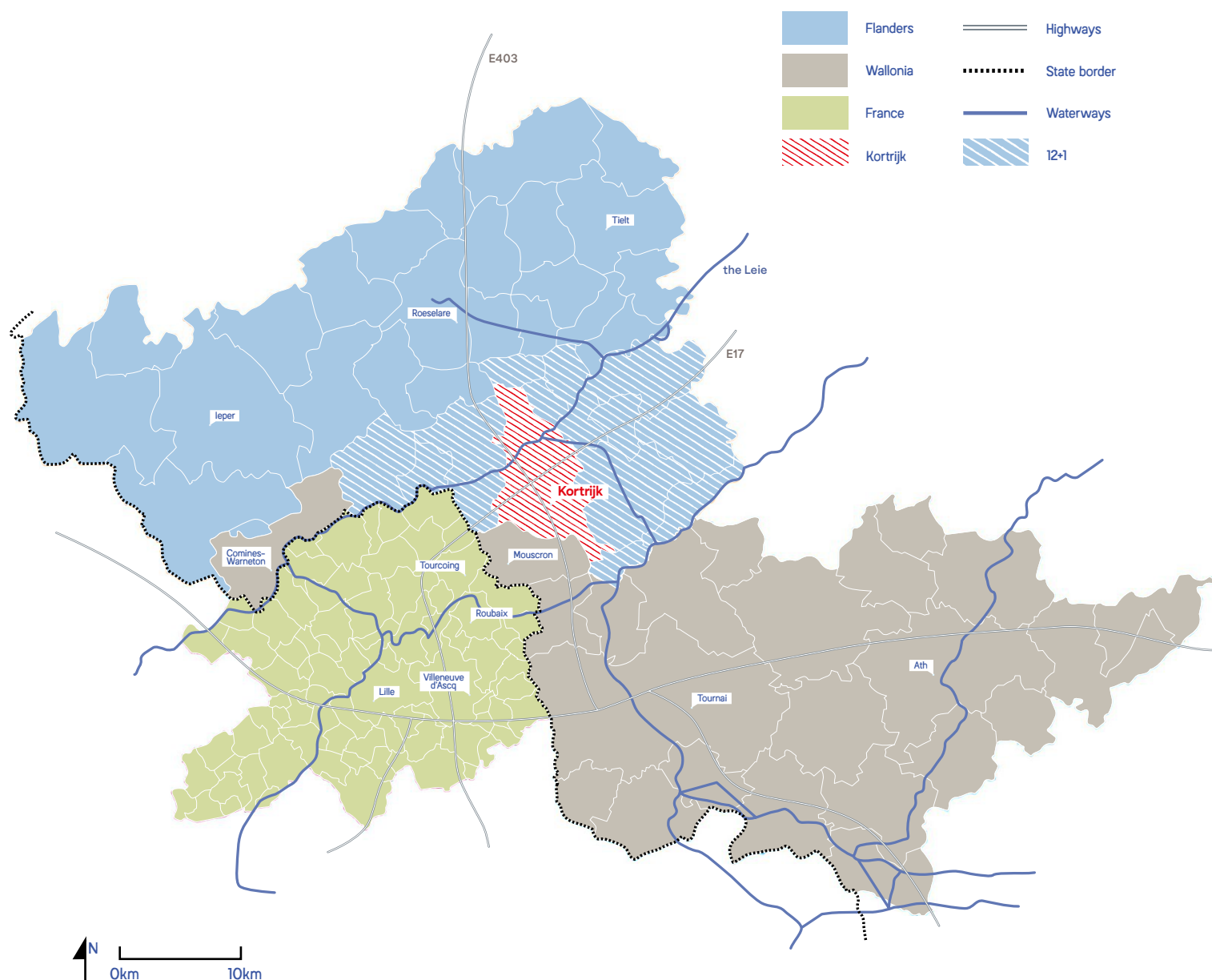
Despite, as mentioned above, the existence of a shared territory, history, regional structures and cooperative initiatives, **a cohesive regional identity remains absent**. Neither residents nor tourists readily identify with terms like "Kortrijk" or "South West Flanders". Instead, strong local and micro-identities prevail. Residents typically identify with areas such as 'Aalbeke', one of the seven communities in Kortrijk, or with local villages, like 'Moen' or 'Geluwe', parts of different cities in the region... Thus, the question arises: How can we unify everyone under the global vision of Kortrijk2030?

Beyond the 12+1

South West Flanders is flanked by France with the border around 10 km from Kortrijk centre and Lille about 30 km away. The language border to the French speaking Walloon region of Belgium is less than 10 km away, too. Whilst the ECoC territory includes the South West Flanders region in Belgium, we take the **Eurometropolis (Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai) with 2.2 m inhabitants** as a valuable pool of cooperation partnerships, potential visitor source, and renewed European cross-border collaboration. The international performing arts festival NEXT is the cultural flagship of the Eurometropolis. 24 partners in 16 cities realise an artistic fest for almost 15 000 spectators moving around the region. ECoC brings a chance to build on and deepen our cultural connections with our Walloon and French neighbours, as we describe further below.

How do we stop turning our backs to each other?

Let's be honest. Despite pioneering efforts and good practices, our regional cooperation is facing **significant decline**. Local politics often prioritise the local level and may not fully recognise the benefits of regional collaboration. Given our culture of hard work, it is not obvious to take time for slow processes (conversations) which lead to (sustainable) collaborations. We were pioneers in cultural cooperation with our French-speaking neighbours, thanks to the Interreg programme. However, we now miss this type of funding in current European programmes. We have a habit of looking northwards (Ghent! Antwerp! Brussels!), whereas Francophones often direct their attention southwards (Paris!). How do we stop turning our backs on each other? Additionally, our reluctance to embrace our bilingualism hinders us from actively leveraging its potential. "I don't speak French" remains one of the most commonly uttered phrases in our region, despite the fact that every Fleming learns French from the age of 10 in school.



And here lies **the incredible significance of obtaining the ECoC title** as a benefit to the wider cross-border region. The long process towards 2030 (and beyond) provides both time and space to explore novel forms of collaboration stemming from a shared timeline and ambition. Our ‘Just Durf’ concept aims to inspire politicians, residents, businesses and organisations to come up with daring new ideas and collaborations. We aim for a new benchmark for regional cooperation, not only locally but also within the broader European context. **Digital innovations break down language barriers**, while **co-creative ECoC projects** (such as **the Arts Marathon, Giants of the Euroregion, Soap & the city, The Legacy of the Treaty...**^{*} as you will discover

in our artistic programme) dissolve mental and physical borders. Through smart communications and mobility – using boats, bikes and other slow-moving vehicles – people will be able to relate better to a common and shared territory, not only tourists but also the inhabitants.

^{*} Blue-marked texts in this bid book are artistic projects in our Kortrijk2030 programme.



The cultural profile of Kortrijk



When Kortrijk was designated as a **UNESCO Creative City of Design** in 2017, it wasn't due to major cultural institutions or events. Rather, it owed its recognition to the conversion of the region from the flax industry to a region of creative manufacturing comprising creators, artists, cultural organisations, businesses, educational institutions, governmental bodies and engaged citizens. This interconnected network thrives on creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness and a daring vision for the future.

However, this ecosystem remains relatively unknown to many. The UNESCO designation marked our initial endeavour to step out of the shadows, to open up our minds to Europe and the world. The ECoC title represents the next step.

Let's have a look at the cultural ecosystem.

The Kortrijk region has an interesting diversity of professional cultural organisations. Strong players are the **City Theatre Schouwburg**, active in the field of stage presentation for more than 100 years. **Arts centre BUDA** comprises an arthouse cinema and also one of the largest creation spaces for performing arts in Belgium and even Europe, located in the building of the first multiplex cinema in Belgium (Budascoop). **Wilde Westen** is a concert and festival organiser and one of the pacesetters of an intense music experience in the Eurometropolis, with a broad reach into Flanders. **Texture** is a very contemporary museum of textiles and flax – based in the former warehouse of the Linen Thread Company which is one of the most important relics of the flax industry. From the beginning of 2025, we will add **Abby** as a Museum of Contemporary Visual Arts. **Designregio Kortrijk** is the coordinating organisation for the UNESCO Creative City Network and operates on the quintuple helix model.

Our city has a history in pioneering in **socio-artistic work**: **Wit.H** focuses on the inclusion of people with disabilities, and both the community outreach of theatre producers **Antigone**, **Unie der Zorgelozen** and **de Figuranten** work with people in (financially) vulnerable situations. **Avansa** is a regional socio-cultural organisation that promotes social debate through participatory projects with a strong focus on mental well-being. **Het Bataljong** is a company of young theatre makers and actors, guided by professionals. **Radical HeArts** is a production house for both exhibitions and performances. **Reveil** wants to creatively realise a mourning revolution in Flanders whilst **PERPLX** is a workspace for emerging circus artists. **Passerelle** (dance), **De Stroate** (hiphop), **LZSB** (public domain), **Bolwerk** (arts & crafts) and **Quindo** (multimedia) are committed to open youth

work and education within culture. The **Royal Academy of Fine Arts** (visual arts) and **Conservatorium** (music, dance, word) offer art education in leisure time for young and old in the region. The **City library** is the most accessible cultural place in the city, where residents and associations feel at home.

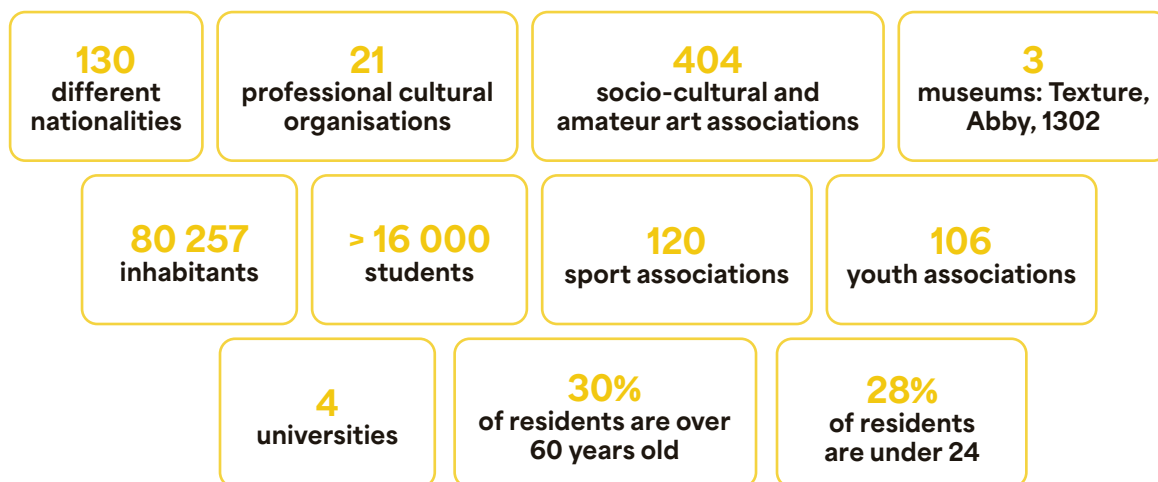
All these organisations are connected through the association **Kortrijk Arts Council**. This is an organisation of independent creators as well as city-run institutions, which has been a significant contributor to our vision and our programme.

We have a (political) tradition in investing in **(decentralised) infrastructure**. That's why we have a dense network of medium-sized **culture and community centres** (49) and **libraries** (34) located throughout the region. Thanks to this we can bring culture close to our people. In our city centre we have various culture hubs which connect different functions. **Buda-island** with a strong focus on creation and presentation of contemporary performing arts (Budascoop, Budatower, Budafabriek), the **Music Centre**, **Bolwerk** for (young) arts & crafts (see also Q37).

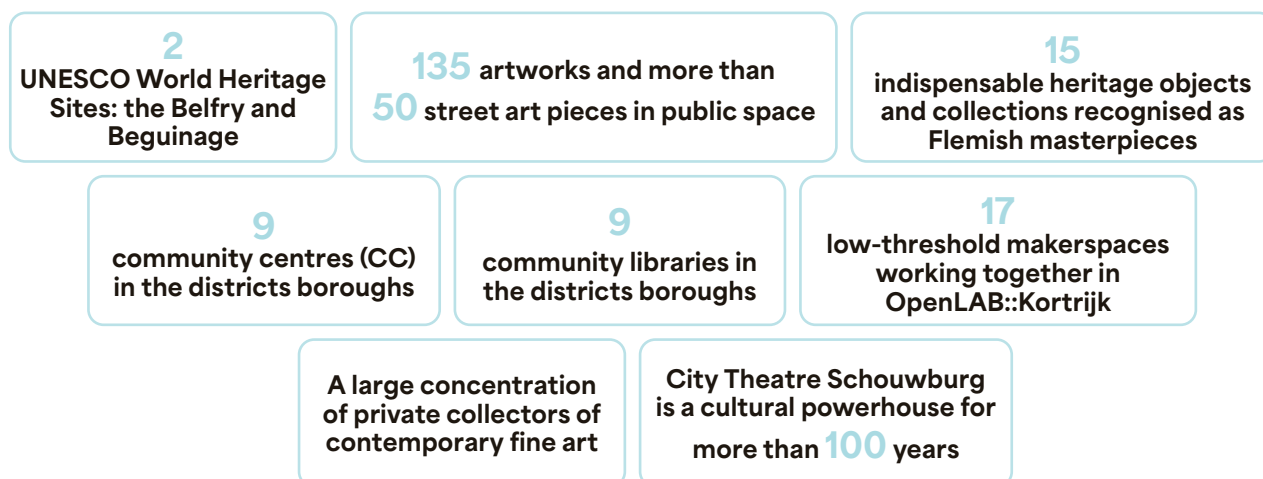
An eventful city

You may know Kortrijk from the Biennale Interieur, the international design fair (from 1968). It had its last edition in 2020 and changed into **Design Nation**, a new professional design fair in Kortrijk XPO. **WONDER Creativity Festival**, created by many cultural and creative partners, annually highlights creativity in the region and reaches more than 12 000 visitors. **Sinksen** is the annual city festival over the Pentecost weekend with over 200 000 visitors, **NEXT Festival** is the annual international performing arts festival in and around the Franco-Belgian Eurometropolis. Festivals like **Sonic City** and **Alcatraz** feature on the musical map, **UNWRAP Digital Entertainment Festival** builds bridges between the gaming, film, media and music sectors in search of the future of entertainment. In 2024 Kortrijk hosted the first edition of **Flanders Technology and Innovation Festival**. The **Kortrijk Triennial** dynamically highlights contemporary art, heritage and urban renewal (next edition in 2027, then 2030). The brand-new **Kortrijk Art Weekend** showcases everything happening in the field of visual arts in Kortrijk. **Memento** is our word-art festival, curated by our city poet collective **Letterzetter**. **Spinrag** is the children's arts festival.

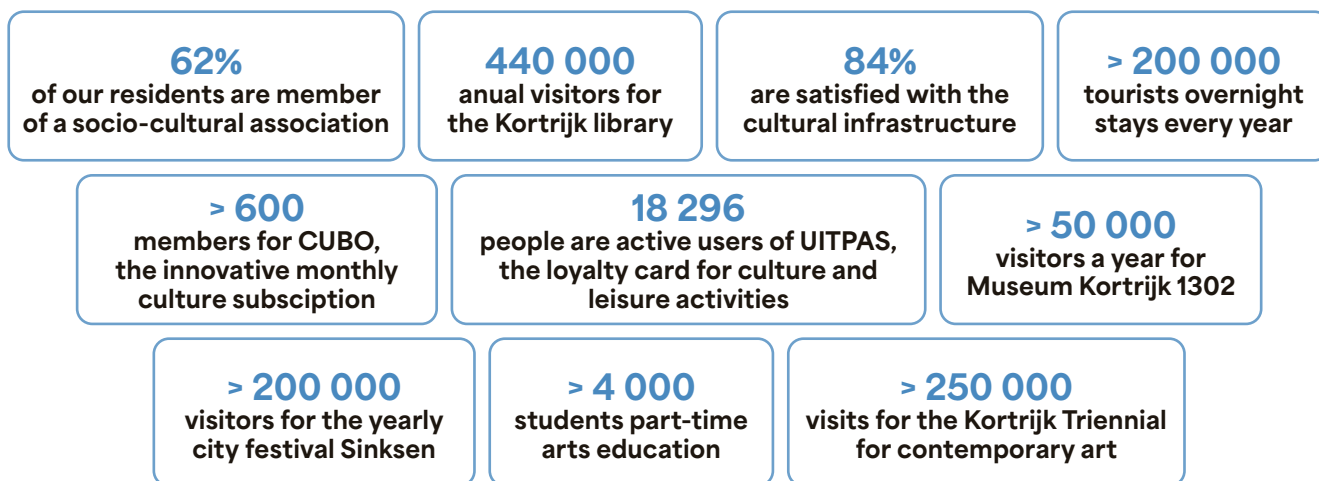
Belonging



Shaping



Relating



Pioneering





Lost and found heritage

Kortrijk is one of the oldest cities in Belgium, serving as a transition centre between major ancient Roman cities (Tournai, Bruges, Oudenburg). In contrast to Ghent and Bruges only little of our rich heritage remains after the 1944 bombardments that hit Kortrijk as an important transportation hub during the Nazi occupation. In our renovated historical centre, you will find traces like the **Beguinage** (1238) and the **Belfry** (1411), both UNESCO World Heritage Sites, as well as the **Broel Towers** (14th-15th century), **St. Martin's Church** (14th-15th century) and the **Church of our Lady** (around 1200). And of course, as intangible heritage, we have to mention **1302**, the battle of the Golden Spurs, when our region rebelled against French rule and unexpectedly won the military confrontation against the predominant French army.

Associations and volunteers

A solid basis of our cultural and creative entrepreneurship lies within the region's strong associations. Our region counts **more than 1 000 socio-cultural voluntary associations, 330 of which are amateur arts organisations**. Also in the field of youth and sport we can lean on strong associations supported by volunteers. 56% Of our inhabitants participate in at least one association. It's in these organisations that young and old can develop their talents and ideas.

But this breeding ground for culture and talent is under pressure. We see a worrying decline in the number of associations, accelerated by Covid (12% less amateur art associations in the region in five years). In an era where time has become a precious and rare resource (whether it's quality time, me time, or having no time at all), volunteer engagement is losing momentum.

On the brighter side, **inclusion and diversity** is one of the priorities formulated through the long term strategy of the Kortrijk Arts Council and is one of the force fields in the Cultural Strategy 'Culture as Collective Oxygen' (see Q5). Not only in the public, but also in our programme, personnel, boards, partnerships and places.

And what about the citizens?

Looking at the numbers, we are quite satisfied (even though, as we say further below, we are not the best at gathering data). The triennial city and municipal monitor shows that 84% of the citizens of Kortrijk are satisfied with the cultural offer (75% in the region). 88% in Kortrijk and the region are satisfied with the libraries. But, despite our rich cultural ecosystem, 39% of our residents don't visit concerts or performing arts. 49% never visit a library. Only 54% find there are enough activities for elderly people (60% in the region). 27% have a positive attitude towards diversity and 47% think that people from other origins enrich the city. 46% believe we live well together with people from different backgrounds. We can't be proud of these last figures. How can culture leverage change on this? Again, that's where ECoC can help.

What are we missing?

Artists! Research by the Kortrijk Arts Council shows that we are strong at organisational level and a good quality, socially engaged cultural offer but that we lack professional artists who live and work in Kortrijk. Why? Too small, too much on the periphery, too little space to develop and show artwork in the region? Or is it the lack of higher education courses in culture and arts? Students go to the bigger cities like Ghent, Brussels, Antwerp to further their education or professional careers.

What else do we lack? **Data!** In the cultural field we are not as good as we'd like to be in data and impact measurement. We don't know our audience well enough. We gather some data but we don't do a lot with it. There's a need for a more impact and data driven policy. Monitoring and Evaluation for ECoC will give us a much needed nudge in the right direction. And we dare to take up the challenge.

Q4 The concept of our programme

Our concept is **Just Durf**. It was actually Europe that inspired us to find 'durf'. It came up when we tried to find out what ECoC is all about. While we listened to and learnt from what our citizens said in the consultations, the word that came up most was DURE.

Durf means doing things the way you haven't done them before. Durf is about boldly taking risks and embracing challenges. It's about experimenting, failing, and learning. It's about the power of creativity and cooperation. It's a mentality. It's a way of life.

So, during the early phases of our candidacy we created DURE2030 as a platform and methodology to tackle local and regional challenges by using culture and creativity. And because it resonated well with everyone we worked with, we decided to make it our concept. Just Durf. Now we are coming full circle. We are bringing our concept back to Europe who inspired us to it in the first place. We invite Europe to Just Durf with us.

Our concept Just Durf is an invitation to all citizens, organisations and associations, politicians and artists, young and old, ... to embrace the new Durf mentality, reaching out to each other and coming up with new creative solutions. Just Durf is a (mental) space to explore culture and join forces to cooperate on the challenges in society. Just Durf is a story that inspires to develop a Durf mentality and realise 'Flax-ible' Futures together. Just Durf is a quest, a journey and story that we carry into our artistic vision, our artistic programme and the programme pillars.

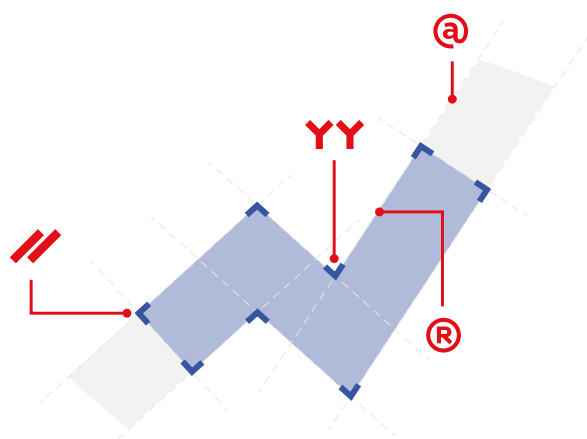
Our first step towards a Durf mentality is to admit that something is wrong and the old solutions don't work any more! Our region seems to struggle with the Borderline Syndrome. We grapple with our identity, unable to adapt to a rapidly changing society and facing difficulties in relating to our neighbours, including our French-speaking neighbours in our own country.

We encounter our boundaries, physically and mentally. We struggle to manage our emotions (control by ignoring). We have problems managing our behaviour when feeling bad. With our programme pillar **BORDER//LINE**, we acknowledge that something is wrong and recognise that true change requires us to transform from the inside out.

So it's time to press the emergency button and transmit a distress signal: **MAYDAY MAYDAY**. Our second programme pillar tells the story of how new solutions emerge only when you take your time, slow down, and allow yourself the mental space for change. It's not about squeezing in some yoga or self-care activities amidst your fast-paced life. No, it requires a deliberate pause before moving forward.

However, slowing down is not easy in the midst of the accelerating Fourth Industrial Revolution. Or can we rather do it thanks to it? Let's embrace this Industry 4.0 but add a **®EVOLUTION** of Imagination. While AI is taking over, we need our own imagination to discover how we work together in this new world, in our company, association or society.

Finally, we commit to co-creating **FL@XIBLE FUTURES**. Future scenarios that, like flax, are extremely versatile, where all parts of society are important, ensuring that nothing and no one is wasted. Flaxibility combines the qualities of flexibility, agility and resilience. We focus on fostering our robust socio-cultural fabric. Being flaxible is the sustainable response to the excessive flexibility demanded today. Flaxible Futures will become the new golden product for our region.



1. Contribution to the long-term strategy



Our Cultural Strategy... and how the European Capital of Culture is included.

Kortrijk isn't bad at strategic planning. **We have a series of long term plans for the city** which include **Urban Planning, a Housing Plan, a Social Service Vision and a City Marketing Plan**. All these ambitions are connected. The Urban Plan refers to several strengths for the city: a connected and accessible city, an entrepreneurial city where functions are interwoven and nearby. The City Marketing Plan uses our creative dynamics as a pillar for actions: Kortrijk, the creative city on the River Leie. In our South West Flanders region, we also have a Cultural Strategy in place. The current regional plan is set to conclude in 2026. The region will develop a new strategy for the period from 2027 to 2032.

More specifically, in tandem with and triggered by our ECoC consultations, the city commissioned **a new, long term Cultural Strategy for Kortrijk**. The strategy is aiming to work in tandem with the ECoC bidding process to address some of the challenges which led us to Durf to be different. The Cultural Strategy is entitled 'Culture as Collective Oxygen. A powerful plan for Kortrijk towards 2035'. The Strategy runs as of now and involves two local policy terms. Its long term perspective for culture sets out a framework taking us beyond the ECoC year and shows our commitment to long term cultural change. And we think, especially in the context of Durf, that our Cultural Strategy is daring, too. The strategy was formally **adopted by the City Council on 10 June 2024** and its main features are described below.

The strategy is the result of a step-by-step participation process of more than two years. We started by asking our citizens what culture means for them. The answers were both simple and diverse. Culture is about art, heritage, history, identity, creativity, talent, personal development. About playing, gaming, dancing and singing. About language, craft, beauty, creating and showing, eating and drinking. About confrontation and discussion, meeting and connecting. About expressing thoughts, images and emotions.

There is one striking common thread, though: **culture gives meaning**. And so, with our Cultural Strategy, we harness the power of **culture as collective oxygen**. To give meaning to our time, city and society together. To breathe fresh life and energy into a place and era where hard work was once seen as the solution to all problems but where now a more balanced, caring approach is needed to create the city we can be.

In our Cultural Strategy, we have defined **four thematic force fields**. They describe the spaces where energy is generated through movement and making new connections:

- **100% Welcome.**

A creative city where everyone is and feels welcome.

Everyone should have the chance to discover and enjoy culture. But a lot of people do not find their way to the cultural offer. Because they don't know how, they can't afford it, cannot get there (or back), do not recognise themselves in it, do not feel welcome, and so on. Plenty of thresholds, visible and invisible. We want to remove them one by one. How? By using an important principle: we are not talking about target groups, but with them. Together we identify barriers and look for solutions.

- **Bursting with talent.**

A city where everyone can discover, develop and showcase their creative talent – professionals and amateurs alike.

Talent becomes visible in activities that you accomplish effortlessly and that give you energy. In this plan we must fully leverage the development of creative talent by establishing a connected chain of talent development. Within this chain, individuals – at any age – can discover, develop and showcase their talent. Crucial to this approach is strengthening the bridges between professional and amateur arts and between the domains of culture, welfare, education and youth.

- **A dynamic ecosystem.**

A city with a dynamic, diverse and resilient cultural and creative ecosystem that is regionally and internationally connected.

Kortrijk boasts a cultural ecosystem of creators, cultural organisations, socio-cultural associations, businesses, educational institutions, government agencies and engaged citizens. However, the Covid pandemic, energy crisis and the war in Ukraine showed that global changes have a strong local impact. The ecosystem is under pressure: the accelerating wave of digitisation, the changing public and volunteer engagement, uncertain funding sources, pressure on the support of (local) government, infrastructure issues or global shocks with local impact. To maintain our cultural ecosystem we need to look for new solutions, connections and ways of support and cooperation.

- **Space space space.**

A city with an inviting and activating public space (online and offline), where unexpected encounters and experiences take place, where you may be yourself, a space that belongs to us all. Kortrijk is one big cultural space. In this space, we meet, interact and give meaning to the city. The infrastructure and public space form a whole that offers oxygen to culture and creativity to all users. But. Climate change and energy transition put the need for renovation of (cultural) infrastructure high on the agenda. Furthermore, a lot of our infrastructure is not accessible for all. How do we put more ownership of users in the management of a building? How can arts and culture be decisive from design onwards in realising a qualitative public space with and for people?

Our Cultural Strategy, along with the four thematic force fields, provides us with a framework to design and implement impactful actions and projects. It's also the basis for strong cooperation with city services from urban planning, infrastructure, welfare, youth and city marketing to use the collective oxygen of culture to add value and new thinking (including Durf) to those services. And it is a legacy plan for the European Capital of Culture. It is the backbone that will carry the results, achievements and impacts of Kortrijk2030 further and secure the continuation of key activities and lessons learnt.

In the short-term, **the ECoC programme is an accelerator for the Cultural Strategy.** The Just Durf concept invites people and organisations to develop new solutions for the challenges we discover in the force fields. Our ECoC programme includes several projects that operate within these force fields. Some examples:

ECoC projects that connect to strategy by programme lines

Cultural Strategy force field	BORDER  LINE Transform from the inside out	MA  DA  MA  DA  Allow yourself the space to change	 EVOLUTION We need more than just our own imagination	FL  XIBLE FUTURES A more resilient, creative and sustainable future
100% Welcome A creative city where everyone is and feels welcome	Normal People	Stadskoor 2030	The New Heartbeat	Welcome Your City
Bursting with talent A city where everyone can develop their creative talent	Kortrijk Collectivity Festival	No Tech Day	Music Outside the Bars	Diaspora Come Home
A dynamic ecosystem A city with a diverse and resilient ecosystem, regionally and internationally connected	Soap & The City	CIS'kes	UNESCO Creative Cities Conference	Keep the Fire Burning
Space space space A city with a public space that belongs to us all	International Arts Marathon	Nexus	Tunnel Vision	Dream Catcher





Strengthening the capacity of the cultural and creative sectors

It is specifically through our third force field, A Dynamic Ecosystem, that the Cultural Strategy focuses on strengthening Kortrijk's cultural and creative sectors. As described in Q5, it aims to foster a **dynamic, diverse, and resilient** cultural and creative ecosystem that is both regionally and internationally connected.

- **Dynamic** focuses on innovation and experimentation, creating opportunities for new ideas, organisations, connections, projects, artists, and talent.
- **Diverse** refers to the variety in operations, disciplines, artistic visions, functions, and outreach.
- **Resilience** involves withstanding challenges, ensuring breathing space, and providing adequate resources, personnel, and infrastructure.

In our vision, culture and creativity contribute to well-being, health, the economy, urban planning, and more. This vision builds upon the recognition and efforts of Kortrijk as a UNESCO Creative City since 2017, emphasising creativity as a means to create a more livable and sustainable environment for its citizens and organisations.

As we described in Q3, Kortrijk actually hosts a robust cultural and creative sector relative to its size with seven municipal cultural institutions (e.g. City Theatre Schouwburg, Library, Museums) and fourteen independent professional cultural entities (e.g. arts centre BUDA, Antigone, Wilde Westen). The independent cultural companies extend their influence regionally and – some of them – internationally. These organisations collaborate through an independent network named **Kortrijk Arts Council**, which has been active since the mid 90s. This council comprises a diverse mix of small and larger organisations, both city-run and independent. An exciting new addition is the **Kortrijk Art Platform** where more than 20 private and public visual arts organisations join forces. The independent cultural sector receives support from the city government in the form of funding, infrastructure, cooperation and project assistance. The **Local Creative Network** contains 370 creatives, most of them active in disciplines such as graphic design, product design and web/digital design. Events like the **WONDER Creativity Festival** showcases the power and diversity of this creative network.

We have several strong innovative and digital education programmes. Our University's bachelor programme Digital Arts and Entertainment has been recognised three times as **the best game development study course in the**

world. Incubators like Hangar K, DAE studio's and Edtech station provide space, education, coaching, knowledge and network to give a boost to the digital (creative) industry. The recently developed Flanders Game Hub in Kortrijk acts as a base where game developers, companies, experts, investors and partners work together to launch and grow more video game companies in Flanders. Open Lab Kortrijk brings together the different makerspaces and develops a programme for adults to discover and develop their digital and technical skills. The Music Centre serves as a central hub for music creation, presentation, education, co-working, meeting and networking. Buda-island is the hub for contemporary performing arts. These programmes and places form a strong breeding ground for our current cultural and creative sector (CCS).

So, what's missing?

We still see challenges and opportunities.

- **the need for (mental) space** to experiment (and fail), to develop new ideas, new forms of cooperation on challenges people and organisations share.
- **the need for (international) connection** between creative industries, the cultural sector and the more economically driven creative sector, between CCS and domains like well-being, health, urban planning, education and youth.
- **the need for different ways of support** (funding, networking, community, matchmaking, coaching, ...)
- **the need for impact evaluation and data** of our cultural and creative industry.

Here, the DURE2030-platform comes into play. DURE2030 initially began as a preliminary and experimental platform and methodology during the bidding process in 2020 (see Q13). Today, it serves as a space where both cultural and non-cultural organisations as well as citizens are invited to share and develop creative ideas to address societal challenges.

E.g. The Rejects A short film by Sandy, a 16-year-old girl from Kortrijk. It began with a simple yet enthusiastic pitch. Through DURE2030, the idea evolved, received funding from the King Baudouin Foundation, and was realised with the help of a professional crew, ultimately earning a nomination at the Ostend Film Festival.

» www.durf2030.eu/projecten/reject

Through this and many other experiments, we have discovered that the DURF2030-platform has the potential to strengthen our cultural and creative sectors by encouraging them to step out of their comfort zones and establish new connections with individuals and organisations from various other fields. DURF2030 places culture and creativity at the very heart of society.

The future of DURF2030

By 2030 we will develop the DURF2030-platform into a genuine “Creative Solutions Factory” where new ideas and approaches can be designed, tested and rolled out. In essence what we are trying to do is to **change society for the better through culture and creativity**. Our experiences in the first years are based on small-scale, bottom-up projects. Towards 2030 the DURF-platform will grow as a vehicle to break down good policies and ideas into accessible, digestible, doable bits. It will be a **framework for cross-sectoral collaborations with culture and creativity as a driver, always with a focus on social and economic innovation. Not only for our region, but also for Europe**. It will help CCS-professionals and create opportunities for a new generation of cultural and creative operators. The DURF2030-platform will further develop its toolbox, based on the experiments of the former years, in support of CCS with an impact on society. Our platform will include:

- **DURF Connects:** Organisations and ideas across sectors and various policy domains, following the quintuple helix model. It facilitates this through organising DATES (networking events), matchmaking

ideas and organisations - locally and internationally, developing (digital) platforms for connection, connecting companies and culture with the Culture Pact (Q26).

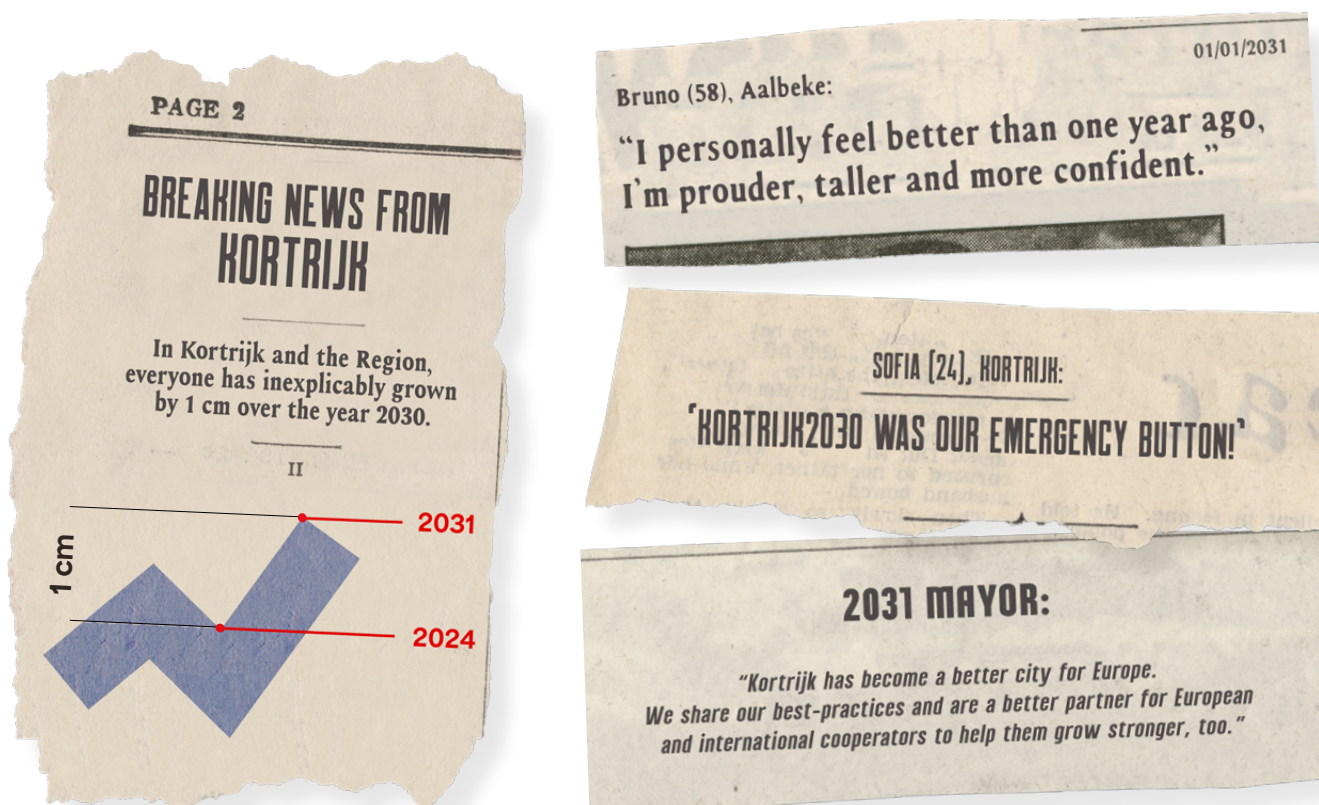
- **DURF Calls:** Invites citizens, creatives and organisations (cultural-non-cultural) to pitch innovative projects or ideas centred on designated themes and challenges or specific demographics (like youth, voluntary associations). The pitcher always stays the owner of his or her idea but can use the DURF-toolbox to realise it.
- **DURF Supports:** Handpicked ideas receive customised support, including budgetary or subsidy guidance, match funding, mentoring, access to facilities, nurturing of growth over time, and communication support.
- **DURF Impact:** In collaboration with universities, we will scientifically support and monitor the outcomes and impacts of projects, but also gather and unlock data of our creative industry (e.g. Open Creatives Platform) and document good (and bad) practices.

The DURF2030-platform, envisioned as the **Creative Solutions Factory**, aims to serve as a beacon for smaller cities by providing targeted solutions and for larger cities to extrapolate small-scale solutions to a larger scope. It acts as a facilitator for cross-sectoral collaboration to foster a dynamic, diverse, and resilient cultural and creative ecosystem that is well-connected both regionally and internationally.



Q8

Foreseen long-term impacts



By 2031 the impact of Kortrijk2030 has turned our region into a factory, producing innovative approaches to health and well-being, where culture and creativity serve as instruments to promote social cohesion and support individual well-being. The region continues to thrive as a forward looking, dynamic environment, where art and culture are not static but evolve with the needs and desires of our community. The collective oxygen is always on tap.

Artists and creatives, both established names and emerging talent, have been encouraged to participate in a lively exchange of ideas and expressions with their European counterparts. We have finally created a cultural ecosystem where collaboration and exchange are natural, where the walls between disciplines blur and new, surprising forms of creation emerge, both with professional cultural partners and also with the residents of Kortrijk and the region.

In Autumn 2023, through the participation process (Q13) we detected **seven specific objectives** for Kortrijk and the region, our **Magnificent Seven** that help us determine the impacts we anticipate:

- ❶ Evolving into a 'may do' city, replacing rules with guidelines.
- ❷ Embracing the continuous stream of different revolutions (e.g. the Fourth Industrial Revolution) and making culture connect in both ways ending up with culture in those industries and the integration of revolutions in our cultural lives (AI, VR, ...).
- ❸ Bringing out the qualities of slowing down.
- ❹ Opening windows and doors to look out and let others in.
- ❺ Enhancing the vibrancy of our renovated streets and squares with spontaneity.
- ❻ Lowering barriers within the socio-cultural fabric, our associations (for participants, volunteers and spectators).
- ❼ Positioning our region as a destination, rather than a stopover.

These seven objectives seem very different but have one element in common. All seven contribute to improved mental well-being for our residents and visitors. However, the ECoC title is certainly not a miracle drug but far more, a unique opportunity to achieve our goals more quickly and make a lasting impact. Drafting these sustainable objectives was a very interesting and necessary exercise to keep the focus on long-term impact amidst a wealth of information.

Magnificent Seven

CULTURAL IMPACT

KPI: Kortrijk and the region are recognised within the Belgian cultural scene, by inhabitants and visitors, and are a catalyst for European cooperation.

SOCIAL IMPACT

KPI: Residents of Kortrijk and the region feel happier, looking confidently and resiliently towards the next years.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

KPI: Kortrijk and the (EU) region grow as an attractive region to live, work and live in.

ECOLOGICAL/URBAN IMPACT

KPI: Integration of sustainable development goals in local and regional policies.

IMAGE & IDENTITY IMPACT

KPI: Become better known, the place to be in North-West Europe.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
European cooperation is self-evident, for professional and even non-professional players, within the Eurometropolis and beyond				●			
Stronger connections within the socio-cultural fabric, mutual ties, Kortrijk and the region are on the Belgian cultural map						●	●
All opportunities for cultural initiatives in a city where rules have become guidelines, rather supporting than bothering	●					●	
Kortrijk and the region are the ideal soil for new pioneers in the cultural field		●				●	
Elaboration of a customer journey for culture in Kortrijk and the region			●	●			
New opportunities for cultural participation in less obvious places	●				●		
There is plenty of room for trial and error	●		●				
More spontaneous liveliness on the streets and squares			●		●		
Renewed enthusiasm for volunteering in the cultural sector and beyond						●	
Local communities have (re)new(ed) forms of cooperation	●			●		●	
Plenty of local ownership by giving new impulses to meeting centres encouraging them to function as community centres				●		●	
Kortrijk and the region have become a destination and no longer just a transit point, the ideal alternative to big cities to live, work and live in							●
Integration of the new Industrial Revolution (AI, VR, AR,...) into the cultural sector, for example by developing a game policy		●					
Cultural ecosystem that reinforces cultural partners and makes them economically stronger	●						●
Culture takes its place within the business community, cross-sectoral cooperation to tackle the challenges of our time (environmental issues, migration, ...)			●			●	●
Clearly higher attractiveness for domestic and international tourism							●
A green approach to cultural events is self-evident for everyone	●						
Attention for quality greenery in Kortrijk and the region, like extra forests			●		●		
Creative use of existing infrastructure, reuse of churches and chapels, vacant or abandoned buildings, shops, etc. as surprising places for connection	●			●			
Searching for new models of shared ownership, based on broad use of infrastructure	●			●		●	
Openness towards creative filling of public space, such as renewed squares and parks	●	●	●		●		
Renewed common identity and pride in Kortrijk and the region		●			●		●
We are no longer the 'most marginal' region of the country but an interesting central point in the heart of Europe, recognised by policy makers				●			●



Monitoring and evaluation

Sometimes you can read how someone feels on their face, but especially in South West Flanders, you'll get a standard "ça va" or "abaja" (our local ça va or word to avoid awkward silences) if you want to know how things are going. It's in our nature, in our DNA, not to show how things really are.

Can we change track, can we learn something from a game like The Sims? In this computer game, you see how your 'Sim' is doing by the colour of the diamond above their head. If it's very green, things are going well, but the more yellow, orange, and red the diamond becomes, the worse things are going for your character. How can you influence this? There are different actions you can take, of course there are basic needs like eating, sleeping, washing, or going to the toilet. But two other factors are 'fun' and 'social'.



Interesting, however, in our own lives, we get stuck on being workaholics, self-care shamers. In a game like 'The Sims', we manage to send our character to the theatre, let them dance, have a conversation with the neighbour, ... but in real life, that's clearly much harder.

And once the diamond isn't green enough, our Sim can't cook anymore, can't go to work, can't laugh, ... and neither can we function anymore. At the moment we don't have diamonds to show how we are doing, or how the city is doing. But we'll search for other ways to make the invisible visible during our bidding phase, our implementation phase and even the years after.

And we intend that our approach to Monitoring and Evaluation will take on an innovative, fun but also crucial role in showing the health of the city and its people. And how that improves with the regular application of the cultural oxygen that ECoC will apply. Also where we need to take action if things stay yellow, orange - or even start to turn red!

Monitoring trajectories with a wide range of partners

How can we effectively measure people's mental resilience? Or even that of the city itself? Even our monitoring and evaluation process will ask for a Just Durf-approach. We will develop the right methodology in various trajectories and with different partners. We intend to work within the whole quintuple helix, which includes not only the government, industry and the academic world, but obviously also civic society, including culture, and the natural environment.

Within the DURF2030 platform we run the project 'geDURFd' (DareD), one of the pilot projects (2024-2026) in collaboration with one of the universities, VIVES. Within this programme we are measuring the state of mental resilience among our young people, and the impact of participating in a cultural project. We definitely want to incorporate lessons learned from this into the monitoring and evaluation for the entire ECoC trajectory as well.

- **Monitor and Evaluation-Offices within the Kortrijk2030-team**

Numbers don't lie! In the Kortrijk2030 team, we provide a **full-time staff member for Monitoring and Evaluation**. In this way, we want to ensure a focus on M&E. This is before, during and after projects. This person will make sure the various tools are well coordinated, communicated and that M&E has a central place within the different departments. Further on, there will be a close collaboration with the social media and marketing team to use the most modern techniques for in-depth data collection and presentation.

- **City of Kortrijk and other (local) authorities (12+1 and Eurometropolis)**

There is already some data collection at the local level, but rather limited to demographics. However, there is also some data available from a few professional cultural partners and amateur associations. Unfortunately, this data is fragmented and often incomplete. Within the ECoC project, we will streamline and collect this data for Kortrijk and the region to have a **broader basis for impact measurement**. We will use the available data as a baseline dataset, but make sure a baseline survey is carried out in the years 2025-2026.

It will be an interesting challenge to collect, compare and analyse datasets from different local authorities, but we accept the dare! A similar challenge lies ahead with the neighbors in Lille Metropole and Picardy Wallonia, a challenge that we will tackle with the Eurometropolis.

- **Academic trajectory**

A strong collaboration between the 4 universities that are situated in Kortrijk (VIVES, Howest, KULAK, UGENT).

General approach within classical research, linked to specific measurement of mental resilience. In collaboration with PhD students and/or BA/MA students, we want to establish groundbreaking indicators.

In a first meeting with these partners, the universities confirmed and emphasised the urgent need to address an improved mental well-being, also with the students. The numbers are insanely and historically high. Various universities already employ multiple psychologists to support the students and numerous community managers (as an example... the number of consultations rose from 326 in 2019 to 584 in 2023). Therefore, cooperation is a given for all universities and the methodology and the tools have been discussed with them. Figures might even be worse among international students. From this consultation also emerged the project **Welcome your City**.

- **Market-oriented research**

We also will commission **a strong market-oriented research by a private partner**. Both in the years before 2030, but also after the ECoC year, we will work with an independent agency. We looked into several interesting organisations who could work with us. We will have the option to commission one or more of these from 2026 onwards.

- **Benchmarking with other (candidate) ECoCs**

We **benchmark our results within the network of fellow (former) candidate cities**, the Culture Next network. Another possibility is collaboration with **Polyloop**, a partner company within the Culture Next network, to find the right measurable indicators to monitor the impact of culture in society (in line with the SDGs, but also based on other (European) plans and measurement indicators).

- **Artists**

We also launch **monitoring and evaluation as an artistic project**. **Golden Record Studio** is one example that is already in our artistic concept, but for sure we will further explore this and launch an open call to creatively and innovatively collect data, e.g. interventions in the public space.

Methodology and tools

- Basic surveys and inquiries from (local) authorities,
- Strong collaboration with the universities in Kortrijk, (with TUA West - Technische Universitaire Alliantie as an interesting partner),
- PhD students on the topic (4 years),
- Integration of specific research assignments in bachelor's and master's theses, and specific group projects throughout the curriculum,
- Willingness to integrate Kortrijk2030 spaces on the campuses (cf. Veszprém2023 - Panon University Hub),
- Integration of Mental Resilience into the curriculum (VIVES, one of the universities in Kortrijk offered 'Selfcare Management' in the curriculum as a test),
- All with technology as a lever (pilot project with an AI Psychological assistant),
- Participation in Open Creatives, a data-driven platform together with other cities and regions (Ghent, Leuven, ...),
- Research based on GPS signals from phones (and even more modern techniques),
- Collaboration with artists,
- Research into facial analysis (based on AI) to read mental well-being on people's faces.

Timing

From 2026 on, the M&E-activities (market-oriented, artists, ...) will begin on every domain mentioned. The specific collaboration with the universities, more extensive than it is today, will be initiated in 2026. As a result, from 2028 on, students will be working annually for Kortrijk2030.

In 2031, within the legacy of Kortrijk2030, other studies will be conducted. From then on, new research is planned every three years.

Dissemination of results

The M&E officer from the Kortrijk2030 team will produce an annual report. This report will, on the one hand, reflect on the conducted research, findings, and recommendations, which can be considered by local political levels. On the other hand, future methods will be explained and potentially adjusted based on evolving insights.

For a fun way of disseminating results for everyone to look at and perhaps also get some insights in their own lives and well-being, we really do envisage something like in the Sims game. Different characters representing different groups of people who e.g. show diamonds on their head to indicate the results that we found in our surveys. The big aim is to have them shine bright green throughout our population. And you know what they say about shining bright: Your light brightens everyone around you.

2. Cultural and artistic content

Q10 Artistic vision and strategy

Our artistic vision and strategy is to embark on a quest. A journey from Border//Line towards Fl@xible Futures. For us, local citizens of West Flanders and everyone in Europe who can join us. Our quest is to improve the mental resilience in our region to be inspiring for other cities and regions across Europe. We want to learn from them, we want to give something back.

We embrace a full customer journey, as marketers call it nowadays... but Just Durf is more than that. The story we offer to Europe is a daring quest. It encourages all of us to dare. Our artistic vision is both a call and a calling.

As in any good story, we start from a position of weakness, of trouble, of a task that offers no easy solution. We live in **BORDER//LINE** times. We feel something is wrong. The task set for us is to overcome the borders that have piled up over the years. As a Eurometropolis we combine three regions and two languages. But the intensive history of collaboration needs reanimation. Borders really became borders to companies, cultural organisations and all inhabitants.

At the same time, individuals in our region find themselves confronted with their own limitations. The situation is dire. We resemble boiling pots, primed to erupt due to the mounting pressure, the hard work that we burden ourselves with and lofty expectations placed upon ourselves and our society. We burn in or even burn out...

When we finally realise this... we press the emergency button. We dare to see our situation as a huge crisis. We search for help: **MAYDAY MAYDAY**. We need more breathing time, slowing down and allowing ourselves the mental space for change. We use culture as our collective oxygen to embrace the empty spaces in our public domain, fill the gaps between our care institutions and the arts, build bridges between islands of isolation, and search for new constructive ways to work together. We gather the companions for our quest. And turn an emergency call into a "May Day" – a day where we give ourselves permission: Yes, I may!

As we allow ourselves and others to learn from our boundaries, to take our time, we allow ourselves to grow. Growing under the pressure of challenges is called: **REvolution**. We need culture to embrace the industrial, cultural, social, ecological revolutions – Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, gaming, digital art, climate change, mental health, war impact, ...

Kortrijk, West Flanders and Europe have to scale things up, starting a (R)evolution of the imagination.

Flax has been and is the golden product for Kortrijk and its widest region. A very strong product that can be used in multiple ways: clothes, bikes, tech ... But most of all it has the specific characteristic that it needs to rot before it has the potential to be used in all its diversity. It's the summary of our story. We have forgotten how to 'soak in water and wait until we are good to bend,' so to speak.

The companions of the quest have to go through the process of pain to heal and become strong for what's ahead. We don't need to be flexible. That's a trap, an unhealthy remedy for all your sorrows. After our quest, and through the revolution of the imagination, our futures are flaxible (stronger, more resilient and more vibrant than flexible) and we see a diversity of futures, a new heritage without ignoring the old one. Our numerous cultural associations will be stronger and get new potential with new, young volunteers. Our economic sector embraces cultural projects as they see what it means to their employees, our youngsters get a booster vaccine thanks to our vivid cultural life, so art is not a prescription remedy to get better, but a preventive medicine against getting ill.

Maybe bruised, but stronger and more resilient, more aware of our strengths we emerge from our quest. We are ready for **FL@XIBLE FUTURES**.



Outline and structure of our cultural and artistic programme



BORDER LINE

We acknowledge that something is wrong and recognise that true change requires us to transform from the inside out. How can we detect and overcome our mental and physical boundaries?

THE LEGACY OF THE TREATY

The past & present of a border (region)

In 1820, a border treaty was signed in Kortrijk between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Kingdom of France. Except for a few changes, this border is still identical to today's Franco-Belgian/Luxembourgian border. Less than a decade ago borders seemed to fade and so was the treaty. But in 2024, borders are back, stronger than ever. The Brexit, COVID-crisis, the war in Ukraine, the Gaza disaster, ... All defined by borders and in search of new borders.

The Legacy of the Treaty will

explore and discover a border from both a historical and contemporary perspective. All the old boundary posts are shown on a digital map and will be **connected by a variety of new and existing trails**: hiking, biking, or even, where it is in the middle of a river, navigating. It will add an extra layer to the popular trailwalking or gravel biking. On these digital maps, **places of interest will be marked and accompanied by stories, in a matter-of-fact or an artistic way**. Listen to the song of a tobacco smuggler, who gratefully used

the border path and knew his ways in and out.

How can the history of our border be placed in a broader perception? A story about painful, but also hopeful and beautiful stories, as on every European border.

Partners: *Province of West Flanders (Westtoer), Trage Wegen vzw, Tourism Heuvelland, Stad Ieper, Flanders Fields Museum Ieper, Maison du Tourisme de Wallonie picarde (WAPI), Département du Nord (FR), ...*

SOAP & THE CITY

Theatre Soap Opera

Building on our strong socio-cultural fabric, we aim to help associations look beyond their boundaries and get to know each other better. We challenge our amateur art associations, including the 59 theatre groups in our region, to join this adventure. From a strong narrative around mental resilience, we create a follow-up story just as the telenovelas on tv. **Each episode is played by another association and presented in another venue in the region spiced up by the different dialects**. This will encourage members of one group and their public to also go watch other groups at other places. We intend to involve professional theatre makers, organise common workshops and inspiration sessions to raise awareness and breach the dikes. A project that strongly focuses on capacity building of our amateur art associations and bringing the different communities closer together.

THE NEXT LEVEL

Investigating cross-border cooperation

The NEXT festival breaks down national and linguistic barriers, it's an ongoing exploration of the cross-border region. The people living and working along this border experience it differently: some view it as a given, others as an invitation, and many see it as a barrier. These aren't just physical obstacles; land and language differences also hinder a sense of belonging and shared identity. From 2026 NEXT will go to the next level. It will literally step out of its own festival and actively seek out the people and places that define the border. With creators from around the world, the NEXT LEVEL will **reflect on how artistic creation can enhance inclusivity, civic awareness, personal development, intercultural openness and mental health** through participatory workshops and meetings on the concept of care. The youth exchange programme, teeNEXTers, will contribute to this exploration by bringing together teenagers from

Belgium, France, Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Italy, enriching the dialogue with their perspectives.

By 2030, this investigation will culminate in an international conference focusing on cultural cooperation in a multilingual and cross-border region.

Partners: *Schouwburg Kortrijk, arts centre BUDA, Antigone, CC (Cultural Centre) De Schakel, CC De Steiger, CC Guldenberg, CC Het Perron, CC Het Spoor, Leietheater, Maison de la culture de Tournai, La rose des vents (FR), Scène nationale Lille Métropole Villeneuve d'Ascq (FR) Espace Pasolini, laboratoire artistique Valenciennes (FR) Le Phénix (FR), Scène nationale Valenciennes pôle européen de création Valenciennes (FR), 9-9bis, Oignies (FR), Abby (BE), La Condition Publique (FR), Le Fresnoy (FR), Le Grand Bleu (FR), Le Gymnase (FR), Le méliès (FR), Maison de la culture d'Amiens (FR), Opéra de Lille (FR), Palais des Beaux-Arts (FR), Théâtre du Nord CDN Lille / Tourcoing Hauts-de-France (FR)*

Inspired by: *Berlin Berlin (Lands' End) and Simon Allemeersch (Rabot 4-358)*

INTERNATIONAL ARTS MARATHON

Sports bring people together and contribute to our general well-being, much like culture does. So, imagine the impact of combining sports and culture. With the International Arts Marathon, we literally cross both physical and mental barriers. **By connecting two ECoC-cities we break down the boundaries.** We symbolically pass the torch from Lille2004 to Kortrijk2030 after 26 years (and for a distance of 26 miles). **The marathon route not only features cultural experiences (contemporary art, video, street art) but also incorporates sustainable and artistic designs for clothing,**

medals, refreshments, ...

As part of the preparation, training programmes accompanied by musical guidance from national and international musicians will be developed.

Potential Partners: *Golazo, Sport Kortrijk, Museum Texture, MEL (Métropole Européenne de Lille) (FR), Lille (FR), Futurotextiel (BE-FR)*

LIFE CYCLE

A journey through industrial and natural heritage

In Spring, Kortrijk and the region are the beating heart of international cycling. During those weeks there are many professional cycling teams residing in Kortrijk for training and

competition purposes as well as numerous cycling tourists / enthusiasts from all corners of the world. We will seize this opportunity to present a **participatory photography project** via interactive cycling and walking tours along some of the gems of natural heritage, but certainly also the industrial heritage of the region: the old swimming pool in Spiere Helkijn, former electricity plant Transfo Zwevegem, old border post in Rekkem (Menen), etc. **We reach out to the numerous photography clubs in Kortrijk and the region to create and show new work in the public domain and in the unique industrial heritage.** The outdoor exhibition will be inspired by the historically hard-working cyclists, so called 'Flandriens'.



NORMAL PEOPLE

The Power of Vulnerability

Normal People is an art exhibition in the Abby Museum that shows the power of vulnerability, questions the norm and encourages the evolution towards a diverse and inclusive artistic – and cultural – landscape.

"There is no art of madmen, any more than there is of people with poor digestion or people with knee problems."

— Jean Dubuffet

One part of the exhibition focuses on the evolution of European Art Brut to contemporary participatory art, in collaboration with European collections. The exhibition might start with Facteur Cheval, move through the Compagnie de l'Art Brut (Jean Dubuffet 1948) via Adolf Wölfl and Willem Van Genk to Sylvain Cosyns and Pascal Tassini.

The second part of the exhibition showcases works by contemporary artists who develop artistic and cultural power from a disability or a mental vulnerability, or who for any other reason deviate from 'the normal', 'the healthy', 'the appropriate and recognisable'. Next to European networks like the European Outsider Association we will also involve many artists and art institutions from the so-called 'regular' art circuit.

Potential Partners: *Wit.h, Abby, Museum Dr. Guislain Ghent, Collection de l'Art Brut Lausanne (CH), Museum Gugging Klosterneuburg (AT), LAM Lille (FR), European Outsider Association (EU)*

BLIND TRUST

Dance away your boundaries

Blind Trust seeks to foster real contact and connection through contemporary dance in unusual places. **We invite everyone to dance,** blindfolded, which puts you and your being in motion. As a blindfolded dancer, **you have no choice but to surrender to your dance partner.** You respond to non-verbal, tactile instructions and engage in dialogue about physicality and boundaries. Blind Trust introduces contemporary dance in places with a huge need for contact and connection: class-rooms, elderly care centres, and - why not - in business companies.

A professional choreographer guides blindfolded amateur participants into contact improvisation.

Blind Trust will evolve as a cascade, sharing experience with other groups, where the first group becomes the guide for the second ... further enhancing acquaintance, connection, surprise, and experience. The result will be

"The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision."

— Helen Keller

showcased on the dance floor or outdoors in the public space. Our ambition is to partner with at least one school, company and care centre in each of the 12+1, and who knows, there might be more 'blind trust' to come from this.

Partners: *Passerelle, dance companies in the 12+1*

FRIENDLY FIRE(S)

Flanders and even Belgium as a whole are small regions in Europe, but with a strong cultural life. The ECoC competition proves this, as a strong dialogue grows between the candidates during the bidding phase. Kortrijk2030 will use the title to go further with these dialogues and **encourage Just Durf in the other cities by realising one of the projects from each of the other final bid books** in consultation with their teams. How and which one? This is to be determined during a possible second round and afterwards. (And who knows, this can be an inspiration for the Cypriot candidates to do the same?)

Partners: ECoC 2030-candidate cities in Belgium

IN THE MOOD

Congress and festival about youth care and culture

In The Mood is a **biennial international conference and arts festival where mental well-being and culture are prominently featured**. The first edition of In The Mood (2026) is linked to 'Ge Durft!' (see Q19) a multiyear project where arts and youth institutions connect in participatory projects. For the second edition (2028), In The Mood will go abroad and participate in A Time For Mindfulness in Bielsko-Biala. The goal is to exchange artists, specialists working in the care field, but with a strong link to culture. In 2030, Kortrijk will be the landing site for an international edition centred on:

- Artistic interventions focused on mental well-being thanks to residency programmes in Limassol, Kortrijk and Bielsko Biela

- A documentary festival focusing on the topic of mental care
- The presentation of a scientific report on four years of research into the link between mental well-being and the impact of culture (in collaboration with University of Ghent).

This third edition will be a European conference, in close collaboration with Bielsko Biela, Limassol and European organisations.

Partners: Chaos, arts centre BUDA, AZ Groeninge (hospital Kortrijk), Bethanie (youth care focussed on female minors), Oranjehuis (youth care), Bielsko Biela2029 (PL), Limassol2030 (CY), Niksic2030 (ME)

Inspired by: Rysiai Fest (LT), CAE Beyond the Obvious Elefsina (GR)

MAYDAY MAYDAY

We press the emergency button, slow down, take a deep breath and allow ourselves mental space for change.

NEXUS

Where environment, public art, artists and non-artists meet

Nexus seduces international artists to co-create **arts and permanent installations in the public space**.

The role of the artist is the one of a **NEXUS between the professional art world, the artist's own identity and background, the inhabitants and the location**. The project begins with neighbourhoods or communities suggesting a theme, common issue, or need that everyone agrees on. The artist goes on a journey in and with the neighbourhood, creating an artwork that addresses the community's needs.

As our city is in transition to a multi diverse society, this will shape the artistic outcomes and present

the city as a beacon of cultural participation and community engagement. Through this innovative project, **Kortrijk contributes to the European cultural identity** as we match international artists specialised in outdoor participative arts with the themes and needs generated by our local residents. From 2026 we will develop several projects spread across the region. **In 2030 the permanent art installations will be unlocked for an international public through a trail and biking tour.**

Partners: Abby Museum, Museums Brugge, Triennale Beaufort, Be-Part, Triennale Brugge, Gladstone Gallery (UK), Foksal Gallery (PL), FRAC Grand Large Hauts-de-France (FR), Lille3000 (FR), De Pont Tilburg (NL) and many other international Galleries and museums



Potential artists: Wim Delvoye, Jeppe Hein, Carsten Höller, Nathan Coley, El Anatsui, Cecilia Vicuna, Anicka Yi, Kara Walker, Tania Bruguera, Superflex, Abraham Cruzvillegas, Rachel Whiteread, Pipilotti Rist, Erwin Wurm, John Kormerling, Jacob Dahlgren, Jeremy Deller, Kendell Geers, Olaf Nicolai, Ryan Gander, Claire Cunningham and Ugo Rondinone.



KORTRIJK COLLECTIVITY FESTIVAL

International Festival of Literary & Word Art Collectives

Collectivity offers a counterforce to loneliness, stimulating communication and conversation while avoiding the risk of exclusion. In 2030, Kortrijk will host **the very first International Festival of Literary & Word Art Collectives**. We will reach out and invite collectives from all around Europe to travel to Kortrijk and create and present innovative and unique forms of language art. We will explore this duality, challenging the collectives to set up inspiring participation programmes with our citizens, and to spark up engaging conversations about mental health and well-being all over Europe.

The International Festival of Literary & Word Art Collectives won't be just another international literature festival, because language art is so much more than collections of poems. We will get it **out of the books / box and into the public space** to show the power of multilingualism. The festival invites citizens and artists to create an open air exploration workshop in the city and channel the results in unforgettable poetry, (spoken) word art, rap and hip hop experiences. A considerable part of the festival will be



integrating new technologies in 2030 to have **interactive presentations of word art** (video mapping, moving texts in the city centre, an augmented and personal reality to discover), but also **experimenting with virtual creation** as AI generated poetry or NFT poetry art.

Potential partners: *De Stroate*, *Memento Festival*, *Streuvelshuis*, *Het Penhuis Poëziecentrum*, *Vonk & Zonen*, *Villa Verbeelding*, *Pen Vlaanderen*, *Klimaatdichters*, *Letteristen*, *Hyster-x*, *deBuren*, *Versopolis*, *Dichters in de Prinsentuin (NL)*, *Tilt (NL)*, *Cela (EU)*, *Transpoesia (ES)*, *Flow (FR)*, *Poets of today, voices of tomorrow (INT)*, *Poets on an Island (CY)*, *Huis van Poëzie (Copenhagen Poetry Festival) (DK)*, *Poetry Club Aarhus (DK)*

STADSKOOR 2030 New Inclusive City Choir

Our region has a rich choral tradition. Singing together is a timeless and universal activity, yet contemporary choirs do not reflect the current societal realities in Kortrijk and the surrounding region. The participants are mainly white and older people.

Stadskoor 2030 aims to **be an inclusive and representative choir, consisting of 2 030 members by the year 2030**. By representative, we mean that the choir will include members of different ages, genders, backgrounds, professions, religions, and financial classes, mirroring the diverse makeup of a modern city like Kortrijk. Everyone MAY join!

The City Choir of Kortrijk will combine traditional choral singing with modern electronic sounds. Composers and conductors Dimitri Andreas and Diederik Glorieux will draw on the unique backgrounds of the singers to create a broad spectrum of genres, sounds and styles.

Stadskoor will be a permanently embedded choir with 2 030 people, singing along and taking over the

public domain in Kortrijk in the summer of 2030, and on **Sinksen 2030, the annual city festival in Kortrijk**.

Partners: *Wit.h*, *Wilde Westen*, *Music Centre Track*

THE NOMADIC GARDEN Non-Concrete Solutions!

South West Flanders is the region in Belgium with the least forest cover, and many city centres are suffering from a grey, concrete-covered landscape. As part of the strict European and Flemish regulations concerning blue and green infrastructure, the cities in the region have started a major initiative to transform the city centres. This transition is welcomed by many until their own parking spot or neighbourhood parking is next in line. How can culture be a part of the mental transition needed for the transformation?

The Nomadic Garden consists of a mobile garden, a movable public art installation, and outdoor play-furniture. It is used as a temporary green area in neighbourhoods transitioning from grey, hard, concrete spaces to breathing, green areas. The Nomadic Garden fosters connection and neighbourhood engagement during its residency and softens perceptions **to help people embrace the idea of a new future**: the city as a national park.

The Nomadic Garden will also be **a part of the mobile Forrest (Circle4Change)**, a project by Bruno Doedens in 2028. Especially for this project, we will build our own Cycling Tree modules from 2026 on.

Partners: *LZSB*, *Fonds Gezonde Lucht*, *Greenpeace*, *Circle4Change (NL)*

Potential artists/collaborations: *Raumlaborberlin (DE)*

SAVE.OUR.SOULS

Soulful and silent spaces

What do you do when you feel the need for stillness and slowing down, yet you have programmed an ECoC year packed with FOMO-inducing events? Push the button. SOS. We create soulful spaces and moments of silence throughout the Capital of Culture year. By utilising art in our widespread churches and small chapels, transforming them into places for disconnecting, resting, meditating, silent soundtracks, and relaxed performances. But also by building new spaces in unexpected places and programming voids, moments of invisibility, islands of silence, and moments of disappearance.

Partners: *Passio, De Kerkgemeenschap, Bielsko Biela 2029 (PL) - Refuge*

Inspired by: *Olga de Soto - Paperlane, Patrica Vanneste - The Sjæl, Masbedo - Ricordo di un dolore*

CIS'KES

How can rules become guidelines?

We live in a world with many rules and regulations, as we explained before. Organising an event is hard, considering all regulations that apply to public space and the restrictions one feels exposed to when wanting to go public with an activity. How can we facilitate enthusiasts and activists to make use of the public space, how can we find **healthy balance, challenging some rules, confirming others** but always lowering barriers and thresholds.

With CIS (Culture in Support), we want to optimally support everyone, especially the organisers of an event. Moreover, we have the perfect m/f/d to help you organise!

CIS (Culture in Support) is a name that can be used in Flanders for both a woman (Sis(ka)) and a man ((Fran)Cis), and for every gender in between.

We train a team of Cis'kes (Culture in Support Guides) to help, guide and provide crucial support - with a true Durf-mentality - for anyone: individuals, associations, activists, cultural professional players, etc. in realising their ideas. And Cis'kes will even come along!

CIS will bring a special van, wrapped in ECoC Kortrijk2030 imagery - the ideal marketing tool. The van contains safety signage, sorting stations, and can also serve as a reporting point for transgressive behaviour.

This project will take its definitive form in the preparatory years and will undoubtedly have a lasting impact on the city and the supporting services.

CIS is always just one phone call away.

FROM ME TO YOU

Culture on Prescription

Not in the form as we know it already: culture prescribed by a doctor as a cure or sometimes prevention of illness. No, in Kortrijk, **every resident gets a culture on prescription voucher to pass on to someone who needs it.**

How does it work? Anyone can prescribe a cultural activity. For your friend who is not feeling well, for your colleague who is having a dip, for your sister whom you want to give a taste of an exhibition, and more.

This voucher grants you free access to a show or exhibition. Every month, we select an offer focusing on the impact of the performance (not just the artistic value). For example, an exhibition that makes you happy, a film that makes you dream, a performance where you can go wild, a creative workshop where you can discover your unknown talent, or a choir where you can sing along. As culture is prescribed by someone close by, Just Durf rolls out to the wider society. By making positive experiences with culture, people will start doing things themselves or prescribing culture to others.



NO TECH DAY

Almost a hundred years ago, due to fuel shortages, the first car-free Sundays were organised in France and later in the Low Countries. Today, the car-free day is part of European Mobility Week in September. It has become an icon for attention to sustainable transport and therefore also sustainable ecology.

From a similar perspective, we **will launch a new European trend, where no technology is used for one day.** Although technology is also looking for sustainability solutions, it is increasingly becoming a burden, especially with the growing impact of AI, ... and the large energy consumption machine learning requires.

We are launching a campaign to get as many European cities as possible to participate in this unique initiative. We will provide tools, tips, and tricks and aim to launch a new, sustainable trend. **Only live music and performance, real conversations, encounters and dates, live singing and let's bring back Facebook of Medieval Times on that day... the minstrels!**

REVOLUTION

We need culture to embrace the revolutions in society and add a revolution of imagination.



UNWRAP x SONIC CITY

What's the future of entertainment?

That's the question we answer during UNWRAP x SONIC CITY. This 10-day festival in the city builds bridges between gaming, film, media and music industries. Creative applications that arise in one sector are increasingly finding their way into other sectors, and the cross-pollination that occurs between these different sectors often leads to the most fascinating projects.

Unwrap x Sonic City combines **conferences for and about the future of the entertainment industry** mixed with an **international music festival, curated by international artists** (in the past Courtney Barnett, Low, Thurston Moore, but in the future hopefully Mogwai, David Byrne or Kim Gordon) **and playdays** - for kids & families to play.

The disciplines interact with each other for both artists and audiences. **International musicians** are invited for residencies that create and perform with new technologies using the city as their stage. Think of immersive sounds and projections in our historical city centre, game engines, motion capture, AI arts and music generation, and other innovations we don't know yet. **The audience** is invited to undergo new festival experiences and play with new technologies and games (new games, art or indie games, nostalgic joysticks, e-sports, ...).

Partners: Wilde Westen, Howest Digital & Arts Entertainment, Flanders Gaming Hub, Hangar K, Tranzit, South by Southwest (US), City of Austin (US), Niksic2030 (ME)

Potential Partners: Oulu2026 (FI), Nicosia2030 (CY)

THE NEW HEARTBEAT (S)pacemakers

This project focuses on the cultural knowledge of three underexposed dance communities (**Ballroom, Crip Aesthetics & Hip Hop**), to **include them in contemporary theatre institutes and society**. By bringing these three very different communities together, presenting the artists and their works on bigger and smaller stages and by exposing audiences to their diverse realities and visions on dance, THE NEW HEARTBEAT will change the shared imaginary on three levels: the artistic, the institutional and the societal in more traditional cultural organisations such as our City Theatre Schouwburg.

Historically, Ballroom gives a space for black trans women (and later to the **LGBTQIA+ communities**), Crip Aesthetics is an act of empowerment of self-identified **artists with disabilities**. Hip Hop dance provides a creative and non-destructive release to tensions in a **racist and violent environment**.

These communities open up ideas about dance, power relations, marginalised realities and support of the group. The need for dance comes from a need to create **safe(r) spaces: spaces to explore and express identities with soulmates** in an exclusive world and art-education system.

Partners: De Stroate, Tanzhaus (DE)

Potential partners: Root Division, DTM Brussels, summer Dance Forever Amsterdam (NL), Hiphophuis Rotterdam (NL), No Limits Festival Berlin (DE), No Limits Art Castle Amsterdam (NL), Europe Beyond Acces (Funded by the Creative Europe programme)

Potential artists: Rodie Boyindombe, Chiara Bersani, Claire Cunningham, Michael Turinsky, Lasseindra Lanvin, Georgina St. Laurent

THE GOLDEN RIVER CINEMA

Kortrijk has a **strong cinematic history**. From the 1930s onwards, there were multiple independent cinema houses (Cinepalace, Gouden Lanteern (Golden Lantern), Cinema Royal, Ons Huis, Cinema Capitoile), and in 1975, 'De Pentascoop' became the first purpose-built multiplex cinema with five halls in one complex in Belgium (and Western Europe) - also the cradle in which the worldwide cinemagroup Kinopolis was born.

What if we combine our cinematic history with public spaces, film organisations, and professional companies in a unique adventure to **create an outdoor Cinema Summer Festival on and next to the water of the rivers Leie and Schelde?** We'll tour the region with this outdoor cinema venue and match it to the urban development around our rivers with a strong focus on beautiful squares, nature, accessibility, bringing the water close to its citizens, ... By implementing the latest projection technologies and sound evolutions, we create unique art cinema experiences in remarkable settings.

Cinema experiences are evolving faster than ever. One of the world's leading companies in advanced **display and projection**, image processing, connectivity, and computational optics, **Barco**, is based in Kortrijk. In terms of **immersive sound design** and individual audio experiences, Kortrijk is also well-equipped with multiple studios and audio companies working across Europe (**Mono**, **The White Cabin**).

Potential Partners: *arts centre BUDA, Mono, Barco, The White Cabin, RamDam Festival Tournai, Kinopolis.*

JOB OPENING: THE NEW JESUS (m/f/d)

What would a new Jesus figure do today? Shouldn't we, more than 2000 years later, start looking for a revolutionary again? Someone who dares to challenge the established order, someone who dares to awaken everyone's conscience, someone who can unite people, in whom people can believe again and, above all, someone who preaches tolerance, ... We are announcing a job opening, **a daring cultural project to find the new Jesus**.

If we can all agree on the job description of course...

TUNNEL VISION

Tunnels and bridges connect our region for cars, boats, bikes, and hikes. As cars go underground, tunnels are becoming the biggest contemporary building projects. These tunnels provide ideal surfaces to colour our region, leveraging **the growing street art culture** in Kortrijk and the surrounding area.

With Belgium's first hip hop academy in Kortrijk ('De Stroate'), street collectives are flourishing, but they are not yet on the city's cultural radar. **Let's break the tunnel vision that art is only for black or white boxes, that street art is more street than art, that it is only vandalism or urban disorder.** It can thrive the local scene if we use our concrete walls smartly. By 2030, our public spaces will feature work by international professionals and local collectives, who will be part of an educational programme focused on street art, in collaboration with the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Youth Centre Transit, Hip Hop Centre De Stroate, and the Art in Public Spaces Advisory Board.

Partners: *De Stroate, Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Transit, City services Arts in Public Space and Urban Planning, Collectif Renart (FR)*

FROM DISRUPTIVE PLACES TO HIDDEN GEMS

A (R)evolution of new identities starts in the cracks of the concrete, as this is where the movement is.

Kortrijk and the region feature some long time **Disruptive Places** (unused dark spots). These empty shops, buildings, companies or even public spaces often disappear out of the common knowledge due to their lost function. But a lot of these places can also be seen as **Hidden Gems** (places that are beautiful and unknown). With this programme line Just Durf will provide an answer to the need for spaces and experiments in Kortrijk.

1. Multiple communities pop up in our region. They are connecting people and building bridges in our society but with a huge, unfulfilled need for safe(r) spaces, houses, pubs, ... Organisations such as Safety Pin or Quace (both acting to get safe(r) spaces for LGBTQIA+ communities), Refu Interim (that connects with newcomers) or multiple collectives/artists (often hip hop, street art, jamming, paint and sculpture, ...) that do not tend to link themselves to the existing places but need space to experiment and develop. We will link their needs to our disruptive places to become hidden gems.
2. On the other hand, we will help everyone to discover the disruptive places, but also the hidden gems. Cultural geocaching! All year long, various small surprise-acts will be organised, without them being announced, a mini-concert, a personal poem, a portrait or even a local dish...

Partners: *Elefsina2023 (GR), Budweis2028 (CZ), Limassol2030 (CY)*

Potential Partners: *Time Circus, Oulu2026 (FI)*

MAGMA

Think big inside the box until the box gives in

In our region, we lack higher education institutions for performing arts. So we lose our potential professionals to other cities, both as teachers and performers. **MAGMA is an artistic platform that addresses this gap by reimagining the concept of art school.**

Imagine a place where classical and urban art collide as the norm, where diversity in the workspace and on stage is as evident as in the streets. Picture spoken word seamlessly intertwining with Harold Pinter, where hip hop dance encounters contemporary dance. Here, we defy the constraints of a traditional school system and strive for transformation. When individuals struggle to knock at our door, the entire department surfs the pavement to find them.

The philosophy of MAGMA lives in the old idea of 'popular education' in the adult education centres of Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany. It lives in the non-hierarchical and non-institutional approach of the psychiatric clinic of La Borde in France.

Think big inside the box until the box gives in... What if our theatre house is rebuilt into a hub where these artists, philosophers, and researchers gather to share knowledge, learn, or simply belong? Our guiding principle is "each one teaches one," where experience is the only true hierarchy. It's a learning approach that embraces the idea that every question merits multiple answers and perspectives. And that every individual holds something worth shaking up the status quo for. It's time for Europe to discover Magma and for Magma to discover Europe.

MUSIC OUTSIDE THE BARS

Flemish Part-time Art Education (DKO) is a strong institution that reaches more than 4000 youngsters (and adults) in the 12+1 region. However, within the field of music, an unexplored area remains concerning **students who do not belong to the mainstream, or at the moment are not even part of the regular education.**

We will focus **on the support** of three specific target groups who are in need of adapted education:

- We focus on the integration of non-native newcomers. By enlarging the curriculum that currently is too focussed on Western music and lowering thresholds for disadvantaged groups, we want to discover new talent and grow as the gateway to the many (music) associations in the city.
- We support highly talented youngsters by engaging external artists, offering additional performance opportunities and providing students with financial assistance if they wish to attend a masterclass on their own initiative.
- Students with special needs, mental or physical disabilities, are offered highly tailored instrument lessons, with additional support for learning to read music and rhythm.

Music schools in Wallonia and France face similar challenges. We want to collaboratively develop new ways of education incorporating expertise from the different education systems in the Eurometropolis. **We develop the music education of the future for Europe!**

Partners: *Conservatorium Kortrijk, Rotaryclubs Kortrijk, Conservatoire de Marquette-les-Lille (FR), Music Schools and Academies in the Eurometropolis.*

MOURNING HAS BROKEN

A mourning revolution

In many regions of the world, people commemorate their dead in beautiful, connecting ways. And yet, in a lot of European countries, we seem to have a hard time finding our way to each other when we lose someone dear to us (or even other kinds of losses such as illness, economical issues, job losses, ...). **With the pandemics, climate change and war in mind, we might even say that a decent way of contemporary mourning is an absolute necessity.** It is scientifically proven that healing culture and being part of a warm community puts people on the right track for a healthy grieving process.

We imagine the contemporary city as one that offers recognition and comfort for people who are grieving (for all kinds of reasons). Kortrijk2030 will **become a trigger in this #mourning revolution that stands for a warmer, freer and more collective way of saying goodbye.** Let us lower the barriers to be there for those who lose someone and use culture as the way to connect. For example, on November 1st, All Saints' Day, we bring poems and solemn live music to the cemeteries ...

The organisation **Reveil shouts out for a Contemporary European Mourning (R)evolution.** A



movement carried by society. Let us mourn collectively and bring together as many individuals, local artists, musicians, poets and associations as possible to provide Europe's mourning culture with a warm and rich colour palette.

Potential Partners: *Reveil, Uitzicht (crematory), Proprogressione (HR), Insha-Osvita & Protoprodukcija (UA)*

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network Annual Conference

A 5-day conference with talks, workshops and community events

that connect the international participants (policy makers, focal points, cultural & creative sector) with our local citizens.

A UNESCO Creative City is a city placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of its development plan. Hosting the annual conference in Kortrijk in 2030 would be a unique opportunity to show the world what our region has to offer in the cultural and creative context.

The timing is also unique, reflecting on the UN 2030 Sustainable

Development Goals. So when we host the conference in Kortrijk, we want to add a **new element to the conference: next to policy makers from UCCN-cities, we will invite young operators from the cultural and creative sector of the participating cities** to connect with our local citizens in workshops and community events, to co-create how culture and cross-over and international collaborations can act as leverage for the SDG's beyond 2030.

Partners: *Designregio Kortrijk, UNESCO Creative Cities Network*

FL@XIBLE FUTURES

Co-creating scenarios for a more resilient, creative and sustainable future.



GIANTS OF THE EUROREGION

Giants are undeniably part of the local heritage in South West Flanders and the North of France. Every city and village used to have its own giant that appeared every year at city festivals. However, due to various reasons, most of the giants and the knowledge about them were lost. In 2018, Emma, the small giant, was created by Bolwerk as the six-year-old child of Manten and Kalle, the lost giants of Kortrijk. Little girls grow up ... In 2030, we discover how Emma starts dating the giants in the region.

With the Giants of the Euroregion, we are starting a multi-year project to revive the giant heritage in the region. From 2026 onwards, we will **build new giants** (who will reflect the contemporary multi diverse society) for our villages and cities in the region, along with a **revival of an intergenerational volunteer tradition**. A giant is nothing without its proud carriers (young & old), who bring the giant to life during city festivals, city parades, and more.

In the summer of 2030, Emma, **Kortrijk's city giantess, will be**



visiting her potential partners in municipalities and cities of the region. Everyone will be able to join her during her search for love. Upon arriving in each municipality, Emma will be welcomed by the (new) giant and the local marching band playing a specially composed song for Emma.

Will Emma find love in the region? Will she enlighten us with a marriage in the centre of Kortrijk? Both local giants will bring their **brass bands and international giant guests will be invited from France, Portugal, and Spain** (which also have a vibrant

giant heritage). Emma's wedding party will be a massive, city and regional event bringing everyone out on the streets.

Partners: *Histoires vzvw, erfgoedcel Zuidwest (Heritage Association South West Flanders), Werkplaats Immaterieel Erfgoed (Workspace intangible heritage), Howest – Ugent, Vives, La Maison des Géants, Office de Tourisme Hauts de Flandre (FR), Les Machines de l'île (FR), Associació Institut del Patrimoni Cultural Immaterial (ES), Inter-City Intangible Cultural Cooperation Network (ES), Federação do Folclore Português (PT)*



KORTRIJK the MUSICAL

A bold reimagining of the story of Manten & Kalle

In 2020, a daring group of Kortrijk residents unleashed a musical spectacle on the lowered banks of the Leie in Kortrijk. This initiative was a **collaboration between professional creatives** from the musical world, brought to life and **supported by various local amateur arts associations**. The story was based on the historic Battle of the Golden Spurs, but with a romantic twist, captivating an audience of 11 500 people. Kortrijk the musical showcases the dynamic power of local creativity, drawing from local creative talent: local associations, students of the conservatory, members of musicals in the region. This ambitious production not only ignites immense pride among its countless dedicated volunteers but also breathes new life into **the Urban Myth of Manten & Kalle**, an almost forgotten history in Kortrijk that inspires the flaxible futures of Kortrijk and the 12+1-region.

DUBOSQ UNLEASHED

Returning European theatre heritage to the community

‘Dubosq Unleashed’, an international partnership between the local community, researchers and artists, **aims to restore and reuse the painted stage sets of City Theatre Schouwburg, which is Europe's largest collection.**

Franco-Belgian artist Albert Dubosq and his student Joseph Denis created well over four hundred historical drops and flats between 1913 and 1938. **The restoration of the sets preserves this unique heritage for future generations.** The biggest challenge will be to remove the asbestos-fire-retardant covering a large part of the sets.

Many contemporary theatre, dance and performance artists have already expressed their interest in this unique collection. In 2030 the **completely renovated City Theatre Schouwburg** will host a magnificent opera in this unique stage set. Furthermore, we take up the challenge to invite **contemporary choreographers** to work with these sets and elaborate eclectic performances.

We are teaming up with Howest's world-leading Digital Arts and Entertainment school in order to **bring Dubosq's analog legacy into the digital future.** A digital version of all the theatre sets can be used for contemporary theatre pieces, but even more, integrating our heritage in games, using a top-notch gaming engine. Dubosq would be proud!

Partners: DAE Howest, City Theatre Schouwburg, Passerelle

Potential partners: Factum foundation (ES), Bérengère Bodin (FR), Alain Platel (FR), Archana Ballal (UK), European Dance Development Network

GOLDEN RECORD STUDIO

How does a city evolve during an ECoC trajectory, seen through the eyes of artists?

The GOLDEN RECORD STUDIOS is a performative field station for participatory research raising the question: What should your contemporary "city selfie" depict? It offers a multi-medial platform for local communities to create their own recordings. The project engages in a long term trajectory in Kortrijk from ‘now’ till 2030 and beyond. A professional artist **takes a ‘snapshot’ every few years.** This snapshot gives you an idea of the cultural reality of Kortrijk and the region at that moment. A collection of images, sounds, people, poetry, ... the soul of the city.

Just like the golden record that travels with the Voyager spacecraft to the end of the universe, this golden record is collected and presented as a living archive to portray the diversity of life and culture during (and beyond) the ECoC-trajectory.

Partners: arts centre BUDA, Matthaei & konsorten with Nicolas Galeazzi (DE)

KEEP THE FIRE BURNING

An interactive & artistic (re) search to empathic fl@xible working conditions

How can you keep your employees happy? The answer is not always more salary, a car, or a phone, but rather a combination of elements where the newest part is care. Care for health, care for culture, and care for each other in the workplace.

Keep the fire burning **brings artists and creatives to the workspace** to go on a common and creative journey with employees and management **for more caring working conditions.**

We explore the impact of neurodesign and neuroarchitecture on our workplaces. We co-create interactive theatre performances, poetry or visual arts based on experiences and stories from the workspace.

An inspiring DURF2030-pitch is the Confessional Chair, by designer Giel Dedeurwaarder. This chair is created for employees who want to talk about their own mental sanity. This artistic process will open up discussions on our relationship with work and create future visions and solutions.

Keep the Fire Burning will create **a multifaceted kaleidoscope of alternative views on our relationship with work:** artistically imagined, co-created and ended in clear guidelines for workplaces everywhere. In 2030, the (artistic) results of all these projects will come together in a large public statement in the public space which opens the debate on work in the middle of society.

Artists: *Bram Booris Vanacker, Giel Dedeurwaarder, Jonas Vansteenkiste*

Partners: *Het Bataljong, Liantis, Avansa, Unizo, Research Institutions, Cobras*

Potential Artists: *Egon Schoelynck, Marieke De Maré, Sarah Vanbee, Pé Vermeersch (Radical HeArts), Lucas Vandenbussche*

WELCOME YOUR CITY An international gateway

You would expect that temporary residents such as students, professionals, artists, professional sportspeople, ... find their way in easily, into our cosy urban village. There are numerous associations, interesting events and theatre performances, ... attractive, affordable and accessible. But still... they're are not finding their way in. To further develop into a European city, also a student city, we need to take significant steps to support our international residents better. Welcome your City becomes a **catalyst** for specific international concerns through a broader cooperation and coordination for temporary residents in Kortrijk.

We elaborate on the existing 'International House'-concept, but we go further. Thanks to the broad collaboration between city administration and schools, companies, socio-cultural life, (professional) cultural and sports partners, and youth organisations. Welcome your City will be established towards 2030 and grow independent afterwards, funded by the Kortrijk Culture Pact (Q26). It makes sure that professional sportspeople have a good life outside of their job in Kortrijk and perform better, international students are less lonely because of an established network and professionals of all kinds are helped during the first period of their residency.

Partners: *Universities (Howest, VIVES, UGent-Kortrijk, KULAK), Kortrijk Culture Pact (Business Club), city services*

DIASPORA COME HOME A human heritage endeavour

With this project, we want to search for a common identity for the 12+1. Someone from a suburb like Heule or Aalbeke does not feel like a Kortrijk resident or vice versa. The strength of these local communities is an asset, but we want to invite people to develop a kind of common pride, finding a way out of the inferiority complex we sometimes live with. Maybe we can use the unknown examples of people in Kortrijk and the region who have made their mark in Europe and sometimes worldwide. Would we all know the daughter of a colleague is a humanitarian worker on the Greek Islands ... or that we have renowned musicians in all kinds of music, or even Jan Palfyn, the inventor of the obstetric forceps? Do we (still) know these people? Is there such a thing as **human heritage**? And can we try to create an identity to refer to?

We also want to draw attention to the migrants who moved here. Integration remains a challenging theme, but how many of these talented people have strengthened our city and region in recent decades?

This project changes our perception by **bringing this human heritage to the forefront, through guerrilla activities in the streets, with unexpected encounters, etc. How about a speed date with an AI-version of these people?** We want to inspire and motivate people to remain creative, entrepreneurial, and positive and build a common identity for Kortrijk and the region?

Partners: *Abby, Refu Interim, FMDO*

HANDCRAFT THE CAPITAL / HANDCRAFT YOUR CITY

Crafts, self-made arts, DIY... it's both a local and very international phenomenon. As people tend to work more and more, many start knitting, claying, wood carving, mandala making, drawing, and other crafts as a way to disconnect or reconnect. As these hobbies gain popularity, local collectives sharing knowledge and passion come and go. How can we capture this creative and informal movement and lift it up both internationally and locally?

Handcraft the Capital / Handcraft Your City **connects handcraft collectives from various ECoCs and candidates** while they do what they love: making and crafting. By setting up cosy venues and shared moments digitally connected, we share local knowledge and skills at a European scale.

Since crafts are also about meeting, we create an **arts and crafts festival** in each participating city where makers, products, and the public meet. We colour the city with handmade arts: the streets and trees get knitted coats, the air is filled with mandalas, and people can buy local, self-made arts from across Europe. We are also incorporating the art and craft of local cuisine into the festival to add more flavour and excitement.

Partners: *Draadkracht, Curieus, Michelangelo Foundation, Katowice2029 (PL), Larnaca2030 (CY)*

DREAM CATCHER

During the spring holiday Spinrag (Spiderweb) is **one of the biggest arts festivals for kids and their families in Flanders**. Almost all the cultural infrastructure is used and lots of partners are engaged for movies, theatre performances, children's concerts, and more.

But **what if we would put Children - our future - in charge of the city during this festival in 2030?** They will get the keys to our public spaces and reinvent our city for 10 days. Whatever they dream: we will try to realise it. A city with no cars and only steps? A city with nature inclusive playgrounds? A digital playground? A waffle-baking-playmobil? ...

We catch their dreams and make them come true! Kortrijk has strong experience in capturing a lot of childhood dreams; the ideal soil to build a playful city for a week.

To name some of them... **De Kinder Kreet** (a manifesto made by kids with their wishes for the future), Wildebras with **the first adventure playground**

of Flanders, the internationally awarded **My Machine** (who translates children's inventions into practice).

Partners: *City Theatre Schouwburg, arts centre BUDA, Wildebras, Tranzit, Speelmakers, MyMachine, Malmö Växtvärket (SE), Constructlab Berlin (DE), Constructlab Portugal (PT), Budweis2028 (CZ)*

THE SECRET

A community research project at the crosspoint of heritage, innovation and creation

The mesmerising ultra-fine flax thread that once defined 17th and 18th-century lace masterpieces is nowhere to be found today... Was it the manual spinning techniques, specific flax varieties, or economic dynamics that led to its finesse? We can only guess at the reasons why. **The Texture Museum embarks on a quest to uncover this enigma, aiming for nothing less than The Finest Lace Thread Ever Created!**

By 2030 we make the Texture Museum the centre stage for a community-driven project at the

junction of heritage, innovation and creation. A living lab where creatives, scientists, industry experts and the public meet to unveil the secret of lost craftsmanship and revive it for future generations. **The project culminates with a high quality product line in our shop (fingers crossed!) and a sensational art installation in the museum.**

Potential Partners: *Texture Museum, Lace Studio, European Fashion - EFN (EU), Cité de la dentelle Calais (FR), Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage, International Bobbin and Needle Lace Organisation – OIDFA (global), Safilin Linen Spinning Mill (FR/PL), Inagro, Centexbel, Studio Hilo (DE), A Year on the Field (EU), International Association of Lace – IOLI (global), Crafts Council Nederland (NL), The Linen Project (NL), National Association of Swedish Handicraft Societies (SE)*

Potential Artists: *Studio Plastique, Studio Formafantasma (IT/NL), Gabriel Dawe (MX/US), Nike Savvas (AU), Jeongmoon Choi (KR), Chibaru Shiota (JP), and Numen/For Use (HR) are being considered.*



Q12

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

Just Durf is all about making connections between new and old, tradition and evolution. Thanks to the unique position of our city as Flanders Game Hub, but also thanks to the constellation of the DURE2030-platform we can connect our artistic projects and local cultural heritage with new translations.

Digital Arts & Entertainments (DAE)

DAE is not only the name of our world famous curriculum at Howest University of Applied Science, it is also a way of looking at the future of culture and entertainment. A high integration of Game Engines and Digitalisation is used to explore our cultural life. Kortrijk is in pole position as Howest and independent organisation Wilde Westen started a long term collaboration to develop stage designs controlled by Game Engines. The technology is being perfected and forms the core of two stop-the-city-moments in our programme:

- **Unwrap x Sonic City:** By 2030 music festival Sonic City will integrate **the stages of the future (both live as well as in a digital environment)** in the traditional festival setup. The stage becomes a part of the artistic process that musicians can control. Unwrap x Sonic City links it to an intense artist residency programme, so artists, show, and stage match and prove a unique experience for both public and artists.
- **Dubosq Unleashed:** The digitalisation of the unique theatre sets of City Theatre Schouwburg (drama theatre) will allow their public use. Using greenkeys, game engines (to make the theatre sets come alive) we build up experience for the audience and artists. In 2030 the result will also mark a new opera, made for the historical, digital theatre sets.

Stage Revolutions embedded in more traditional art forms

Sound evolutions, video mapping, AI integration,... the new technologies for live performances evolve at lightning speed and at the same time get more and more accessible to young artists.

- **Choir – Het Stadskoor:** Not just a traditional choir, but an all inclusive one that combines musical heritage with new, contemporary electronics. When performing live, the choir always creates **an immersive sound design**, matching audience, place and music.
- **Poetry – Collectivity Festival:** The International Festival of Literary & Word Art Collectives won't be just another international literature festival. The festival invites citizens and artists to create an open air exploration

workshop in the city. Going from stages where artists can perform to wondrous city installations **using AI generated art, Augmented Reality & Virtual Reality implementations**. Language art is so much more than collections of poems.

Knowledge & connection for evolution of cultural local heritage

Collaborations with companies and other sectors lead to innovation. Just Durf searches for this connection to revive some of our heritage like flax, clay, our traditional giant puppets and to translate those sometimes forgotten traditions into ambitious programmes.

- **The Secret:** The Museum Texture goes on a journey with researchers, universities, companies, and artists to recreate The Finest Lace Thread Ever Created! This project aims to combine contemporary craftsmanship with heritage. **Traditional methods blend with cutting-edge research and production techniques**, creating a storytelling experience centred around Texture and its exhibits. **We cultivate experimental flax fields and set up a participatory 1sqm flax project in gardens, parks and urban green spaces** offering challenges for handspinners, lacemakers and living history communities worldwide.
- **Handcraft your City:** Local communities of Kortrijk, Katowice and other European cities (to be connected) **will connect through digital platforms** while making arts & crafts. This connection fosters the sharing of expertise and drives innovation. By organising an arts and crafts festival across Europe, local communities are challenged, adding an extra layer of engagement and development to this sector.
- **The Giants of the Euroregion:** The professional cultural organisation Bolwerk will work in an innovative way on the intangible heritage of giant puppet culture. Central to this project: **a contemporary and participatory approach with an emphasis on an interactive process of co-design**, involving inhabitants of the city and various partners from the public and private sector. Uplifting this to the region brings our giant heritage back to contemporary times.

Thanks to the ECoC title, we can polish the sometimes dusty image of heritage and traditional art forms. We are **reintroducing all generations to our heritage, to their heritage, to classical performances with a twist, to the renovated city theatre, both digital as in real life**. With a modern or even futuristic perspective, we bring heritage and traditional art forms back into the spotlight.

2019

The Anarchistic start

2020

Leeuwarden18

Bruges02

Graz03

Lille04

Mons15

Birth Durf2030

Q13

How we involved and will involve local artists and cultural organisations

Our local cultural sector and artists are the foundation of our whole story towards 2030. From the very start of our quest (in 2019), they took an active role. The operation of the DURF2030-platform created new projects and collaborations. The cultural programme in this bid book was supported by the many cultural and creative partners in our region. However, it is important to mention that from the start, we did not limit ourselves to the involvement of the cultural sector, but immediately opted for a cross-sectoral and participatory approach in which citizens and other sectors became actors in the realisation of a shared vision (see Q17). But let's start at the beginning...

The Anarchistic start (2019)

Immediately after the City Council decided to run for the ECoC title, we initiated our anarchistic start: everything was possible. It was the Kortrijk Arts Council who recommended inviting **experts from previous ECoC cities**. Together we initiated meetings with Brugge02, Graz03, Lille04, Mons15, Leeuwarden18 as well as a proud loser (Eindhoven18) and an ECoC in preparation mode (Kaunas22). Those sessions were open to everyone, discussing the impact, do's and don'ts, and what the title can mean for a city and its region. The meetings were attended by cultural professional organisations and associations, artists, policy makers, and culturally-minded inhabitants. The Kortrijk Arts Council discussed several insights from these sessions during an extended meeting where all cultural workers were invited. One thing became very clear: yes, we can, and yes, we dare to compete for ECoC. This marked the start of a broader approach to the role of culture in our city and a quest for an evolving cultural life adapted to contemporary challenges - as we set out in Qs 5, 6 and 7.

Our experiment: DURF2030 (2020)

2020 marked the start of a worldwide epidemic, a period where culture was challenged in all its aspects. At the same time, in Kortrijk, we started the next phase of our bidding process: **the experimental phase**. Not by talking and discussing, but by experimenting in new cross-sectoral collaborations. Searching for and stimulating new cultural and creative ideas, content, collaborations, and approaches to tackle social challenges. You can't find new solutions if you do what you always have been doing

- that's what we learn from Einstein. We needed to create a new way of working together, a new way to involve not only cultural organisations and artists but also citizens, associations, education partners,... Enter DURF2030. A platform where organisations, citizens and creative ideas meet. DURF2030 was (and still is) run by a small team of two people, supported by a steering committee of 12 people from different sectors (schools, economics, culture, youth and health care). DURF2030, in itself, is an experiment with one goal: **driving social change through culture and creativity**. Not only with creative experiments but also by inviting (through open calls), connecting, supporting, measuring impact. And no better time than a COVID-period to start experimenting.

Time for action (2020-2024)

Open Calls (OC)

Ten open calls for artistic projects were launched between 2020 and mid 2024, focusing on inspiring societal topics or focussed on target groups:

- **Loneliness:** Started in the middle of COVID, addressing how to resolve **the struggles of isolation**,
- **Behavioural Change:** Searching for cultural projects that stimulate **changes in people's mindsets**,
- **#TheyWillDecideTheName:** Supporting **youth engagement**,
- **Dare to Care:** Exploring **how culture and care can connect**,
- **Durf Werkt:** Investigating **the future of work** and how culture fits into this frame,
- **Unexpected Encounters:** Generating **unexpected encounters** in the public domain and cultural sectors,
- **A call to students** for small-scale experiments, taking over **public spaces around campuses**,
- **A call to amateur associations** to step out of their comfort zones and engage in challenging new projects,
- **A call to the professional cultural sector** to take over one of the main squares of the city, that we called the 'Kortrijk2030 square' during the Sinksen city festival 2024,
- **A call to the professional youth sector** to showcase the creative minds and often invisible ideas of our youth.

OC Youth Sector
- 19 projects

OC Professional Arts
- 5 projects

Associations Council XXL
- 120 organisations

Arts Council Kortrijk XXL
- 80 organisations

JUST DURF sessions: 783 artists/organisations

2025

2021

This approach led to **62 supported projects** often handed in by individual citizens, non-cultural organisations, teaching us that project proposals in many cases focus on small-scale experiments within comfort zones.

The Invitation (2023)

As DURF2030 focused increasingly on action, awareness of the ECoC candidacy began to spread. Questions arose: What is our candidacy about? What's our central theme? Why would we want and need this title? Interesting questions. With different answers. We chose not to answer the questions ourselves, but invited **eight experts** from various backgrounds to write a manifesto. The manifesto turned into an invitation. An invitation to get people and the city moving, a text with only one goal: a conversation starter, focused on mental well-being, the role of culture to enhance mental well-being and the role Kortrijk and the region play in this context.

Four initial Invitation-sessions took place in Spring 2023, inviting broader societal participation (social, youth, cultural sectors, volunteers, children, teenagers, elderly, LGBTQIA+, etc.). These sessions sparked further invitations, **resulting in 21 meetings and engaging over 200 people**. The discussions were highlighting the city's needs, probing topics, and potential solutions for change by 2031.

The Magnificent Seven (2023)

The numerous invitation sessions, one-on-one conversations, and unexpected encounters provided a broad substantive framework about the city and region. **It's a picture based on opinions rather than exclusively on numbers**. It represents a recognisable cross-section of our society. It forms the ideal breeding ground for inspiration.

Enter the **'20 for 30'**. A multidisciplinary team of 20 experts (city administration, culture, education, care, region, youth, newcomers, elderly and business) used **design thinking** methodology to translate all the gathered information into **long term objectives** with specific elements unique to Kortrijk and its region or at least more tangible than elsewhere: **our Magnificent Seven (Q8)**.

Those seven were translated in our artistic vision from Border//line to Fl@xible Futures. A story that needs Just Durf to evolve. A mentality that should be appealing to our cultural ecosystem.

Just Durf (2024)

With the bid book deadline approaching, we were united, much like in 1302 with the Battle of the Golden Spurs. This defines our region and cultural sector: proud, critical, and always striving for better, but united when it matters. In **January 2024**, Kortrijk2030 invited all the professional cultural organisations of the 12+1-region in an **Arts Council XXL** and all amateur arts organisations of Kortrijk in an **Associations Council XXL**. During these meetings the artistic vision was unveiled, and everyone gathered to become part of the creative process. **80 professional artists/organisations** and **120 amateur associations** were inspired to come up with their own ideas.

But that wasn't the end. We were invited to introduce the Just Durf story to their representative boards, public events, brainstorm sessions, teams, volunteers, and organisations not present at the first councils, resulting in **23 presentations of Just Durf, reaching 783 artists/cultural workers in Kortrijk and the region**. Many proposals in the programme also came about thanks to all these sessions.

2025 and Beyond

The artistic programme in this bid is the result of the DURF2030-approach towards our local artistic sector (organisations and artists): no business as usual, no comfort zone, but connecting ideas, organisations and sectors in a European setting. The result is an artistic programme packed with ideas and projects from our creative and cultural sector. This process guarantees the implementation of a programme strongly anchored in our cultural field and also gives our partners a European platform to be presented, to work with and grow.

Our DURF2030-approach will form the basis for a structural and long term involvement and cooperation of the local cultural sector in creating a daring, inspiring and captivating cultural programme for Kortrijk2030.

OC #TheyWillDecideTheName
– 15 projects

OC Dare to Care
– 6 projects

OC DurfWerk
– 3 projects

The invitation

2023

OC Amateur Associations
– 7 projects

OC Unexpected Encounters
– 3 projects

OC Students
– 3 projects

2024

The Magnificent Seven

Invitation sessions: > 200 people

3. European dimension

Q14

a) / b) How we intend to contribute to Europe's cultural diversity, how we tackle European issues and promote common aspects of European cultures and heritage

Sometimes we refer to Kortrijk as 'fait divers'. We say it in French with our Flemish accent. It loosely translates to 'miscellaneous stuff'. Not important enough to make the European headlines. Relatively unknown outside of Belgium, perhaps a little overshadowed by the more obvious charms of some of our Flemish and our French-speaking neighbours.

And sometimes we feel a little like a fait divers too. Easily detectable. When we talk about our big European accomplishments, we recur all the way back to the Battle of the Golden Spurs... That was in 1302 - so a mere 720 years ago. Time flies...

What have we done for Europe? A great deal!

Twisting a Monty Python quote, you may ask: What have Kortrijk and the South West ever done for Europe? A whole lot, even if it often went unnoticed. With Just Durf we are learning to dare, to speak out and show our contributions to the advancement of European technologies, intellect, creativity and well-being - but we still struggle a bit to boast too much, so bear with us.

When you arrive in Kortrijk you find yourself in the midst of all of Europe's best sides and all of its contradictions as well.... We are at the edge of our country, surrounded by borders and at the same time we are at the heart of Europe. Lille is only half an hour away, Cosmopolitan Paris and Brussels are close by. In fact, we can go there and back without (noticing) borders, but language brings with it some mental barriers. Lille or Rijsel, Doornik or Tournai, Kortrijk or Courtrai, the different names of these cities in Dutch and French cause confusion for those unfamiliar with this part of Europe. But then again, multilingualism reflects European identity and is part of the cultural diversity we contribute to Europe. Our region has been and can be again a laboratory for embracing the power of multilingualism.

Europe deserves to Just Durf with us!

We feel the European Capital of Culture is an opportunity for any city in Europe to pick up the slack that has sneaked into Europe-enthusiasm. Into ours, too. The relations within this first ever European EGTC Lille, Tournai & Kortrijk has gone a bit dormant and - as we said before - our French neighbours rather look southwards to Paris, while we look northwards to Ghent, Brussels and Antwerp. In Europe, especially the EU, we have become so used to all the freedom of living and working anywhere, the shared currency, the travels almost without borders and many

other commodities, that sometimes we become too lazy to bother crossing the border, putting up with another language (or our neighbours with ours) or surmounting all the bureaucratic hurdles of cross-border cooperation although significantly diminished compared to before 2008.

We are writing this under the impression of the recent EU parliament elections which in Flanders and Belgium, and in France, but also in many European countries, have seen another shift towards antidemocratic, nationalist and eurosceptical positions. It almost feels as if we have forgotten our vision of a Europe without wars, without borders, without nationalism... and we are turning our backs on each other - all over again.

So we think Europe deserves to Just Durf! Even if Kortrijk is a 'fait divers', we dare. Our DNA is hard work, but also being innovative. Even if we go against the current, we think out of the box, together with Europe. Dear Europeans out there: Give yourselves permission to Just Durf with us!

Embracing empowerment beats focussing on fears

Yes, of course we share all the challenges that others around us - near and much farther away - also face. Kortrijk has a number of strategic transition lines that counteract pan-European issues like an ageing population, increasing diversity, migration and (war/climate) refugees, an increase in poverty (it's as if we are going backwards on these things in Europe), the global changes in the climate and its impacts. Yes, of course, we share them all. But we also see that all of this causes a lot of anxiety in people, causes fears upon which they vote in elections, causes mental and physical health issues and does not really help - neither to resolve the issues nor to be happier on a personal level. We have everything and should not risk losing our freedoms and rights out of fear. We think Europe needs a Just Durf moment and a Just Durf movement. Let's go, Europe! Let's Durf and make some noise!

As said before, in the DURE2030-platform we experimented with open calls, supporting mechanisms, and identifying gaps in our cultural landscape. The topics of our open calls in this phase of the bid are all relevant at European level: Loneliness, Behavioral Change, Youth Engagement, Dare to Care, Future of Work, Unexpected Encounters. This approach led to 62 supported projects in which we gained a lot of experience. By implementing small-scale experiments addressing European/global challenges on a local level, we observe that citizens and organisations become inspired

and regain hope through collaborative efforts and hands-on initiatives. Together we create a shared imagination for flexible futures. An important move against fear-voting and towards feeling empowered.

Becoming relevant for Europe

With projects like the **International Arts Marathon** and **The Legacy of the Treaty** we invite European partners to cross (language) borders together. Our **In the Mood Festival** engages international partners to press the pause button, to reflect on mental health and how culture can have a positive impact on our well-being. **We must counter the idea that Europe only imposes rules and instead show what opportunities the European Union brings.** What is possible, what we may do - thanks to Europe. Furthermore, we are convinced that **No Tech Day** will become a European trend, a moment to forget all electronics and focus on each other and our mental well-being.

We also want to make some real good examples of reinventing the use of industrial heritage to inspire many

other European cities. Throughout the project **Life Cycle**, people will discover places like the old electricity plant Transfo. Nowadays, thanks to many EU-funded projects, Transfo has become a cultural hotspot where the history and future of the site come alive through energy education, culture, and sports. This transformation showcases how historical industrial sites can be revitalised to serve contemporary community needs, blending educational initiatives with cultural and recreational activities.

And with the Sustainable Development Goals all of us in Europe expand our outlook far beyond Europe. We feel this is part of our European dimension - how we connect to global values like the SDGs, committing to humankind, our planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. The city of Kortrijk signed the Eurocities Lille Call to Action for a low carbon and more inclusive culture (2023) and recently the Braga Manifesto (UNESCO Creative Cities Network, 2024) which promotes culture and creativity as strategic factors for sustainable urban development.

c) Our partnerships with cultural operators and cities around Europe

The unique position of Kortrijk offers opportunities for interregional collaboration and cultural integration – and provides a toolbox for a wider European outreach.

International Networks

Our region has connections with all European Union member states, both through membership in various European networks and through concrete collaboration on various projects. Additionally, there are collaborations beyond the borders of Europe. However, we have to admit that our ties with Eastern Europe are not as strong. ECoC provides a good opportunity to change this - especially looking at Budweis2028, the Polish connections for 2029 and the prospect of Bulgaria 2032.

The city of Kortrijk is an active member of the **European Social Network** (since 2016) and the **UNESCO Creative City of Design-network** (since 2017). Kortrijk takes a leading role in the UNESCO Design-network (coordinator from 2020 - 2023). Within this network we cooperate with several former ECoCs, like Graz (AT) and Kaunas (LT), but also partners like Bilbao (ES), Kolding (DK), Saint-Etienne (FR), Como (IT) and Geelong (AU).

The ambition to become ECoC caused us to further open our commitment and look towards Europe. In 2021 the City of Kortrijk became a member of the **Culture Forum of Eurocities**, thanks to the participation in the Culture in Heritage-programme with our giant, Emma. We also joined

Culture Next (2023) and participated in two conferences of **Culture Action Europe** (Beyond the Obvious in Elefsina 2023 and Malmö 2024). We are planning to be a full-time member of this network shortly. At both conferences we established new collaborations with future European Capitals of Culture. It's the ideal breeding ground for informal meetings and planting seeds in the minds of our cultural workers.

Our cultural partners boast a variety of different European connections, e.g. Arts Centre BUDA is a member of Europa Cinemas, and the platform for circus artists PERPLX is a member of Circostrada, the European Network for Contemporary Circus and Outdoor Arts. These are just some of the examples of the strong European connection of our partners.

Kortrijk is **twinned with four European Cities**: Bad Godesberg (DE), Frascati (IT), Saint-Cloud (FR), and Windsor & Maidenhead (UK). Kortrijk also has twin city relationships with cities outside Europe: Chefchaouen (MA), Greenville (US), Tashkent (UZ), and Wuxi (CN). Most of these partnerships are more historical and not as active as they once were or could be. ECoC provides an opportunity to rethink and revitalise these forms of cooperation.

The City of Kortrijk is an active partner in numerous **European grant projects** spanning a wide range of programmes. Among those with a cultural connection,

we are involved in Interreg Europe, Interreg France-Wallonia-Flanders, the Citizens Equality Rights and Values Programme, the European Solidarity Corps, the Asylum and Migration Fund, Erasmus+, and Creative Europe. For instance, one of the projects, Creativ'Up, is a collaborative effort with partners in France and Wallonia. This project fosters (technological) innovation in the cultural and creative sectors by experimenting with pilot initiatives.

This focus on an international network, both from city, cultural partners and ECoC team, led to a variation of European expertise that is implemented in our artistic programme. We (or our cultural partners) have already spoken to many of the partners below and some of them are still on our wishlist and give a taste of the direction we are taking.

Creatives (artists, designers): Collaborations with artists such as Studio Formafantasma (IT/NL), Gabriel Dawe (MX/US), Nike Savvas (AU), Jeongmoon Choi (KR), Chiharu Shiota (JP), and Numen/For Use (HR), Matthaei & konsorten with Nicolas Galeazzi (DE), Jeppe Hein (DK), Carsten Höller (DE), Nathan Coley (GB), Cecilia Vicuna (Chile), Anicka Yi (South Korea), Kara Walker (US), Tania Bruguera (Cuba), Superflex (DK), Abraham Cruzvillegas (Mexico), Erwin Wurm (AT), John Kormerling (NL), Jacob Dahlgren (SE), Jeremy Deller (GB), Kendell Geers (South Africa), Olaf Nicolai (DE), Ryan Gander (GB), Claire Cunningham (GB), Bike4Change (NL), Raumlaborberlin (DE), Collectif Renart (Lille, FR)

Cultural Organisations: Hilo (DE), Collection de l'Art Brut Lausanne (CH), Museum Gugging Klosterneuburg (AT), LAM Lille (FR), European Outsider Association (EU), Gladstone Gallery (UK), Foksal Gallery (PL), FRAC Grand Large Hauts-de-France (FR), De Pont Tilburg (NL), Dichters in de Prinsentuin (NL), Tilt (NL), Cela (EU), Transpoesia (ES), Flow (FR), Poets of today, voices of tomorrow (INT), Poets on an Island (CY), Copenhagen Poetry Festival (DK), Poetry Club Aarhus (DK), South By South West (US), Office de Tourisme Hauts de Flandre (FR), Les Machines de l'île (FR), Inter-City Intangible Cultural Cooperation Network (ES), Malmö Växtoörket (SE), Constructlab Berlin (DE), Constructlab Portugal (PT), Proprogressione (HR), Insha-Osvita & Protoprodukcija (UA) La rose des vents (FR), Scène nationale Lille Métropole Villeneuve d'Ascq (FR) Espace Pasolini (FR), laboratoire artistique Valenciennes (FR) Le Phénix (FR), Scène nationale Valenciennes pôle européen de création Valenciennes (FR), 9-9bis, Oignies (FR), La Condition Publique (FR), Le Fresnoy (FR), Le Grand Bleu (FR), Le Gymnase (FR), Le Méliès (FR), Maison de la culture d'Amiens (FR), Opéra de Lille (FR), Palais des Beaux-Arts (FR), Théâtre du Nord CDN Lille / Tourcoing Hauts-de-France (FR)

Research & industry partners (academic, practice-based, production): A Year on the Field (EU), International Association of Lace – IOLI (global), Crafts Council Netherlands (NL), The Linen Project (NL), National Association of Swedish Handicraft Societies (SE), European Fashion - EFN (EU), Cité de la dentelle Calais (FR), International Bobbin and Needle Lace Organisation – OIDFA (global), Safilin Linen Spinning Mill (FR/PL), Associació Institut del Patrimoni Cultural Immaterial (ES), Federação do Folclore Português (PT)



Q15

Our strategy to attract the interest of a broad European and international public

Our strategy is to put Kortrijk on the map as a hidden gem. We want to captivate every visitor with a surprising programme, from young to old. Our ultimate ambition is to make everyone leave happier than when they arrived.

In Kortrijk, we currently have an incredible number of 'potential visitors' who pass through by bus or car, or stay for just one night for a work visit or as a stopover. If only we could make these people discover the charm of our urban village and help them to escape the rat race...

At certain times, Kortrijk can be quite busy. During major trade fairs, the cycling season with an international public, or the Sinksen Festival, when mainly people from the nearby Kortrijk region come to enjoy a bit of culture, a tasty bite, a refreshing pint, and a party. Kortrijk is close to everything, close to our big brothers in Belgium and France (Brugge, Ghent, Brussels, Paris, Lille, ...), so a combination with one of these cities, or a combination with the seaside is perfect.

The current city marketing plan focuses on four narratives which can add texture and flavour to the motivation of spending time in Kortrijk during our ECoC year. **Kortrijk Gaming** as an international magnet for students, entrepreneurs, and investors. **Kortrijk Culinaire**, evolving into a national culinary hotspot with impact reaching beyond our borders. **Kortrijk, the shopping capital of West Flanders**, with a targeted approach towards the Walloon and French hinterlands. And **Kortrijk, the creative hub** on the Leie River, which ECoC can bring to life even more through a rich artistic programme. Each of these narratives captures an aspect of Kortrijk's identity and potential, contributing to our city's reputation and attractiveness on both a national and international scale.

Specific niches in an urban village

We want to attract a new audience and introduce them to Kortrijk through some strong international projects. Our artistic and cultural programme includes several projects targeting specific niches potentially attracting very specific audiences to Kortrijk.

The Kortrijk Collectivity Festival is the first of its kind, where Language Art gathers from collectives. Another niche project is expanding and showcasing the **Next Festival**, a cross-border collaboration within the EGTC, which will serve as the foundation for setting up an international conference on organising cross-border festivals. In one of our flagship projects, **Giants of the Euroregion**, we intend to bring

giant puppets together from Kortrijk and the region, but also from the whole Eurometropolis and even international 'giant guests' from all over Europe. During summer we are convinced this will attract a very diverse audience from different parts of the world. The art exhibition **Normal People** intends to attract people from all over Europe to discover a vast collection of contemporary art, developed by artists with a disability or a mental vulnerability.

Temporary centre of Europe

At other times, we want to further captivate and inspire visitors in Kortrijk with culture, giving them a moment to rest, to escape the treadmill of life. In spring, we welcome the entire international cycling world, with cycling teams present in Kortrijk, the Velofollies fair (at XPO Kortrijk) and finally the major events, the Spring Classics. We aim to inspire this predominantly sporty audience with culture through our **Life Cycle** project.

Innovative conferences

Several innovative conferences can trigger talk about Kortrijk as a new player on the international conference scene. In 2030, Kortrijk aims to host the five-day **UNESCO Creative Cities conference** with an innovative twist by integrating an exhibition with a focus on new, young design talent from all over Europe. At that time, Kortrijk should become the creative heart of Europe.

Unwrap x Sonic City will attract an international audience, with the absolute world elite in gaming, film, and media coming to Kortrijk in 2030. This will only strengthen the international image of Kortrijk as a gaming stronghold and of certain courses at our universities (i.e. Digital Arts & Entertainment).

The **In The Mood festival** will be a major crowd-puller in 2030, with the conference focusing on youth, youth institutions, and the integration of culture. Strong European collaborations will contribute to attracting interest from a broad European audience.

In the marketing strategy we'll explain how we intend to communicate about ECoC and the way we will guide people to Kortrijk in 2030.

Q16

Connections to designated European Capitals of Culture and other candidate cities



In the early beginnings of our candidacy, during the anarchistic start (Q13), we met with several experts from former ECoC-cities (**Brugge, Graz, Lille, Mons, Leeuwarden**), a proud loser (**Eindhoven**) and an ECoC that was then in preparation mode (**Kaunas**).

In 2022 a delegation of Kortrijk visited two ECoC-cities, Esch-sur-Alzette and Kaunas. Two totally different stories, but each of them interesting in their very own way. In **Esch-sur-Alzette**, we learned about cross-border cooperation, the business network, monitoring and evaluation... A broad delegation of the 12+1 - region (politicians, administration, creatives, companies, higher education) went to **Kaunas** for an inspirational visit, a UNESCO Creative City of Design. The Kaunas-cooperation was actually more than a visit as there was a cooperation in the programme 'Modernism for the Future' and in the field of 'Design', for example the K-totem and 5x5 programme (design programmes who are still standing). As Kaunas also had an International Day of Happiness, which connects well to our programme on mental well-being, we keep the connections close.

Renowned neighbours

We have thorough contact with the city of **Mons**, Belgians last ECoC (2015). During a multiple-day visit with the Kortrijk2030- team, we discovered things the Mons2015-team would have done differently and the lessons they learned. One thing that jumps to mind is how they coped with projects that didn't make it to the artistic programme with their 'Salon des Refusés'. Within the legacy of Mons2015, there is still a vibrant energy, and the people we spoke to, indicated they are willing to actively seek connections with the programme and they will support Kortrijk2030 if we were to become ECoC.

Another inspiring ECoC in the neighbourhood is **Lille**, but on a different scale and two decades ago. Thanks to the collaboration within the Eurometropolis, we met the people from Lille3000, the legacy-organisation several times. We learned from Mons, Brugge and Lille, even participating in their festive years. Now it's time to implement the lessons learned and reverse the roles.

ECoC-acquaintances becoming ECoC-friends

Our ECoC-family is growing thanks to several inspirational visits preparing our candidacy.

During a visit to **Veszprém** (2023), the City of Queens close to the beautiful Balaton-lake, we met with the Mayor and several of the senior members of the team. There are remarkable parallels with the story of Kortrijk. Not only did

Veszprém manage to promote their city and region as an interesting hub to work, live and thrive. The well elaborated cooperation with the Panon-University was inspiring and the Street Image Programme (with a more attractive city centre with a jazz club, a breakfast bar,...) relates strongly to our ideas and initiatives towards the creative industry, f.e. crafts (jewellery, woodturning,...). Finally, Veszprém is a UNESCO Creative City of Music, an obvious connection with Kortrijk.

Bodo (2024) had a strong focus on Sami-identity during the opening week, and with its opening presented us with the ideal way to see the start of an ECoC year. Learning how identity is powerful for your story. In **Tartu** (2024), a city very close to the borders as well, where the theme is the Arts of Survival, some ideas are raised on identity, inclusion and integration. The regional integration is also inspiring for our story.

Becoming a European networker

Kortrijk invests in an **active European network of ECoC cities** through presence and memberships in multiple networks.

- **Culture Action Europe, Beyond the Obvious:** meetings in Elefsina 2023, Malmö 2024
- **Culture Next network:** meetings in Elefsina 2023, Belfast 2023, Leeuwarden 2023, Oulu 2024

In 2023 we visited **Elefsina** during a **CAE-meeting on culture and mental well-being**, right up our alley. Thanks to the very welcoming team of Elefsina, we learned that it is important to stay flexible, (or should it be flaxible?) when the title is awarded. Elefsina had to cope with the aftermath of the COVID-crisis. We are still in close contact with Elefsina and are working on a Erasmus+ project on informal youth engagement in disruptive places (two other future cultural capitals are also involved in this project, but not yet as a collaborating partner: **Oulu** and **Budweis**).

The **Culture Next-network** is a truly inspirational network. It is always great to connect with cities and people that went through the same trajectories as you did. In addition to the very important network, each of the CN-meetings is in places that are connected to ECoC-cities and every meeting has its own story...

Furthermore, another project was also born thanks to the first visit in Elefsina where we met our Polish and Cypriot colleagues. A supra-local project, 'Ge Durft!', explores further collaboration with **Bielsko-Biala** and **Limassol** (both ECoC candidates).

Throughout all these networks and other links, several intentions and programme lines got connected with other ECoC-(candidate)-cities. Within the programme there are **confirmed collaborations** with **Bielsko-Biala** (PL), **Katowice** (PL), **Elefsina** (GR), **Larnaca** (CY), **Budweis** (CZ), **Limassol** (CY), **Oulu** (FI), **Niksic** (ME) (see Q11 for more info), and yet to be discovered, but on speaking terms, potential collaborations **Leeuwarden** (NL), **Uppsala** (SE), **Kiruna** (SE), **Nicosia** (CY), **Bourges** (FR), **Novi Sad** (SR), and of course, we will try to open this up in the near future. Moreover, initial contacts have already been made with the future ECoC-cities, **Chemnitz** (DE), **Nova Gorica** (SI), **Trencin** (SK), **Liepaja** (LV), **Evora** (PT) and **Skopje** (MK).

Other ECoC-candidate-cities for 2030

All the Belgian and Cypriot candidate cities and Niksic had a **partner meeting** in Larnaca in the spring of 2024. There had been informal earlier contacts, but the first seeds were planted during this partner meeting. A **second, more profound visit** took place towards the summer.

With Friendly Fires, we want to stress the importance of the collaboration within Belgium. In **terms of measurement and evaluation**, it is certainly meaningful to examine whether similar projects or actions will result in substantially different effects in Belgium and Cyprus (as described in Q9).

We see several opportunities for collaboration with the Cypriot cities. In alphabetical order, we point out some interesting connections, also indicated in the artistic programme. We are convinced that, whatever the outcome of this competition, the established links will already help our cultural partners, organisations, ... to build some interesting European connections in the next months and years.

With the 'Yet to be City ... **Kourion**', a newly formed city to the West of Limassol, we wondered how a newly founded Kortrijk would look like and how different the cultural offer would be. The strong connection with heritage will make links possible with several projects in Kortrijk2030. Kourion is also brainstorming about a project that looks somewhat similar to our **CIS'KES** (Culture in Support).

As **Larnaca** is focusing on a strong design-line, we feel a strong connection with Kortrijk as a Creative City of Design. We will exchange on several events and projects and we might have artists in residence in the next couple of years. Larnaca's Bio Design Festival grabbed our attention, being a sustainable festival and linking it with our creative industries, for example to look at the effects of climate change on the flax-related businesses. We connected the people from Larnaca with Designregion Kortrijk to guide

them towards a UNESCO Creative City of Design in Cyprus. If Larnaca is shortlisted, Kortrijk will help Larnaca in building their own design centre.

We felt a strong connection with the colleagues in **Limassol/Lemesos** on several projects and programme lines. A city-therapy fits perfectly within several of our projects, as does the 'caring city'. Limassol also has a strong history in associations and we are convinced that learning from each other's experiences and exchanging good examples is meaningful for both cities and for Europe in general. Limassol also feels the need to activate unknown parts of the city and has a tradition in crafts. Finally, Limassol relates strongly with the urge we identified, being on a turning point in society. Tolerance is fading; cities that once were the most progressive need to reverse the curve to be able to look towards a more flexible future.

As we struggle with borders and how to reach people on the other side of the border, we can learn a lot from the Cypriot capital, **Nicosia**. The cultural programme has been adapted in the last years and several projects with people from the Turkish occupied regions have been reached. Exchanging with our cross-border project: **the NEXT Level** will be very interesting. Furthermore the Eleftheria Square (designed by Zaha Hadid) is an interesting example of how to activate newly developed infrastructure. This square attracts tourists, but also brings regional people to the city and gives the opportunity to locals to meet in an inspirational environment. Nicosia also houses one of the biggest gaming companies in the world, without any doubt a strong connection for several projects in our programme.

Finally, we had several digital and one live meeting with the team of **Niksic**. Within their Re:Connect-programme, we can connect several projects to our artistic programme. Our internationally awarded Museum on the Battle of 1302 and identity in general is inspiring for the plans of Niksic on their virtual museum. Furthermore, Niksic is also a city close to the border, which also is not such a recognised destination within their region. Within the Re:Evolve-pillar the links with our gaming industry can help them in becoming a home of digital revolution. Last but not least, we loved the idea of bringing back minstrels to tell ancient and new stories, bringing storytelling back to earth in this digitally floating world. We integrated this in our **No Tech Day**.

We are only aware of one non-EU-candidate, and in Cyprus we didn't hear anything back from Agia Napa, but we are still open to look for opportunities with all of the candidate cities!

4. Outreach

Q17

Involvement of the local population and civil society

Kortrijk has a **very positive tradition of participatory work and integration of the people's voice**. Over the last decade, the City government has experimented with various forms of citizen participation, including budget games, referenda, citizen calls, and more. Also in our civil society - and cultural sector - we have pioneers in social-artistic work (Unie der Zorgelozen, Wit.H, Antigone, de Figuranten) who, as Q13 pointed out, have contributed hugely to our programme. Therefore, it was logical to opt for a bottom-up and co-creating approach from the beginning of our ECoC-process.

In Q13, we set out our process of involving the cultural sector especially, but also citizens, and civil society. Recognising the need for a more cross-sectoral approach, we integrated both the cultural sector and civil society from the beginning. It's embedded in our DURF2030-methodology. Our goal was to invite and motivate citizens and civil society to take initiatives themselves. By doing so, we transformed them into ambassadors for Kortrijk2030. Together, we truly believe we can become the European Capital of Culture. Just Durf! is our next step, engaging **early adopters**, those who easily go with new processes or seek innovative methods, and extending our reach **to more 'unusual suspects'**. Beyond the actions we described in Q13, we focus on three main public involvement trajectories:

1. DURF2030 for everyone

From the beginning, DURF2030 has been open to citizens and organisations who are not yet creatively engaged in a cultural environment. This inclusive approach has led to projects such as **'De Wachtverzachter'** (The Waiting Softener), an idea from a social-work student that became an art installation, designed to alleviate the tedium of waiting at a drawbridge, or **Operatiekwartier**, a new community radio station that provides DJ workshops to refugees while infusing our city with diverse musical flavours. These projects underline that the DURF2030-methodology is not just about strengthening the creative and cultural sectors, but also about involving citizens, civil society, and companies as active participants in the transition we want to achieve.

As mentioned in Q6 we will further develop the DURF2030-platform as a Creative Solution Factory, and especially as a low threshold entrance for citizens and civil society to develop their creative and artistic ideas. Every year we will **launch several DURF Calls** inviting people and their communities to take initiative, and co-create our Just Durf story.

2. Unexpected encounters

Around here, we are not naturally inclined to engage in conversation with people we don't know. If timidity takes over, we need a strong portion of Durf. So we experimented with methods to truly connect with people on the streets about our road to 2030.

SINKSEN is our biggest city festival in the region. Each year during the Pentecost weekend, Kortrijk is transformed by culture, street performances, crafts, parties, concerts, and open-air movies. Attracting over 200 000 people in three days, it is a time when the regional and local inhabitants unite. The 2024-edition was the ideal moment to host a 'Kortrijk2030 Square', providing **space for conversations about ECoC** (the Kortrijk2030-team talked to almost 1 000 people during these days) and offering a cultural programme that gave a taste of what our ECoC is all about. Highlights included **Cinemamaximiliaan** (an outdoor cinema with live music by refugees), a creative family performance by **Zandzand**, 6-hour performance by **Ruben Kindermans**, local amateur associations and more. It wasn't business as usual, but a display of dreams, ambitions, and diversity.

PAINTING YOUR FUTURE. During the weekly market in the city centre, we invited citizens to paint their vision of Kortrijk in 2030 on a large painter's canvas (a concept from the **young artistic collective BAF**). Everyone could add a dot, a line or a whole dream on the painting. This invitation led to conversations about the needs and dreams of those random passers-by. By involving market visitors, rather than just the regular cultural enthusiasts, we broadened awareness of the possibilities for Kortrijk as the European Capital of Culture. We will repeat these kinds of **creative conversation-starters** in unexpected places like shopping centres, outskirts, sport events, elderly care centres, hospitals, ... starting in 2025.

By bringing our ECoC Candidacy closer to our inhabitants as shown above, the dream started early. The questions: Why Kortrijk? Aren't we too ordinary for that? turned into: Yes we can, what can we do? Can we be a part of it? The results of this engagement are visible throughout our artistic programme. **Kortrijk, thank you for going on this adventure with us!**

3. Cultural Ambassadors

We launched initiatives to recruit and train local ambassadors who could promote Kortrijk2030 within their networks. These ambassadors played a crucial role in spreading awareness and enthusiasm about our candidacy,

helping to build a broad base of support throughout the community.

DATES #1, #2 & #3,... #2030: The best unexpected encounters lead to a date! And that's why on a regular basis we started dating those interested in our process. Starting in 2023 during our writing phase, we had a Date every six months, especially open to the recently unlocked individuals and organisations. It proved to be the perfect moment to engage with people; matching places, participants, and inspiring ideas, just like on a real date.

It began in the Art Church Sint Rochus and was followed by an event at the Textielhuis, a temporary home base for

a young arts collective. At our third date we reached out to the region, connecting with Transfo Zvevegem, a unique heritage venue and repurposed former electricity plant, to reach a broader audience and awareness on a regional scale.

The growing number of participants and enthusiasm for Kortrijk 2030 highlights the demand for this concept. Date#4 is planned for November 2024, just after the preselection. We will proceed with this concept in preparation of the final bid book (if we are shortlisted) and of course towards 2030. **It's through these encounters** between people from companies, education, local government, civic society, cultural organisations and associations **that we open up our minds, and new ideas and collaborations are born.**

Q18

How we include marginalised and disadvantaged groups

During the Invitation talks in 2023, we learned that a sense of belonging is one of the most crucial aspects of well-being. Feeling welcome is a condition for feeling good. This sense of belonging is often missing in minorities and disadvantaged groups in society. And this is becoming increasingly challenging. In a society under pressure, we clearly see dark spots rising in our city and region. The contemporary (R)evolutions within society, health, industry, power, etc. lead to new barriers for a growing number of people to fully participate in society. Culture can offer the collective oxygen to participate, but **there's a need for social and cultural innovation to offer new possibilities for everyone - especially our 'unusual suspects' - to really participate in culture.**

It's worth stressing that our city and region don't start from scratch to build an ECoC for everyone - including marginalised and disadvantaged groups. For more than 15 years our local Surplus-network brings together cultural and leisure providers with social organisations and people suffering from social exclusion. With this cross-sectoral approach they aim to detect and remove both visible and invisible barriers for active participation.

But we know we can't rest on our laurels. In our aim for social and cultural innovation we embrace an important principle: **NOOZO** (Niet Over Ons Zonder Ons/**Not About Us Without Us**). It is a commitment to speak to the people you want to reach and not to decide on their behalf what might be a good solution for them.

In our Just Durf journey, we actively look out for the cracks in society - not to repair them, but to embrace them as a driving force for cultural innovation. Because: **'It is in the cracks of the concrete where you find the movement'**,

Kortrijk 2030 is about creating space (mental and physical) and accepting these cracks to enrich our society and culture. Let's discover them together...

Crack #1: People with reduced mobility

A growing number of people in Kortrijk are not able to attend cultural activities because they are stuck: **elderly people** in residential care centres or at home, **people admitted to (mental care) hospitals**, **people with a disability**, **people living in solitude**, **people in prison**,... For different reasons, those groups can't participate easily in culture, and that's why we focus on a wide integration of bringing culture to them.

Imagine artistic programmes in these places, **redesigned tourist guided tours** that bring the (historical) stories to the people in homes for the elderly. A music hub in the surroundings of a hospital to bring people the healing power of personally made music (**Save.Our.Souls**: The Spell by Patricia Vanneste). A **Culture on Prescription** model (**From me to you**) to invite lonely individuals to cultural experiences (Q19). Or a digital platform where you can join and participate in the 2030 programme from any place you are: at home, in a hospital,...

Vice versa we aim for a **cultural sector which is fully accessible**, not only through adaptation of infrastructure, based on **the principles of universal design**, but also by a shift in the mindset of our cultural workers and services ensuring that all barriers vanish.

Crack #2: Housing Our New Identities

Today we see a lot of (R)evolution within groups who are focusing on new identities. 24% of our inhabitants are of foreign origin, with more than 130 different nationalities

and 7 different religions. But identity questions also include our LGBTQAI+ communities, or people who experience the world around them differently due to neurodiversity.

We can feel the creativity and ambition in different 'so called' communities, but at the moment, there's no answer to their needs. They don't feel welcome in the regular cultural programme of our communities, they don't know the way to existing supporting mechanisms, they are hidden or unknown, ... so we often lose them figuratively and literally speaking. Projects like **From Disruptive Places to Hidden Gems** and **The New Heartbeat** recognise the existence of these groups and are at the same time an active search for safe(r) spaces. We strongly link to social, welfare and youth sectors to strengthen the bridges with our cultural and creative ecosystem, such as Refu Interim, which connects newcomers and cultural organisations by integrating them as volunteers or Quace who gives space to our Queer community.

Crack #3: Financial Limits

The 12+1 region is one of the pioneers of the UiTPAS, since 2015. This culture and leisure card is a loyalty card for everyone but also a discount-card for people in poverty (80% reduction on the real cost). Important! Only the card number reveals whether it is a discount card or not; to the naked eye, they are identical. More than 60 000 inhabitants of our region make use of UiTPAS, of which one third receives a reduction. **In 2030 the whole cultural programme will be connected to UiTPAS.**

But our experiences with UiTPAS tell us that this does not cover all financial needs. So we need other solutions:

- **Our public space is the most accessible place for cultural participation.** It is in these spaces that one encounters art, heritage, and diverse people in unexpected ways. We are committed to implementing various programmes in public spaces such as **NEXUS** and **Tunnel Vision** which will actively link our public domain, its (vulnerable) inhabitants and international artists.
- **We commit to participatory artistic projects** as a way to reach out and involve people who have less chances to participate in culture. Projects like **Stadskoor 2030**, **Handcraft the Capital/Handcraft your City** take inclusivity as a starting point.
- Within the new social classifications, **some people fall out of the supporting systems** (one-parent families, divorced families, etc.) or need extra support. We will experiment with new financial systems (e.g. Pay what you can-method) and integrate existing systems like the European Disability Card in our campaign.

Crack #4: Volunteering: Durf to do something different

We have already mentioned that we have a strong network of voluntary associations. Although since the pandemic numbers are falling as many of **our core volunteers are older or may have lost some confidence in just getting out and connecting with people.** We are keen to turn this around. Encouraging a revitalisation of our volunteering and community spirit. But also looking at innovative ways volunteers can help create our FI@xible Futures.

By 2030, the City of Kortrijk will be a pioneer in promoting mental health through volunteer work. We aim for at least 20% more residents to be engaged, countering the downward spiral of voluntary engagement, not only contributing to the community but also strengthening their own mental resilience. Through the development of various projects and innovative collaborations, we want to enhance the positive impact of volunteer work. Our ambition is **to make Kortrijk a city where volunteer work is synonymous with well-being and personal growth.** In this way, we create a community in which everyone, through their efforts, contributes to a healthier and happier Kortrijk.

Concrete ideas:

- Boost for a more effective new management programme for volunteer work, neighbourhood help, and external associations.
- Specific offerings to companies regarding volunteer work.
- Building a new structure to bring together various known partners around mental health.
- Actively engaging many people who are mentally vulnerable in volunteer work: asking them about their story: where in their life could a difference have been made?
- Further developing the talent discourse: where do volunteers get their motivation from?
- Organising a conference with key partners from various sectors around volunteer work and mental health.
- Researching the role that volunteer work can play in increasing resilience among young people.
- Researching AI - how can it provide support on top of the human connection?

Q19

Our approach to audience development, and the link with education and schools

If we want to get our Just Durf vision to permeate the minds of our audience, we need to develop a long term strategy for audience development. In line with our previous answers in this chapter, our strategy is based on two principles:

- Bring culture to the places where people live, learn, work and play
- Stimulate an active participation and co-creation right across city and region

But first things first. Before starting, let's look at the figures. And here's where we get stuck. As mentioned before (Q3 and Q9) we don't know our audience well enough. We gather some data but we don't do enough with it. We'll use the power of ECoC to better streamline and collect data of our audience, forming the basis of our strategy.

Our strategy will focus on four target-groups where we aim for the most impact:

People in health care institutions

People in the work environment

The regular audiences and

Youth and pupils (in schools)

Who Cares? connects the care and health sectors with the cultural sector. Who Cares? serves as the platform and space where culture can integrate into care institutions, benefitting professionals, visitors, and the public, and making a real impact on their daily work and lives.

Cultureconomics: A Focus on Companies, their Personnel, and their Clients. South West Flanders has a growing industrial life but lacks the integration of culture or artists in companies. How about the ambition for each company in our region to engage an artist in the team/workspace during our capital year? This artist gets a place in the company to work on research, creation, testing, ... essential aspects of the artistic process.

It shows a double win: artists become a 'part' of the company for a certain period, and their (often invisible) working process becomes visible, leading to a positive framing of cultural creation. Secondly, a new audience is created as employees become intrigued to attend future presentations of the artist(s) they got to know.

The Kortrijk Culture Pact (see Q26) also has an audience development element as sponsors will be ambassadors for Kortrijk2030 and connect to their own networks.

Invite the regular public to the Culture on Prescription programme (From me to you) with an innovative twist: In Kortrijk, **every resident** gets a culture on prescription voucher to pass on to someone who needs it.

The new innovative subscription: CUBO (founded in 2021 in Kortrijk) initiated a subscription where people pay a monthly fee to have unlimited personal access to cultural content. Today only the City Theatre and Budascoop (art cinema) are part of CUBO. In 2030 we aim for a regional roll-out of this programme and to create unlimited access to all content of the ECoC year. The subscribers are actively stimulated to explore new genres and artists, developing their own cultural taste and their participation rate. Moreover the model encourages institutions and artists to experiment thanks to the participation of this adventurous audience.

They'll still be under 30 in 2030

Almost 28% of our residents are under 24. These children, youth, students and young adults are the future of Europe and their daily environment evolves at a pace schools and policy makers cannot keep up with. ECoC will implement some new oxygen in their lives, **so if Artificial Intelligence is used on a daily basis in 2030 by this generation, we make sure Artistic Intelligence is also.**

School Life

Kortrijk has 21 087 pupils in primary and secondary schools and 16 034 students in higher education. (this last group is growing by 500 students each year, mainly due to international students). Connecting with school life has huge potential of getting in contact with youth. On the face of it, this should be easy as schools in Flanders (and Kortrijk of course) implement culture throughout all cycles: from primary school to secondary school to universities and universities of applied science.

But schools suffer from:

- **School Drop Outs:** a growing number of young people fall out of the school system. It's not only a growing number, it also happens at a younger age. They are often in a vulnerable home situation, with all the consequences of home abandon, youth care institutions, drug abuse...
- **Psychological issues:** One out of five students in Kortrijk declared in 2023 that they thought about suicide or at least felt the pressure of a serious burnout. Schools increasingly provide psychological help on their own premises.

Culture can't fix these issues but can offer (some) oxygen in the daily lives of those youngsters. Not just by experiencing a cultural presentation (theatre, movie, expo), but also by activating their creative minds and (hidden) talents. Our strategy to connect youth more is **a radical intervention of arts at school, during school hours**. It should give meaning to young people (but also to the young teachers) and shows the way to an artistic sector.

We will implement two specific trajectories that focus on Youth in school:

ROOTS is a human search engine for the creative talents of young people at school. It's about giving opportunities to taste different cultural and artistic forms at school. If you don't know theatre exists, you can't know you're good at it. ROOTS makes the connection with schools, the pupils, (local) artists and cultural organisations.

Teach the Teacher: What if all teachers could guide their pupils to arts and culture without being an expert or an artist on their own. In the years towards 2030 we will develop a crash course for teachers of primary and secondary school to develop their artistic intelligence and use it in their daily work in class – using the Visual Thinking Strategy, a learning method using open-ended questions about art, which improves skills such as observation, critical thinking and (visual) literacy.

School of Life

If we really want to impact young people with culture, we also need to step outside of schools and into their daily lives. The DURE2030-experiments conducted during the preselection phase taught us that the key lies in fostering connections and developing customised support tools that cater to the needs and dreams of young people.

Do You Dare? We radically invest in **informal voluntary youth engagement. Small ideas with great enthusiasm.** The trend in which young people engage in short-term commitments and no longer opt for a fixed hobby is a radical change in the organised urban youth landscape. We'll transform the supporting systems (of local governments) from Kafkaesque grant applications to customised support, based on the ideas young people want to develop. By creating an informal supporting system with a network of cultural and youth workers, (young) artists, a new funding mechanism and the transition of disruptive places to places for youth self-exploration we lay the foundation for a city where anything goes and everyone grows. *(In collaboration with Elefsina, Oulu and Budweis through Erasmus+)*

Ge Durft! A multiyear project that integrates culture in youth care organisations. It creates new gateways **to the cultural and creative sector for young people facing mental health challenges**. By linking cultural



organisations with youth care organisations, we start co-creative experiments on an individual level. A one-to-one dance workshop, a self-organised movie screening in the garden of the institution. Through these activities, we learn how to create safe(r) spaces within our organisations and lower the barriers for entrance for vulnerable youth.

(In collaboration with Limassol, Niksic (BREATHÉ (Art as Therapy)) and Bielsko Biela (A Time For Mindfulness).)

Families and cultural life is a match with an adapted programming. Kortrijk has well established partners (Arts Centre BUDA, City Theatre Schouwburg, Passerelle, Antigone) with a wide range of (breakfast) movies, theatre performances, participatory dance spectacles, etc. for families. In our ECoC year we already combine their expertise and use it in the **Dream Catcher** programme or The Playday during **Unwrap x Sonic City**, but also support them to keep colouring our important childhood in the regular programming of the year.

By expanding our **'They'll still be under 30 in 2030'** programme to a European level (some collaborations have already started), we believe we are not only developing our youth audience but also **fostering a sense of European youth identity** in their minds. They will hopefully grow more than just one centimetre...

5. Management – a. finance

Q20

City budget for culture



In the yearly budget for culture, operational and personnel costs are added up and preparation costs for ECoC have been deducted. We also generate income each year thanks to culture (ticketing, subsidies, ...), but this has not been taken into account.

The same is applicable for the capital investments, which would seriously disrupt the balance. Over the past three years we have pushed ourselves – with the perspective of the European Capital of Culture – to make considerable investments in new or renovated infrastructure. Further details on infrastructure in Q31.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Yearly budget for culture (in €)	14 721 884	17 995 644	18 864 168	18 981 259	20 256 487
In % of the total annual budget for the city	7.8%	8.7%	8.5%	7.8%	8.0%

Q21

Plans to use the cultural budget to finance the ECoC

While the ECoC programme will be the most important cultural initiative in our city in the next local policy period (2025-2030), we will not use the annual city budget to cover the additional expenses for Kortrijk2030.

However, the city of Kortrijk acknowledges the impact of being an ECoC. Therefore, it is important to work together towards 2030, with all cultural services (culture, museums, performing arts venues, youth, sports, etc.) and beyond (care, well-being, urban development, mobility, ...).

Q22

Intended spending from the overall annual budget for culture after 2030

The city of Kortrijk will use their annual budget for culture to achieve the goals outlined in the Cultural Strategy, towards 2035 (as explained in Q5), whether we are designated as ECoC or not.

After 2030, the intention is to maintain the budget for culture and continue the operation of the DURF2030-platform within the legacy of Kortrijk2030, in order to keep the philosophy and action alive.

Q23

Overall operating budget

Total income to cover operating expenditure	From the public sector	From the public sector	From the private sector	From the private sector
63.5 m €	58.5 m €	92%	5 m €	8%

Q24 Income from the public sector to cover operating expenditure

The amounts in **blue** have been informally decided by the current political teams, but given the elections in 2024 in Belgium, they will need to be confirmed by the new establishment.

For some other partners, only **light grey amounts** have been filled in, as discussions are still ongoing. Given the unique location and the strong collaboration of the Eurometropolis, we are convinced that Wallonia and Lille Métropole (for projects specifically in collaboration with them) will also be willing to make a financial contribution.

We have been in dialogue with the Province of West Flanders to explore whether support for the economy or tourism is possible, the decision is pending. Finally, the neighbours within the 12+1 have shown willingness to look for a correct financial model, but here too, the next government will need to take the initiative.

Income from the public sector to cover operating expenditure	In euros	In %
National Government	15 m €	26%
City	10 m €	17%
12+1-1 (municipalities in South West Flanders without Kortrijk)	Approx 0.5 m €	1%
Flanders	30 m €	51%
Other regional authorities (Province of West-Flanders, Wallonia, Lille Métropole, ...)	Approx 2 m €	3%
EU (with exception of the Melina Mercouri Prize)	1 m €	2%
TOTAL	58,5 m €	

Q25 Financial commitments to cover operating expenditure

As 2024 is a year with elections (European, national, regional and local elections) we must take into account that the electoral results could influence these budgets.

All the Belgian candidates arranged a meeting with the Prime Minister and after consultation with the outgoing government, the **Federal Government** (Belgium) decided that the winning city will be awarded 15 m € (3 m €/ year) through the National Lottery. Together with all the Flemish candidate cities, we arranged a meeting with the Flemish Minister-President, who is also the Minister of Culture, and he indicated willingness to give any **Flemish** European Capital of Culture a contribution of 30 m €. The **City of Kortrijk** is accounting for a budget of maximum 10 m € in the multi-year budget. The majority parties have been briefed several times, but the opposition in Kortrijk has also been informed.

Next to these important contributions, we aim to involve extra partners and we had several exploratory meetings with the respective people in charge (see also Q36).

Final decisions will be made after the elections, when all new governments (on all levels) are installed (anticipated to be in Autumn 2024). This would allow all finance decisions to be taken in good time for final selection if we are shortlisted.

Q26

Fund-raising strategy to seek support from private sponsors

Framework

Our approach to the fundraising strategy is the same as the one we applied to all other areas: we've stuck to the bottom-up approach, involving various stakeholders. Additionally, we've taken into account good practices from other European cultural capitals and inspiring examples from different sectors. On one hand, we've already had several discussions directly with companies, as well as with Unizo, the union for independent entrepreneurs, and Voka, the Flemish network for entrepreneurship. On the other hand, there have been interesting exchanges with the Streekfonds West Flanders, experts in funding and connecting donors with various socially beneficial goals. The Streekfonds itself is a foundation established under the auspices of the King Baudouin Foundation.

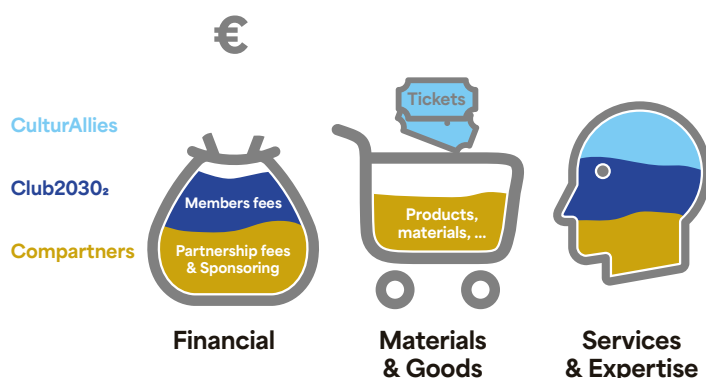
The aim is to **create a sustainable network** where companies are not just seen as sponsors but as full-fledged partners. We are confident that we can raise € 5 m in the four preparatory years and the actual cultural year. In the first year, this may be limited, but we aim for full operation from 2028 on, with the cultural year 2030 as the highlight.

Kortrijk Culture Pact

We want to set up an advanced network, a **power grid**, the **Kortrijk Culture Pact**, that ensures the different parties strengthen each other. This way, we want to move away from the old forms of sponsorship. Everyone contributes what they are capable of. The contributions can be financial, but also in resources or goods, and certainly in services or expertise.

We explore possibilities for **classical crowdfunding** as well as several **digital fundraising** strategies. Digitally, we are looking into online events and webinars, donation matching, gamification, online auctions and raffles, ...

We view collaboration through three important C's



Compagners

The first pillar are the **Compagners**, companies that become real partners. We are looking for these partners locally, nationally, and internationally. We ask these companies for financial support, materials, or goods that they produce and that could be of interest within our network. Additionally, we request companies to share their knowledge and expertise.

Examples

- Safety advisors or accountants could assist cultural partners if they're faced with challenges,
- Exploratory discussions have been held regarding the introduction of loyalty points for their employees, which they could use to consume culture in Kortrijk,
- **Welcome your City**, the international house welcomes the expatriates to connect to compatriots, introducing them to Kortrijk's cultural life.

All of these initiatives will be assets for companies on their quest for motivated employees and especially for retaining their workforce!

Club 2030₂

The second pillar consists of individuals who would like to become ambassadors, stay involved, and thus are early adopters. We call this group **Club 2030₂** - referring to culture as oxygen (O₂) - and a real club of believers, with the ultimate ambition of having 2,030 members by 2030. We ask these individuals for a monthly contribution, which varies depending on the entry point. On the one hand, being an ambassador, they are an important part of the communication strategy, and on the other hand, we may be able to rely on them as volunteers or even for their expertise as well.

Every Club 2030₂ member receives an annual gift and gets advantages to attend cultural events. Imagine walking around with your very own personalised Kortrijk2030-sweater with your personal membership number!

CulturAllies

The last pillar are the CulturAllies, **representing the cultural sector**: professional and volunteer-organisations. They are the foundation of our creative city, both today and towards 2030. They support Kortrijk2030 by (co-)creating our cultural programme.

The cultural field does not support the fundraising strategy by giving money, but they can make a difference on another level. We rely on them for services and expertise. Our

Cultureconomics programme (Q19) cannot work without their knowledge to match the perfect artist with the right business company. They are the third element to strengthen our Culture Pact.

The Culture Pact makes magic happen between the Comparters, the Club 2030, and the CulturAllies as it

bridges the gap between businesses and the cultural and creative industries (CCI). We strongly believe that more mainstream businesses are open to learning from these innovative, creative and rapidly growing sector(s). And vice versa. Which will strengthen the cultural partners in their further development of their organisations.

Q27 Breakdown of the operating expenditure

Programme expenditure (in €)	Programme expenditure (in %)	Promotion & marketing (in €)	Promotion & marketing (in %)	Wages, overheads & administration (in €)	Wages, overheads & administration (in %)	Total of the operating expenditure
40 m €	63%	10 m €	16%	13.5 m €	21%*	63.5 m €

*We realise that this is high, but we prefer to be realistic. Kortrijk2030 needs a full-fledged team, and labour costs in Belgium are among the highest in Europe.

Q28 Income from the public sector to cover capital expenditure

The capital investments, connected to the Kortrijk2030-bid are further explained in Q31.

Income from the public sector to cover capital expenditure	In euros	In %
National Government		
City	> 26.6 m €	58%
Region (Flanders)	> 19 m €	41.5%
EU		
Other	< 0.1 m €	0.5%
TOTAL	> 45.7 m €	

Q29 Financial commitments of the public finance authorities to cover capital expenditure

Being an ECoC-candidate city, the City of Kortrijk decided to invest, as mentioned earlier, in its infrastructure. One of the major projects, Museum 1302, opened two years ago, and works have already started on the other two major projects, Abby and the City Theatre Schouwburg.

Decisions have already been taken and voted by the higher government authorities and the city council.

In addition, during the meetings with the Minister of Culture and the Prime Minister (as mentioned above), we also emphasised the importance of taking complementary decisions if Kortrijk becomes ECoC. This includes various infrastructure projects for mobility (including access roads), refreshing heritage sites, potential school projects, agreements with the church community, ... as well as other matters under the responsibility of the respective authorities.



Fundraising strategy to seek financial support from Union funds to cover capital expenditure

The Kortrijk2030-team intends to work closely together with the subsidy advisory team of the City of Kortrijk. For infrastructure projects, there are definitely opportunities within the European Union programmes that we can explore, such as the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund), the InvestEU Programme (particularly interesting for digital initiatives), or the CEF (Connecting Europe Facility), which offers opportunities related to connectivity and accessibility. However, in the case of the capital expenditure mentioned in Q28, we do not expect or apply for funding to the EU.

We do not exclude the possibility that in the coming years, especially if awarded the title European Capital of Culture, more opportunities will arise.



Spending on new cultural infrastructure to be used for ECoC 2030

In 2019, when expressing its ambition to become the European Capital of Culture in 2030, the local government of Kortrijk decided to invest in three major cultural infrastructures to be ready by 2030 at the latest.

Abby, the brand new art museum will be open by the end of 2025. More than 1 500m ² exhibition space (3 new halls)	A total renovation of the City Theatre Schouwburg, including an extra theatre hall, extra capacity of the main hall thanks to a movable floor and a culture café . The theatre will be open by the beginning of 2026.	Museum 1302, Battle of the Golden Spurs - new immersive museum in the mediaeval Church of Our Lady. The Museum 1302 was opened on 11 July 2022.
Total cost: 18 740 313 €	Total cost: 25 094 483 €	Total cost: 1 900 000 €
9 054 543 € by the city of Kortrijk 9 685 770 € by the Government of Flanders.	16 745 483 € by the city of Kortrijk 8 349 000 € by the Government of Flanders.	800 000 € by the City of Kortrijk 1 000 000 € by the Government of Flanders 100 000 € by the Government of the Province of West-Flanders.

In addition to these large urban projects, several other projects have also been realised (renovations, repurposing, etc.). Two new locations stand out in particular. The churches of Aalbeke and Bissegem (works started summer 2024) have been reorganised and now offer, besides space for services and ceremonies, areas for exhibitions, the local library, the music school, and more.

The prospect of becoming ECoC was an incentive for major investment in cultural infrastructure by the local government.



5. Management – b. organisational structure

Q32 Planned governance and delivery structure

If we are designated as the European Capital of Culture we will set up a **Public Benefit Foundation** as our organising structure to implement Kortrijk2030. As this foundation will have a purpose of general interest (cultural), the recognition could be **granted by a royal decree**. Being a Public Benefit Foundation could be of importance to get tax exemptions and to be allowed to grant tax deductibility of donations. We already addressed this matter in our meeting with the Prime Minister.

This organisation will be set up latest on January 1st 2026, and a number of principles are very important to us:

- **Stakeholder representation**

Representation of the main stakeholders on the Board of Directors, are essential to ensure regional operations. This is also reflected in the organisational chart. Collaboration with municipalities and cities in the region should not be limited to a piece of paper, but must be followed up by people, with boots on the ground.

- **Autonomous decisions**

Despite the political mandates, it is paramount that both the artistic content and managerial decision-making can happen autonomously.

- **Interconnection with existing structures**

The aim is to seek good collaborations and synergies with existing structures to ensure a streamlined operation. It is important to pay attention to future cultural operations within other organisations. We particularly consider the existing operations of Zuidwest (cultural collaboration in the 12+1) but also, for example, the cultural pillar within the Eurometropolis.

- **Shared experience**

In various ECoC cities, we have already heard comments, suggestions, and tips for creating a good structure. We definitely try to incorporate these into the plans for Kortrijk2030. We don't have to invent warm water all over again as a Flemish proverb says...

Framework under construction

For the establishment of this structure, it is important to define the norms and values in a mission statement. Basic values such as equality, solidarity, freedom, transparency, responsibility, based on the Fair Practice Charter developed by the Kortrijk Arts Council recently will be defined. We also want to set an example in integrating methods that will increase mental resilience and health in our staff, in line with the actions and projects for Kortrijk2030.

The Organisational Chart

To explain the organisational chart, we can refer to the Buda island in Kortrijk. At this location, the river Leie splits, only to merge again a few hundred metres further downstream. One branch is used for freight traffic; it has been widened, but you can still discover beautiful aspects of Kortrijk along it. The other branch is for pleasure boating, featuring the beautiful lowered Leie Banks and the historic Broel Towers. Together, they form an island, the heart of the city, but they couldn't exist without each other; they flow into each other and work together in harmony. In the organisational chart, we want to work in a similar way, with a management branch and an artistic branch.

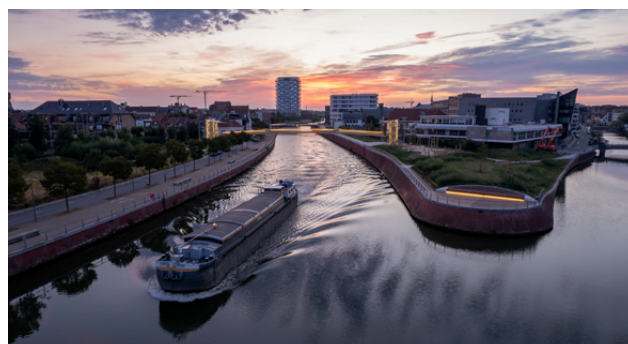
Board of Directors

The Chair of this Board is appointed by the City of Kortrijk, likely the Mayor or the Alderman for Culture. The Vice-Chair is a rotating mandate, shared by representatives from the region. Other Board members represent the various stakeholders in the organisation. These mandates can be filled on a rotating basis. In every mandate, we will consider a fair share of people from Kortrijk and the region (12+1).

- the federal level, Belgium,
- the regional level, Flanders,
- the Province of West Flanders,
- the Eurometropolis,
- the business sector,
- the Kortrijk Arts Council,
- the cultural associations,
- the universities,
- the healthcare sector.

No Advisory Board

We decided not to establish a specific advisory board, but rather to seek the right platforms or forums to assess proposals and decisions. Possible options here are the Kortrijk Arts Council, Associations Council, the DURF2030 steering committee, decision-making bodies of the region (i.e. Zuidwest, ...).



The Management Branch and the JDEO (Just Durf Executive Officer)

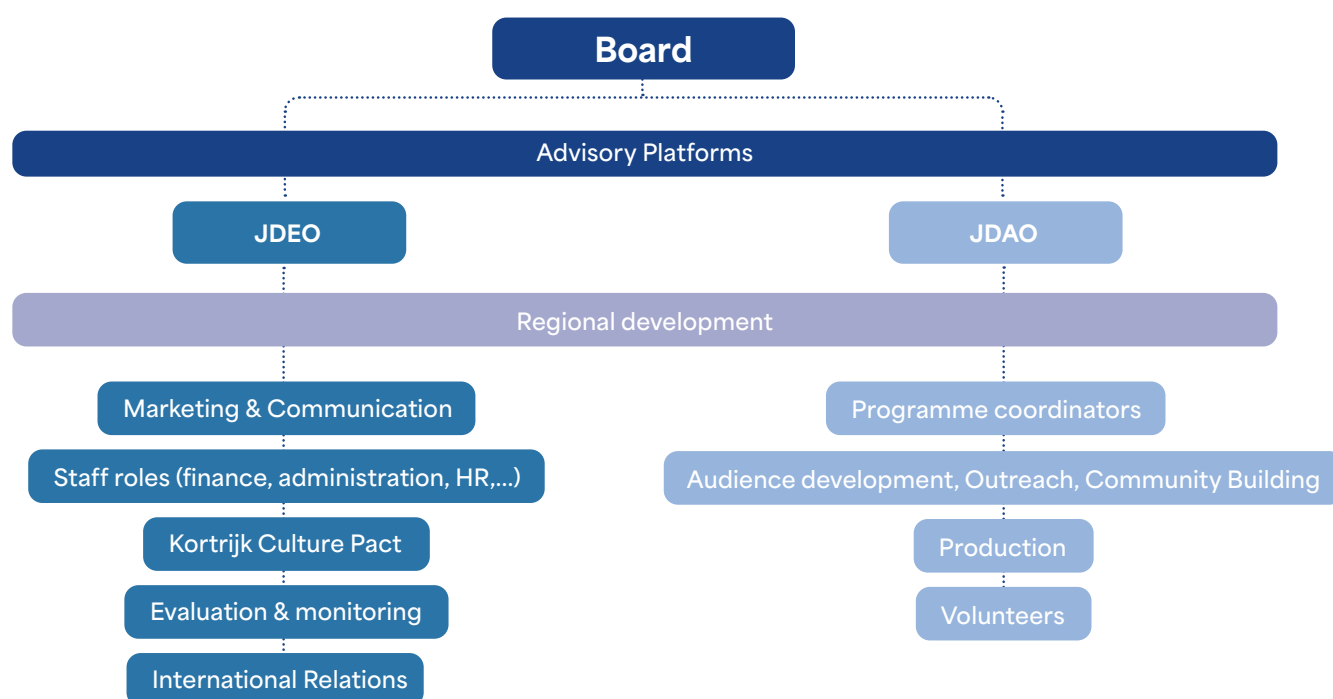
The JDEO acts as a CEO and is the final decision-maker on general operations, HR, IT, and the budgetary, financial-administrative follow-up. Furthermore, the JDEO will also supervise marketing and communication, in line with the programme and in close consultation with the artistic side of the organisational chart. Additionally, evaluation and monitoring are included here. There is also a pillar for international relations, which can also support maintaining relations with other policy levels in Belgium, the EU, etc. The JDEO will report to the Board.

The regional operations work across these different parts of management and the artistic aspect.

The Artistic Branch and the JDAO (Just Durf Artistic Officer)

Within the artistic side of the organisational chart, it is not our intention to appoint one artistic director who makes all decisions from above. Rather, this person, the JDAO, is intended to coordinate the artistic team and ensure regional collaboration. Furthermore, since we will continue working with the DURF2030-methodology towards 2030, this methodology will keep outreach, audience development and community building very closely linked to the artistic programme and team.

The volunteer work here has its own separate pillar, closely linked to the production pillar, which is responsible for the practical operations, support, and logistics for the programme.



Kortrijk2030 Legacy

Let's be honest. The work will not be done by the end of the ECoC-year. After 2030, the ambition is to **keep the Public Benefit Foundation**, continue working with a Durf mentality and keep evolving towards flexible futures.

*"Your Legacy is never one thing.
Your legacy is every life you've touched,
every person whose life was either moved or not."*

— Maya Angelou

Kortrijk, the 12+1, the Eurometropolis needs **the DURF2030-platform as a sustainable vehicle that acts as a facilitator for cross-sectoral collaboration and change.**

The Kortrijk2030 legacy will focus on several specific themes, all connected to previous questions and chapters in this bid book:

- **DURF Connects** through a flourishing Kortrijk Culture Pact to ensure financially sustainable operations and organisations.
- Inviting through open **DURF Calls** to keep experimenting with new creative solutions.
- **DURF Supports** with customised support for creatives, cultural partners, amateur arts, socio-cultural associations, etc.
- **DURF Impacts** through Evaluation and Monitoring to further growth as a knowledge centre, in close collaboration with various universities.

This will allow the effects of the cultural year to resonate for a long time, with the ambition to keep growing even after 2030 and far above that one centimetre...

5. Management – c. contingency planning

Q33

Strengths, weaknesses and how to overcome

Thanks to the experiences with the DURF2030-platform in the bidding phase, we can already gauge well the strengths and weaknesses of the approach we chose. However, a project like ECoC is, of course, something entirely different. Here, we must consider not only the micro-level impact, examining how the people of Kortrijk and the local environment will affect our process, but also the influence that significant changes or adjustments have on the macro-level.

Strengths

- As an urban village, Kortrijk can enjoy dense and compact networks. It is a city small enough for cosiness and big enough for ambition.
- The cultural professional players are each strong partners, who also form the backbone for Kortrijk2030 in the cultural-artistic programme.
- Kortrijk is easily accessible, by train, by car, by plane, ... All means of transport are possible within the hour (connections to Brussels and Lille).
- The various infrastructure works that were planned in function of the candidacy will all be completed long before 2030.
- The bottom-up approach of the bid book has ensured strong and broad anchoring.
- We are not only talking but also doing: some principles have already been tested within the DURF2030 trajectory. Residents and cultural actors are already helping to build up the Durf-mentality.
- The language skills of the population are an absolute asset.
- The strong regional anchoring, whereby the 12+1 have all confirmed their commitment and belief in the Kortrijk2030-bid.
- Beyond South West Flanders, the artistic concept has also been received very positively by the somewhat distant neighbours in West Flanders, Picardy Wallonia, and Northern France. The broad support within the Eurometropolis is also interesting to attract extra audiences and establish new cooperations.
- We are a creative region with a very entrepreneurial spirit and we have the commitment of several entrepreneur networks.
- The candidacy is politically supported at the local level by both the majority parties and most of the opposition parties. We also discussed the candidacy of Kortrijk on other political levels.
- In a relatively short time, the European network has been re-energised, resulting in the development of a couple of European projects already... which makes us hopeful to grow European awareness.



Weaknesses	... and how to overcome
Weak visitor management	Strong initiatives are necessary to welcome tourists in a better way. Within the City of Kortrijk, there are already initiatives to reconsider the tourism narrative in the coming years. Within the Kortrijk2030-team, extra initiatives will also be planned. We will also try address this on a regional scale, 12+1 (cf. Ruhr2010).
Formal volunteer commitment is declining	Although we still have a lot of volunteers, we suggest several actions. As mentioned in Q18, we aim for at least 20% more residents to be engaged.
Kortrijk is not within the Flemish Diamond (Antwerp-Ghent-Brussels-Leuven), but on the periphery. Hence events in Kortrijk and the 12+1 are sometimes forgotten in funding plans (for big events) and general visibility in the media.	Targeted campaigns in the media well before 2030. We aim for a renewed image locally, regionally, and across Europe. Hosting big events together with partners and daring to be proud in many ways (media, policy, visitors)... Good storytelling about the unicity of Kortrijk and the unique projects.
The cultural and artistic programme is made with lots of input from the cultural partners. This is a strength ... but it also houses weaknesses and risks. Cultural partners depend on subsidies, also from higher authorities. Given the impending rounds of cuts, these budgets are also under pressure. Cultural partners often depend on a few strong figures... what if they fall away?	We keep a close watch on our partners. Good agreements make good friends. Collaborating with multiple partners is essential to avoid relying solely on the (albeit necessary) enthusiasm or positivity of individuals. We assist these cultural partners through the Culture Pact (fundraising) to become less financially dependent on subsidies.
The capacity of the various hotels might be insufficient by 2030, even in the 12+1.	Additional beds will be added in the coming years, increasing the capacity further. However, through Kortrijk2030, we also want to help enterprising residents with training and information to rent out empty rooms via AirBnB or couch-surfing. In the summer, we could also look for extra capacity within student accommodations, etc.
The new Flemish and National government have not yet been formed (at the time of writing), local elections will also take place in October. This could lead to some shifts and uncertainty...	We continue to ensure that all parties, including the opposition, are kept informed and involved. Furthermore, we strive for broad support among the public and the cultural sector in general, so that this candidacy remains top of mind for everyone.
A new global pandemic or crisis	While developing the programme, we ensure that extreme scenarios are 'prepared.' You can never be fully ready for all potential risks, but with a partner like TomorrowLab, we aim to be a few steps ahead. In a workshop several highly unlikely scenarios are worked out, which opens minds and helps respond more smoothly in other crisis situations. And as DURF2030 started in full epidemic times, we have an excellent example of how we could change gear.
A threat of war, with additional migration flows?	In our view, the need for culture is even more important in times of war. Culture can help people remain positive, respectful (for each other) and find strength and support in each other during these challenging times.
Residents may complain about an excess of visitors and tourists.	Communication is key. We must ensure that residents are always very well informed and involved and that disturbances are minimised. For communication, it will be important to involve everyone promptly and comprehensively, and to highlight the positive and lasting effects of ECoC.

5. Management – d. marketing and communication

Q34

Outline of the intended marketing and communication strategy

We want to take Europe on our quest with us. A customer journey where we start out at our Border ~~line~~, out there or on our insides, invite everyone for a MAYDAY MAYDAY break, who is looking for a first ~~R~~evolution and make everyone land softly in our Fl@xible Futures. At some strategically placed contact points in our multi-channel approach we send our message to target groups across Europe and some additional markets to say: 'Just Durf to join us'.

The promise we make to those who are brave enough to Durf is: a place where anything goes and everyone grows. Because not only Sofia and Bruno from our monitoring chapter (Q8) will have the chance to grow by one centimetre in 2030 - also our guests and visitors can grow with us and see their Sims diamond on their heads get greener thanks to Kortrijk2030!

Our Just Durf story is one that many on the wider European continent and further afield can easily relate to. It's an invitation to reflect on the challenging demands of our daily lives and tackle them taking some extra cultural oxygen. Enjoy the artistic and cultural programme, discover some of the hidden gems in the region by cycling or walking, and finish with some culinary delights in the area.

Navigating Kortrijk and the region is easy for residents and visitors alike. Everyone can discover this city on a human scale within a strongly connected region. A border city that surprises. A city reinventing its multilingual self. A city showing off its ugliness and beauty to the rest of Europe. A city flexing towards flaxibility. From a stop-over city to a surprising destination.

Building up our storytelling

To increase the local and (inter)national recognition of Kortrijk as the European Capital of Culture, we initially aim to raise awareness and storytell among diverse **target audiences**. As we are relatively unknown, we will grow the project among previous visitors and traditional markets first.

Channelling our communication

One of the first points of contact for the residents and potential visitors is Kortrijk2030's social media. Well-developed channels around the ECoC with a loyal following and good content creation are essential starting from 2026 to build up to 2030. The residents and (potential) visitors get a flavour of Just Durf and the various upcoming events leading to the ECoC year and then further into 2030.

From 2026 on we will have an interactive website that offers programme information in multiple languages featuring a visually appealing design that reflects the spirit and character of our region. It will include an interactive map that uses Augmented Reality (AR) to display programme information for specific venues.

Furthermore, an AI-powered virtual assistant will be available to answer questions about the programme and stay in Kortrijk, developing further along the current technology used by the city government.

Bottom up

We activate local residents and organisations through DURF Calls, raising awareness and commitment to Just Durf. These **bottom-up projects** inspire other people and result in a growing community of believers in the concept by doing it themselves. The Just Durf network goes on **DATES** every six months. Together with the members of the **Club 2030**, they act as Just Durf ambassadors.

In the bidding phase we used **art as a language** to talk about what we find difficult to express. The artwork "Stille Strijd - Silent Struggle" by the artist Saskia Stolz (NL) (picture p38) is highly expressive of our theme. It resonates with people, emphasising the need for collective effort to prepare ourselves, especially the younger generation, for the future. In the second round of the bidding phase, we will start a tour in the 12+1-region with this statue, as a strong artistic symbol of our candidacy. It will strengthen regional involvement by using art in public space.

Target audiences	Potential visitors
Local/regional residents, organisations, companies, ...	more than 300 000 inhabitants
Northern France (Métropole Européenne de Lille)	more than 1 million inhabitants
The (inter)national visitors to cultural activities in Kortrijk (tourists, participants of international fairs, ...)	>10 million visitors (more than 7 million visitors 2023)
Potential visitors in prime target regions: France, the Netherlands, the UK, and Germany.	

With the **Diaspora Come Home**-project we reach out to people from the region who live or work abroad. We highlight their stories, but at the same time we take the opportunity to infiltrate our Just Durf-story in the international networks and places where they live and work.

Fatal attraction

Starting from 2026, we will encourage (international) visitors of all kinds of (major) events to return in 2030. For example, Kortrijk XPO attracts more than 400 000 visitors annually. Teasers and info on what will happen in 2030 with live and digital samples will reach out to people who are coming to Kortrijk and the region in the ramp-up years. Expect innovative communication like a mobile installation in the public space or an AI-generated projection on historical landmarks in the city.

The themes of ECoC will be reflected in the content of several festivals. We will invite keynote speakers who speak out on themes such as the impact of gaming, smartphones and social media on mental well-being. We intend to get the Just Durf-story on a TEDx-event, or even organise one ourselves in the coming years (linked to Unwrap or other festivals).

Additionally, the international speakers at our events can become ambassadors within their networks to further promote the story and concept of Kortrijk2030 through LinkedIn.

Seeking digital attention

Together with our creatives and the digitally savvy (students, companies, start-ups, ...) we will develop interactive and immersive installations, combining state-of-the-art technology, giant anamorphic 3D creations,... which will attract national and international media attention for the story of Kortrijk2030.

Media partnerships will further strengthen our narrative through testimonials. International journalists will be invited to join specially designed Just Durf tours in the ramp-up years to publish articles around their own Durf-mentality as well as covering ECoC pilots and events. The content from these media partnerships is useful in attracting foreign journalists with the assistance of VISIT FLANDERS' international offices.

We started up talks to create a **game focusing on mental health and the oxygen culture can bring**, targeting not only younger generations, but the whole society, who tends to turn towards online games and applications on their smartphones.

Furthermore, we will stay vigilant for the newest marketing trends and use **influencer marketing, content marketing with AI and programmatic advertising**.

International gateways

Many international tourists visit Belgium but are likely unfamiliar with Kortrijk. We make use of our surrounding international gateways to inform and invite passengers to use our region as a (future) destination during their stay in Belgium. Using video screens on digital boards at strategic locations around the ECoC-territory:

- Airports of Brussels, Lille, London, Charleroi,
- Railway-stations of Bruges, Ghent, Antwerp, Brussels, Lille (Eurostar), London,
- Highway E17, which is used by a lot of travellers passing through the region on their way to holiday destinations in France or Spain - or coming back.

Combined visits

The nearby art cities of Bruges and Ghent attract a lot of Spanish and Italian tourists. In Lille, this group of tourists is also the largest group after Belgians, Dutch, British, and Germans. We will launch touristic packages with a combined Kortrijk-Bruges-Ghent offer that will be interesting for this group of tourists. We will establish a collaboration with Lille to highlight a package together or conduct joint promotions.

The Belgian coast attracts many nationalities. In cooperation with partner Westtoer we will develop a programme and packages to bring these coastal visitors to the region. Also for the tourists (mainly Great-Britain) who visit Flanders Fields (remembrance of WWI in the region around Ypres) we develop similar packages.

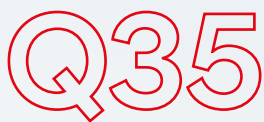
One ambitious example... Marketing 'No Tech Day'

As an example, we present 'No Tech Day,' with the ambition to make it a European day focused on paying attention to each other, to the person behind the screen, and reflecting on our mental resilience.

For this event, we are planning a **road tour across Europe** to explain the concept and encourage cities and municipalities to join in. We will provide **specific packages** that can be used in schools, **ready-made communication and publicity materials**, a well-developed section on the website, etc.

We will share the story through conferences, congresses, and specific networks for European cities, and we will attempt to bring the theme into the public eye with clever actions in cities that show interest. We opt for guerrilla marketing, playing on the element of surprise. The concept of minstrels, who act as a kind of offline Facebook by bringing stories to people, could be a good approach here.

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Highlighting the European Capital of Culture as an action of the European Union

Awareness and importance of the European Union seem primarily age-related. The slightly older population has good memories of the benefits of the coming of a unified Europe. Furthermore, due to the border location of our region, the European reality is self-evident. The buildings of an old border post in Rekkem (Menen) disappeared 10 years ago. Many in the region remember the border checks during their weekly shopping trips to Northern France. Perhaps the greatest symbol of this cross-border movement of people and goods is the 'Sjouwer' in Aalbeke. A 35-metre high memorial along the E17 for the Belgian cross-border workers who travelled to France in the first half of the last century.

The link with the European Union is visible and tangible throughout the past. We want to use physical elements in public spaces to make this evident. Also, to evoke memories of it. We plan to repurpose the former border posts as unique marketing spots for the ECoC-announcement.

Today, young people perceive the European Union as a 'far-off' show that mainly imposes rules without recognising the benefits. A study by VIVES and DURF2030 (2023) discovered that young people (16-21 years old) associate Europe with travelling but not with a common identity. The DURF2030-platform's focus on young people will be a first step to more broadly communicate about the European aspect.

The (new) **Tourist Information Centre (Q38)** will highlight the story of the European Capital of Culture as a brand of the European Union by showcasing the other cultural capitals leading up to 2030. Involving the education sector in the run-up to the programme we will also entice school children and young people to learn more about the concept of the European Capital of Culture by using gaming technology.

In Kortrijk, we have a tradition of thoroughly documenting everything and sharing it through our social media and website. We enjoy creating **aftermovies** of various projects as well as extensive photo reports. The European logo will be integrated in all communication materials concerning projects about Kortrijk 2030.

We are planning to publish special editions of our **city magazine**. A first one will be released after the initial bidding phase. These editions will focus on European values, highlighting the unique opportunities that European collaborations bring to the people of Kortrijk. We will showcase various European Union projects in Kortrijk and the surrounding region, and keep our citizens updated on the progress of Kortrijk2030.

Additionally, we have **200 flagpoles** throughout the city. We will use these flagpoles not only in 2030 but also in the lead-up to 2030 to hang flags prominently displaying the European logo.

We will also invite **European officials and representatives** at several crucial moments during the European Capital of Culture year.

Last but not least, we are exploring the possibilities of integrating the **European Union Day, May 9th**, the celebration of peace and unity, into the cultural programmes of Kortrijk and giving it a place in the public space. Initial contacts have already been made with a view toward 2026.



6. Capacity to deliver



Political support and sustainable commitment from the public authorities

In the local governance agreement for 2019 - 2024, the City of Kortrijk included the ambition to set up a process leading to the title of European Capital of Culture in 2030. Mayor Van Quickenborne and Alderman for Culture Ronse have been strong supporters from the very beginning and fully endorse the candidacy. At the anarchistic start in 2019, the various political parties within the city council were invited to join the discussions with ECoC-experts. In 2020 the city council also invested in the start-up of the DURF2030-platform as the preparatory and experimental phase for the ECoC-process.

During the whole bidding-process the city council was informed at various strategic meetings about the progress, the Cultural Strategy, the participative approach, the communication... Although it is confrontational, especially for policymakers, to admit that there is something wrong and the current support mechanisms are not sufficient, the political support by both coalition and opposition for our project is strong.

The fact that the art piece ‘Silent Struggle’ was bought by our city on demand of the political council proves the general awareness in the political field that there are some alarming indicators on mental well-being and that the pressure of hard work, global crises and discomfort is rising.

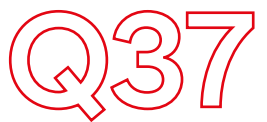
During the Municipal Council Meeting on **June 10, 2024**, not only was the Cultural Strategy formally approved, but **Kortrijk was also reaffirmed as a candidate**. All council members from the majority parties, as well as almost the entire opposition, approved the candidacy (only the extreme right abstained). Moreover, various council members from both majority and opposition gave positive comments about the theme, the approach, and the broad involvement of cultural players and the population in general.

Furthermore, we also **held political consultations with other public authorities**:

- At the national level, a consultation took place with the cabinet of Prime Minister Alexander De Croo on Monday, 29 April 2024
- At the Flemish level, a consultation took place with Minister-President Jan Jambon, who is also the Minister of Culture, on Friday, 23 February 2024
- At the provincial level, consultations took place with Deputy Jean de Béthune, twice in the course of 2023 and lastly on 26 March 2024,
- At the Euregion level, a consultation took place with the Mayors of Kortrijk, Tournai, and Lille (France) within the Eurometropolis, on 29 March 2024, and also with the Minister of Culture within the French-speaking Community Bénédicte Linard on 27 March 2024.

Finally, there were **separate meetings** with the Kortrijk2030-team and the Alderman for Culture of Kortrijk **with all municipal and city councils of the 12 (+1)**, each time giving an informal agreement to support Kortrijk's candidacy. Both the theme and the substantive pillars were explained during these 12 consultation moments and were positively received everywhere.

As mentioned earlier, 2024 is an election year in Belgium (and Europe), with European, national, and Flemish elections held on 10 June, and municipal and provincial elections taking place on 13 October. Thanks to our long process with a strong focus on informing and engaging the broad political spectrum, we have gained political support for the ECoC story.



a) Infrastructure to host the European Capital of Culture

Kortrijk has good cultural infrastructure, and our ECoC ambition has pushed us to move along processes that were in the pipeline faster. However, as we said at the beginning of this bid book, our display window looks nice and yet things are starting to crumble.

We try to counterbalance some trends with creating better spaces for culture and shifting our public space in

a direction ‘from rules to guidelines’. As we speak, two major cultural infrastructure projects are underway, as we mentioned in Q31. Both started with a view to 2030. With **Abby**, we will open a brand new quirky art museum with more than 1 500m² of exhibition space in the historical city centre of Kortrijk by the beginning of 2025. Abby will host international exhibitions where art always negotiates the polyphonic meaning of identity. The combination with a

unique food and beverage concept in the museum will make this place a vibrant cultural hotspot for many communities.

Our **City Theatre Schouwburg**, with a history spanning over 100 years, is currently being renovated. When it reopens in 2026, visitors will be able to enjoy a new culture café and foyer, as well as a new theatre hall on the top floor that can accommodate 200 guests. The main historical hall has a capacity of 830 seated and (thanks to a new moveable floor) 1 050 standing. This opens up possibilities for nightlife and conferences.

Both buildings will be accessible to everyone, ensuring that all visitors can independently, safely, and comfortably enjoy cultural experiences. But both are also in desperate need for *fl@xible* futures, building up new audiences, without forgetting the usual crowd. Our project **Dubosq Unleashed** and the use of the City Theatre for music and other events could help to bring a younger audience into the picture. We definitely need a contemporary approach to communities. E.g. through **the New Heartbeat** which is fully committed to reach underserved communities and artists.

Other stage infrastructure in the city is the **Music Centre** with a concert hall (600 standing) and a smaller concert studio. **Budascoop** - in the building of the first multiplex cinema in Belgium - now has three cinema halls, a hall with a stage seating 270 and a black box for creation or presentation. The theatre hall at **Antigone** seats 200 and **Scala** (Unie der Zorgelozen) has 120 seats.

The Buda-island is our island of arts creation with Budascoop, **Budatower** (6 studios for dance, performance, theatre, circus) and **Budafabriek** which hosts HOWEST University of Applied Science (Digital design and development), Buda::lab (open makerspace) and is the central hub for the WONDER-festival. In the shadow of the Budatower you'll find the old **Horse Stables**, used for (smaller) exhibitions. Upstream you'll discover the **Texture Museum** with the Crown Hall, a meeting and exposition space (400 m²). **The Royal Academy of Fine Arts** is set to undergo a complete renovation by 2030, creating new spaces for arts education, workshops and exhibitions.

Depart is a multifunctional space designed for parties, concerts, conferences but also theatre (1 150 standing). Depart is connected to the **youth centre Transit** which includes a smaller venue for parties and concerts (400). Together they are the homebase for the festivals UNWRAP and Sonic City. **Kortrijk Xpo** is our biggest event spot (40 000 m², 7 halls).

Hip Hop Palace, homebase of the Hip Hop Academy De Stroate, will be completed in 2025. It's a breeding place for young talent and hosts a meeting place, working places for local hip hop-artists, a dance hall and music studio.

In the region, we have a network of **locally rooted cultural and community centres**, home for volunteer associations and amateur-art organisations. Most of them have multifunctional spaces for creation, presentation, meeting,... It's not like there is too little opportunity in terms of spaces, but we see that only about half of our population makes use of them and they **call for more ownership based on trust and less rules**. The associations are calling out for a may day in their own environments.

Industrial Heritage is found in the region. **Transfo** (Zwevegem) is a former power plant now redeveloped into a cutting-edge knowledge and experience centre sparking adventure, business, culture, sustainable energy and education. **Le Bassin** (Spiere Helkijn) is one of the first outdoor swimming pools in Belgium. It has been used for temporary art projects (e.g. Studio Above&Below, UK) and is an invitation to reflect and recharge. **Roterij Sabbe** (Kuurne) is one of best preserved flax retting buildings left of its kind. The site has been a unique scenery for artistic interventions (eg. Niels Albers, NL, in 2020), projection mapping or (small) musique festivals. We already see that the DURF2030-platform fosters and hope that projects like **CIS'KES** will encourage more creators, professional or not, to use our unique spaces.

The **old industrial site Van Marcke** (Kortrijk) will be developed as LandMarck, a new residential and working area. But until then it's a cultural and creative place with events, workspaces for creatives, concerts and events like this year's Flanders Technology and Innovation Festival. And don't forget the **old border post** on the E17 in Rekkem (Menen), the gateway to our region - and Belgium in general. Outdoors, we have **festival sites** like Lange Munte Sport Centre, which hosts the Alcatraz Metal Festival, attracting 35 000 people over three days. Our public space in the city centre is undergoing a major transition. Cars are going underground and the public space is reinvented as a place where you meet, relax, and enjoy although the spaces are not used as much yet as we would like. The **lowered banks of the Leie** won the prize for most beautiful public space in Flanders and are used for several events (6 500 people). **Kortrijk Weide** changed from a grey, desolated parking lot to a park with a swimming pool, companies, a youth centre, an adult education facility and is the place for bigger outdoor concerts (9 500 people). Our Football stadium KV Kortrijk holds around 9 400 people.

Over the next few years, we will not focus on building new major infrastructure but concentrate on renovating our existing facilities (such as Budascoop, Budatoren, Music Centre, Royal Academy of Fine Arts, etc.) with a **strong focus on accessibility and sustainability**. We will also create new spaces by the implementation of a strategy for temporary use of vacant buildings, shops and other spaces.

b) Assets in terms of accessibility



Kortrijk is situated in the far western corner of Belgium, nestled against both the French border and the language border with its neighbours in Wallonia. For some, this location may seem peripheral, but when viewed from a European perspective, it is quite the opposite, especially with its good connections. Kortrijk is **at the crossroads of several (inter)national highways** making it easy to reach by car from every direction - nationally and internationally. Kortrijk2030 and the ramp-up years will be the opportunity to transform Kortrijk from a current stop-over on the way elsewhere to a destination in its own right.

Kortrijk's train station is one of the most important in the country. The station is centrally located in the city centre. There are various connections to the major cities of the country, as well as a connection to the neighbouring French cities of Tourcoing, Roubaix, and especially Lille (37 minutes). Both stations in Lille are **International hubs for train traffic**. There is the Eurostar connection to London

(1 hour and 20 minutes), and from Lille you can also reach Paris in an hour and Lyon in 3 hours.

There is a **direct train connection from Kortrijk to Brussels Airport** (1 hour and 36 minutes). The airports of Charleroi (2 hours by train, 1 hour and 15 minutes by car) and Lille Lesquin (41 minutes by car) are also nearby. Additionally, Kortrijk has its own international airport specialising in business flights and small charter flights.

Kortrijk is easily accessible for nearby or adventurous visitors, both by water and across land. **Leisure boats** can dock right in the heart of Kortrijk (30 boats). There are good and safe **bike paths** along water or old railways. For long-distance cyclists, Kortrijk is reachable via seven cycle highways that traverse the whole of Flanders. Or coming from Lille, Roubaix, Tournai people can use the unique 'Blauwe Ruit' (Le Carré Bleu - The Blue Square) Eurometropolis Bike Trail.

c) Tourists' accommodation capacity

Let's put it this way: We are not the central tourism destination in Flanders. **The tourism sector in Kortrijk** is still in full development. The bed capacity in private hands is of **1 585**. The offerings range from luxury **four-star hotels to various bed and breakfasts**. Additionally, there is a modern and contemporary **youth hostel** with 123 beds.

'De Warande', the outdoor play area and residence centre for youth groups has 130 beds. De Warande also has **camping space** for groups. Concerning other camping sites in the region, we have the beautiful camping Zennijs, which is at biking distance from Kortrijk (and even stimulates bike tourism).

When looking at **the broader region** there are **more than 7 000 beds** available, and even Lille could be considered due to its proximity. Furthermore, other cities in Flanders

and Belgium are easily accessible too. The occupancy of the beds in Kortrijk and the surrounding region fluctuates significantly throughout the year. About half of the visitors come for leisure purposes, while the other half is business tourism.

The city is also taking further initiatives to **help existing and aspiring Airbnb hosts** comply with the relevant laws and regulations. This means that hosts are encouraged to apply for the necessary permits and licences and adhere to local short-term rental rules. Even providing support for residents who want to facilitate **house swapping** through specialised websites and applications is being explored.

During the summer months of 2030, we will make **vacant student residences** available for visitors to Kortrijk in collaboration with the universities in the city.

Q38

Plans for cultural, urban and tourism infrastructure project

Kortrijk has been at the forefront of innovative and sustainable urban development in recent years. This focus will continue. It becomes very clear that development is about offering spaces to meet the needs of people. Rethinking the public space with less rules, more green spaces and making the environment less stressful for the mind. Several promising developments in urban and tourism infrastructure are in the pipeline to transition from **BORDER**  **LINE** into **FL@XIBLE FUTURES**.

A pioneering project transforms the **pedestrian shopping area into a greener environment** that invites the visitors to meet, play and enjoy art and colourful murals. Kortrijk is also **experimenting with slow shopping**. The first realisation (2024) is the result of a participatory process with shop-owners, inhabitants and architects. After an experimenting phase a final design was realised. Following the initial successful efforts, the city government will continue in this direction, establishing even more places with colour, greenery, and inventive city hacks together with the **Nomadic Garden**.

The **Tourist Information Centre** is currently housed in accommodation which is too small for its growing role. To meet the modern needs of a tourist information centre, the city of Kortrijk is evaluating relocating it to an AAA location, Broelkaai 6. This spot, situated along the lowered Leie riverbanks and the famous Broel Towers, is central and highly recognisable. This place could potentially be the ideal homebase for the **Welcome Your City** programme.

In 2026, the services of AZ Groeninge hospital will move from the Buda-island. The then empty **old hospital buildings** will provide opportunities to experiment with different temporary uses. In addition to the other nearby cultural infrastructure the city wants to create a mix of entrepreneurship, students, leisure and creativity. Think of scale-ups that need more space to further develop, an experimental space for game technology, a bar or restaurant where (international) artists in residence meet students, a homebase for development of e-sports,...

The **associated Augustinian Monastery** in the city centre is undergoing a renovation. The exterior is finished (2024). The interior will be renovated with respect for the history of the building. The history of the monastery dates back to the 12th century, and the current buildings originated in the 16th century. The monastery tells an important part of the history of the city. It's the hidden gem of the Buda-island that will be opened for the citizens and associations.

Additionally, the **lowered Leie riverbanks** will be further completed. A low-traffic connection will be made between the Grote Markt and Casinoplein. The project bears the working title **Ramblas**, after the famous boulevard in Barcelona.

Private partners are also making the necessary investments. In the coming years, the former **industrial site Van Marcke** will undergo definitive development. In the meantime the empty industry buildings are set up to be a creative hotspot. Currently, it is the space for creative events and working spaces for artists and photographers. It is also the spot where 'the club of the future' was launched during the Flanders Technology and Innovation Festival (2024). A club where music meets projection mapping and game-design to spice up a dj-set or club show, the ideal place to prepare residencies for **Unwrap x Sonic City!**

Another important investment is the realisation of **high-quality public transport**, a trambus between the city centre and Hoog-Kortrijk, the area where Kortrijk XPO, the hospital, higher education (VIVES, KULAK) are located, and many students live. This will be realised by the end of 2029.

And finally, **our last infrastructure project is not a building**. It's **our human capital**, our citizens who end up living in a city where anything goes and everyone grows.

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Just Durf is the result of an ongoing journey with countless unexpected encounters, inspiring conversations, official meetings, long debriefs, chats in bars, ... with individuals, organisations, artists, residents, students, families, children, companies, cities, ... We cannot name everyone, but it is a path that we will continue, even beyond 2030. The Just Durf team sincerely thanks everyone who dares to dream with us.

Applicant

Kortrijk City Council, in partnership with the 12 other cities and municipalities of the South West Flanders region in Belgium

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Kortrijk Arts Council
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The Invitation Writing Committee
The '20 of 30' for creating the Magnificent Seven
Dare You? - Steering Committee
(Informal Youth Engagement)
Multiple advisory boards (Heritage, Diversity & Inclusion, Health Care, Disadvantaged People, ...)

...

And everyone else who Just Durfed with us!

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