

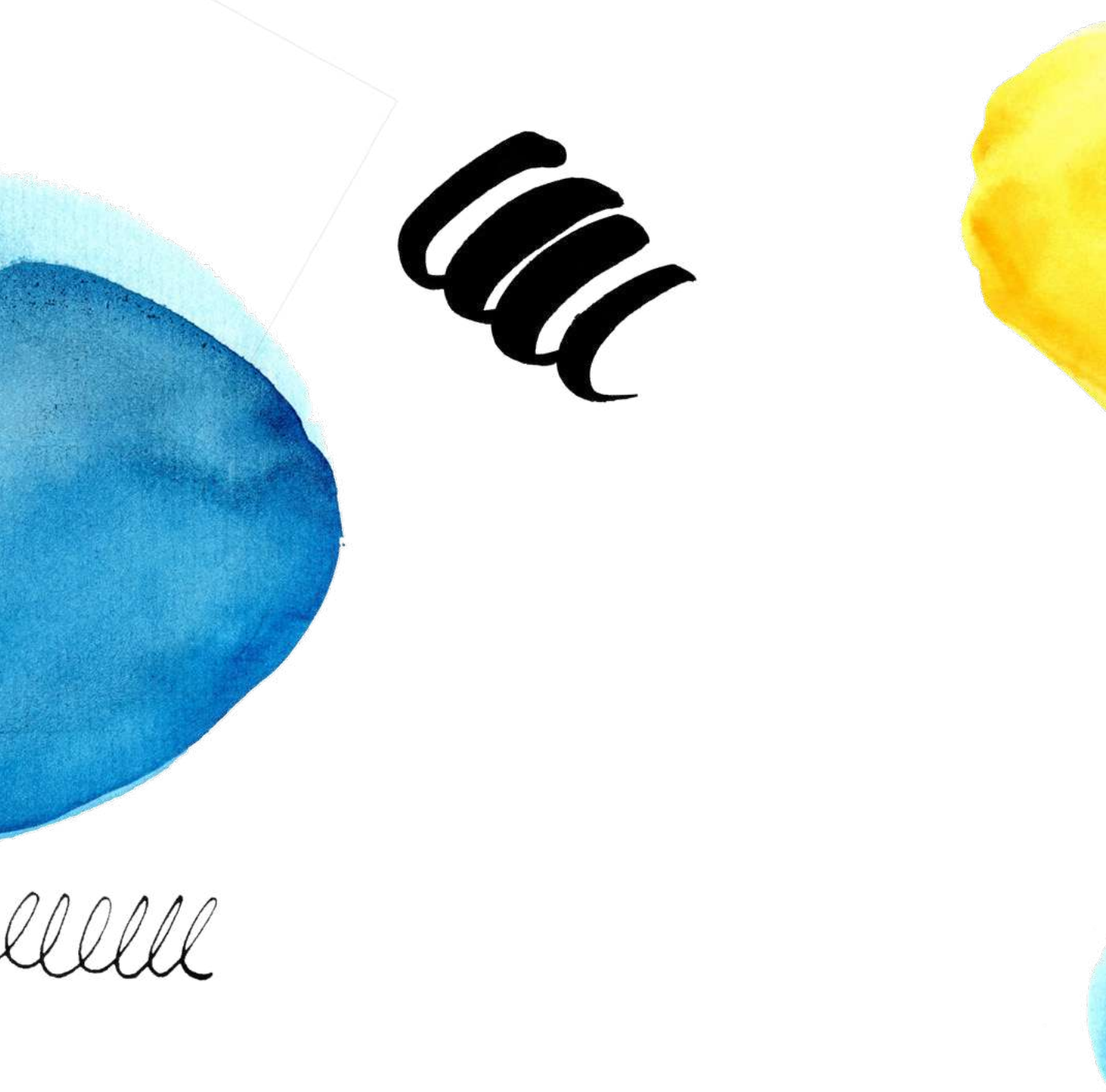


SaDaKa

be generous

Molenbeek
European capital
of culture
candidate city

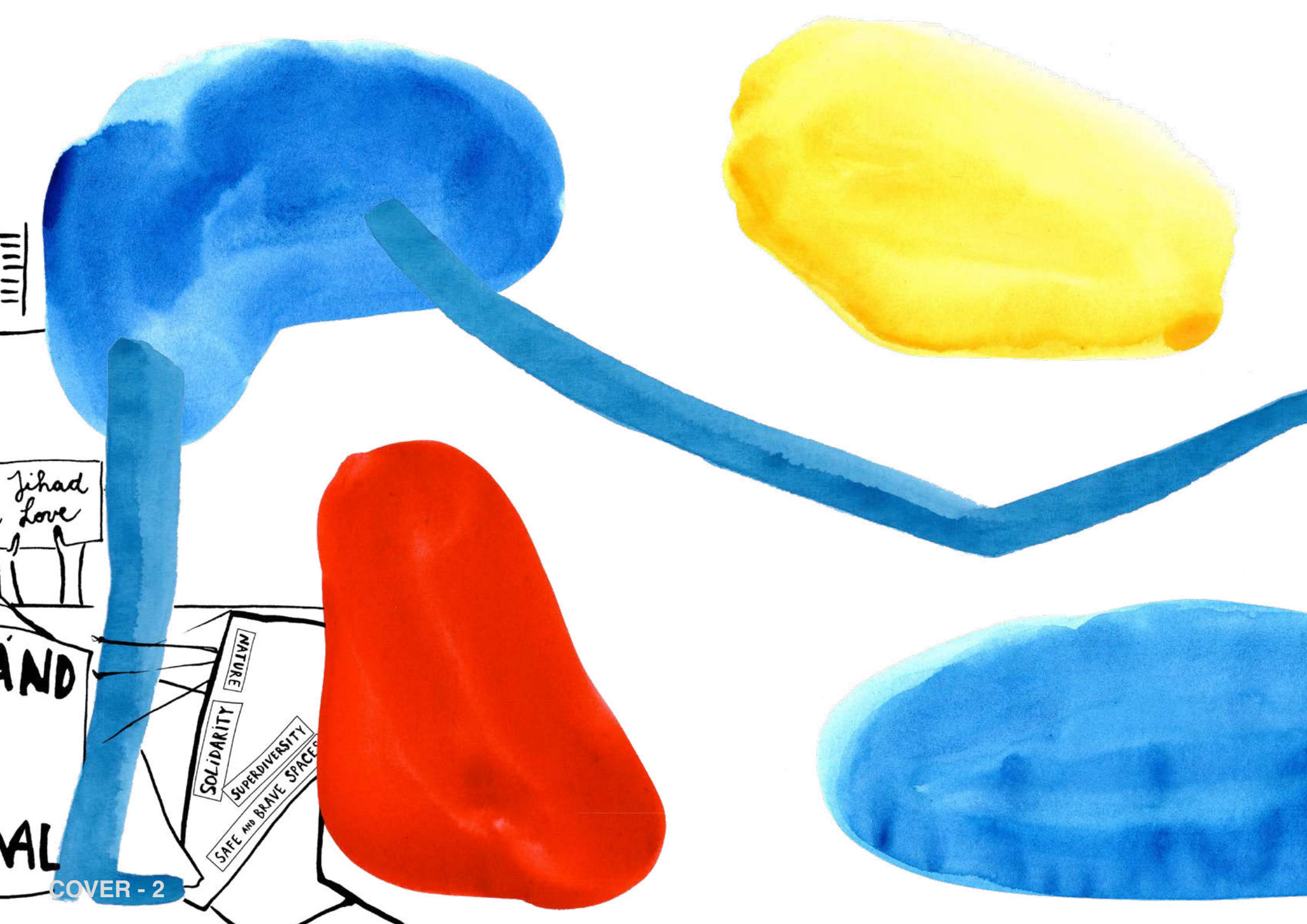






**We
flip
the
script**

COVER FLAP - 2



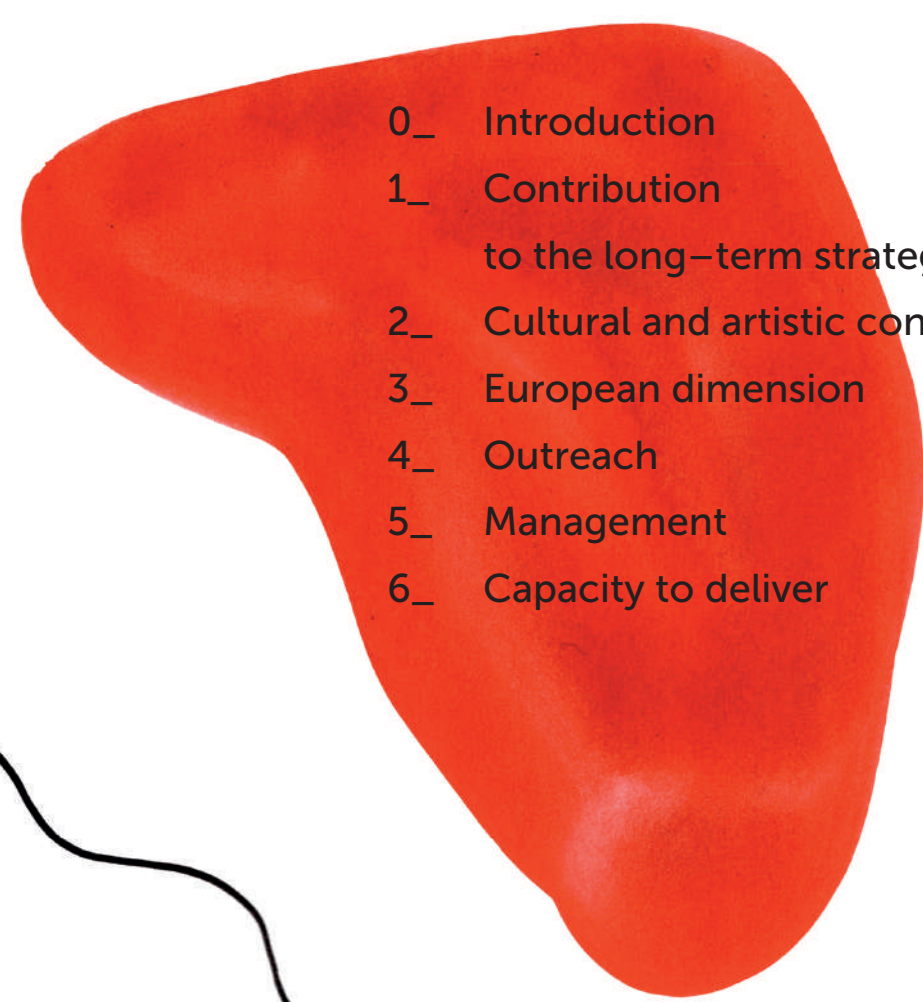
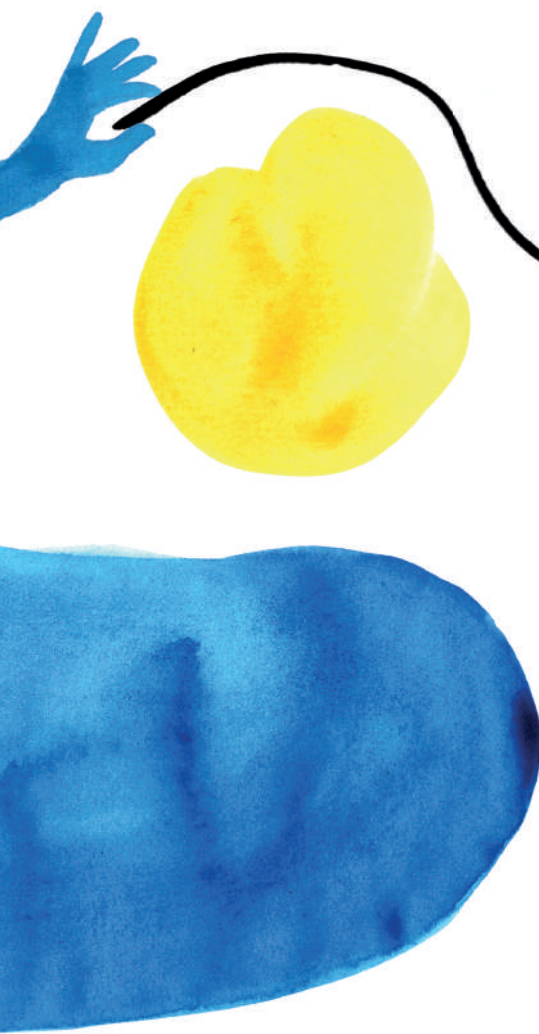
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Jihad
Love

AND

VAL

NATURE
SOLIDARITY
SUPERDIVERSITY
SAFE AND BRAVE SPACES



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0_Introduction

Q01_

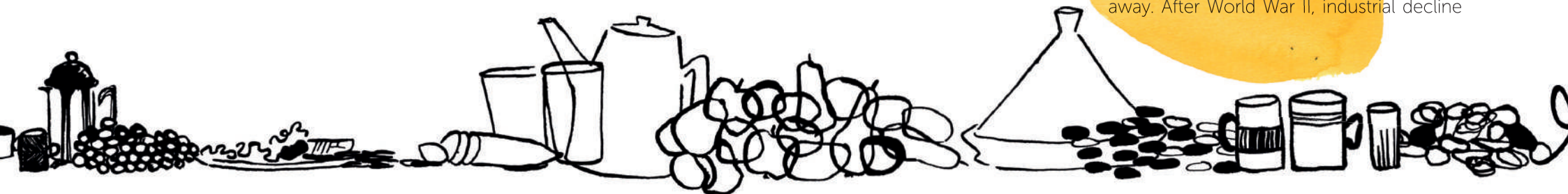
Why does your city wish to take part in the competition for the title of European Capital of Culture?

If you have heard of Molenbeek before, it could be in relation to terrorism in Europe. Molenbeek in the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR) was home to the young men who planned and executed the terrorist attacks in Paris (2015) and Brussels (2016). Donald Trump called it a 'hellhole', Filip Dewinter and Geert Wilders, right-wing politicians, organised an 'Islam safari' here. When passing through Molenbeek, even some progressive Belgian politicians don't feel like they are 'at home' or in Europe anymore. For us, Molenbeek, with its 140 nationalities and even more languages spoken, is the lens through which we look at Europe. We search for European connections in other contexts like Molenbeek that share with us this sense of fragmentation, but also the embodied survival and know-how that adds courage and depth to the future of Europe.

The basic question is: how can we build a common future when we don't share a common past? After three years of intensive micro-conversations we realised that, with the transformational power of a European Capital of Culture (ECOC), Molenbeek can project itself in, and help inspire, a common European future, beyond the fragmentation. With the lived experience of many Europeans, our aim is to create a 'New Us'. The young, superdiverse and the extremely creative populations and communities of the Molenbeeks of Europe must play a key role in that much-needed transformation.

Reimagine European solidarity!

Molenbeek could be literally translated as "Millbrook" in English. Centuries ago, it was a valley landscape, part of the countryside and provided Brussels with food and all it needed to survive. In the nineteenth century, it became the industrial engine, right next to the Canal through which coal arrived from Charleroi, 60 km away. After World War II, industrial decline



set in and diverse waves of migration brought workers from Southern Europe and Northern Africa.

More recently, newcomers have arrived from Eastern Europe for economic reasons, but also refugees from Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Asia. All this has led to the reality of Molenbeek today: an over-urbanized transit city, struggling with painful post-industrial transitions, facing high unemployment, exclusionary poverty and violence, and with far too little space for nature and people to breathe. Fighting climate change within this precarious context is virtually impossible. 2030 is a milestone in our global endeavours to preserve biodiversity and reduce our CO2 emissions. The question how to tackle climate mitigation in Molenbeek, in the form of Settlements of the Future, public places where human and non-human forces connect and reinforce each other, is pivotal. Europe counts many territories like Molenbeek, facing similar crises and challenges. How can we learn from one another?

Although Molenbeek today seems to be part of the enlarged centre of the BCR, the Canal remains an insurmountable mental border which socially, economically and culturally violently splits the region in two. Molenbeek is very much 'on the other side' of the Canal. Molenbeek for Brussels 2030 (MB2030) is about repositioning Molenbeek and the Canal, not outside of Europe, but at its heart. Our drive is to reduce forms of inequality and injustice that the Canal embodies and to build with all

Molenbeek has to offer:
a huge, eager workforce,

generous and creative collaboration, multilingual practices, a spirit of bravery and risk-taking, cultural hybridisation, entrepreneurial ambitions.

Sadaka: solidarity, generosity, empathy, selflessness

The key concept of MB2030 is imagining forms of solidarity that advance equality and justice for all - not only for those who look like us and not only for humans!

Our method is Sadaka. It is a word present in Hebrew (tsedaka), Arabic (sadaqah), Swahili (sadaka), in Hindi/Urdu (Sadqa) and other languages. It means solidarity, generosity, empathy, selflessness. It contrasts starkly with the ancient Roman credo: do ut des, reflected in the morals of commercial contracts, 'I give so that you may give'.

Our European Sadaka is unconditional: a gift without return. Sadaka will be creolised into creative Sadaka by all the concrete practices that MB2030 will embrace: cultural co-creation, circular economy, rewilding, safe and brave spaces. Sadaka became a reality when tents were pitched on the bridge near the Belgian arrival centre for asylum seekers, in February 2023: 'Molenbeek residents organised themselves to help their "neighbours on the bridge" by bringing food, warmth, clothes, medicine or legal assistance', as the Brussels Times reported. Social and public solidarity must inspire, multiply, stimulate, but never replace civic solidarity, the legally formalized respon-

sibility for redistribution of wealth and wellbeing by welfare state institutions.

How can we, out of current and future centres like Molenbeek, through long-term, large-scale, cultural and civic gestures and processes, contribute to systemic solidarity, climate justice and generous rituals, with maximum impact for our entire continent? How can more Sadaka, as is the case in the Global South, be shared by Molenbeek's creative and superdiverse population? How can we all provoke more European solidarity that offers hope, togetherness and positive change for the future of all young Europeans? How can we be good ancestors for those who come after us and will embody tomorrow's Europe?

Finally, how can we reinforce a 'New Us' that Molenbeek and Europe desperately need and how can we embrace creative experiences from communities that don't feel part of today's Europe? Which mental and material change will creolised Sadaka out of Molenbeek produce? These are our crucial questions and challenges.

Q02_

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

Of course. Molenbeek is a part of and at the heart of the new, enlarged centre of the BCR. The regional government is a key partner. This is embodied in the solid, in-depth and long-term collaboration with the two institutions that will be housed right next to Molenbeek, just across the Canal, from 2025 onward: the arts centre KANAL-Centre Pompidou (KANAL) and CIVA -Architecture, Landscape, Urbanism Brussels (CIVA).

In April 2024, the 18 other municipalities in the region officially confirmed and signed up for a structural and long-term partnership with MB2030. Every municipality will have the chance to include its own two-week programme within our overall MB2030 programme, echoing our concept and themes and adding accents of their own called Capital Quinzaine.

Molenbeek is not the only transit territory in Europe. For our European and international partnerships, we focus on cities with similar profiles and needs, and on cities with which Molenbeek, through its population, is intimately linked: Marseille's Quartiers Nord, Tangiers, Malmö's Rosengård, Jenin (Molenbeek's sister city), Rotterdam's Zuid, Katowice, Tunis, London's Haringey, Timisoara, Berlin's Neukölln and Kinshasa. The energy of these places, sometimes too hot to handle, can make us all, in Europe, bloom again and is an antidote to fragilization.

Furthermore, Molenbeek functions as a suburb of cities like Tangiers, Timisoara, Kinshasa, or vice versa. Important communities present in today's Molenbeek come from there. They are often key motors of Sadaka and culturally connect Molenbeek and Europe with the Global South.

MB2030 defends a vision of an open, collaborative Belgium, in which cultural solidarity and Sadaka between strong, thriving regions is a necessity. The city of Mechelen in the Flemish Region has confirmed its commitment to collaborate with us if we continue in this competition. Charleroi in the Walloon Region has picked MB2030 as its exclusive partner.

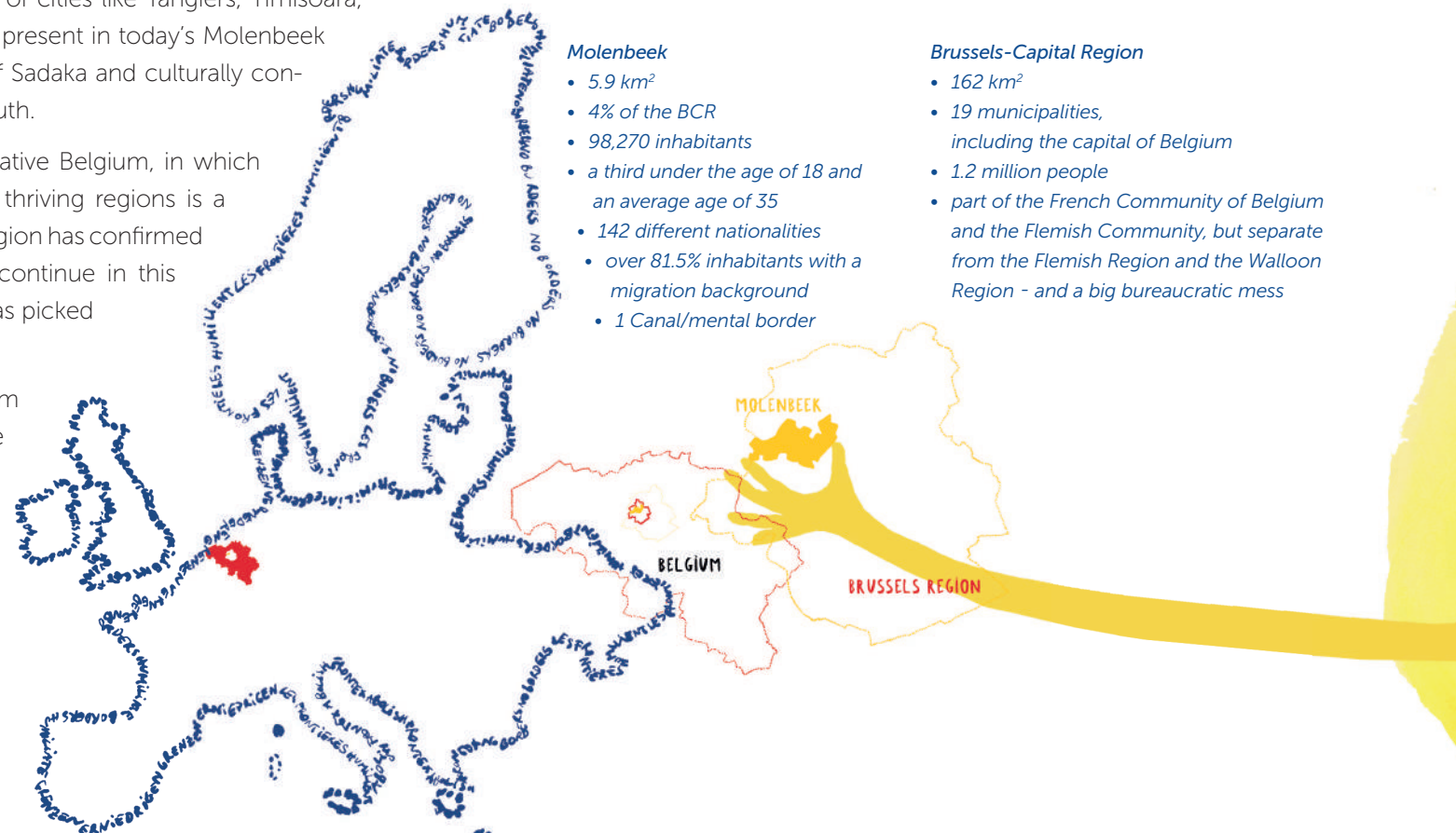
Our motivation is to make sure that long-term artistic, cultural and civic gestures allow for the transmission of more Sadaka between Molenbeek and all its regional neighbours.

Q03_

Explain briefly the overall cultural profile of your city.

Molenbeek has a remarkably dense cultural and social life, reflected in a wide variety of cultural and social structures and associations, all connected to a complex accumulation of levels of public funding and political responsibility. The cultural agenda of Molenbeek includes an average of 500 acts a year, most of them small-scale concerts and music performances, comedy and clubbing. Most events are organised by venues or companies such as the House of Cultures and Social Cohesion (with a capacity of max 180), Vaartkapoen (300), Recyclart (600), Charleroi Danse (400), UP – Circus & Performing Arts (300) or Ras El Hanout (150).

A large number of cultural practices in Molenbeek are linked to the diversity of its population: ceremonies, festivals, rituals, weddings. But they seldom resonate

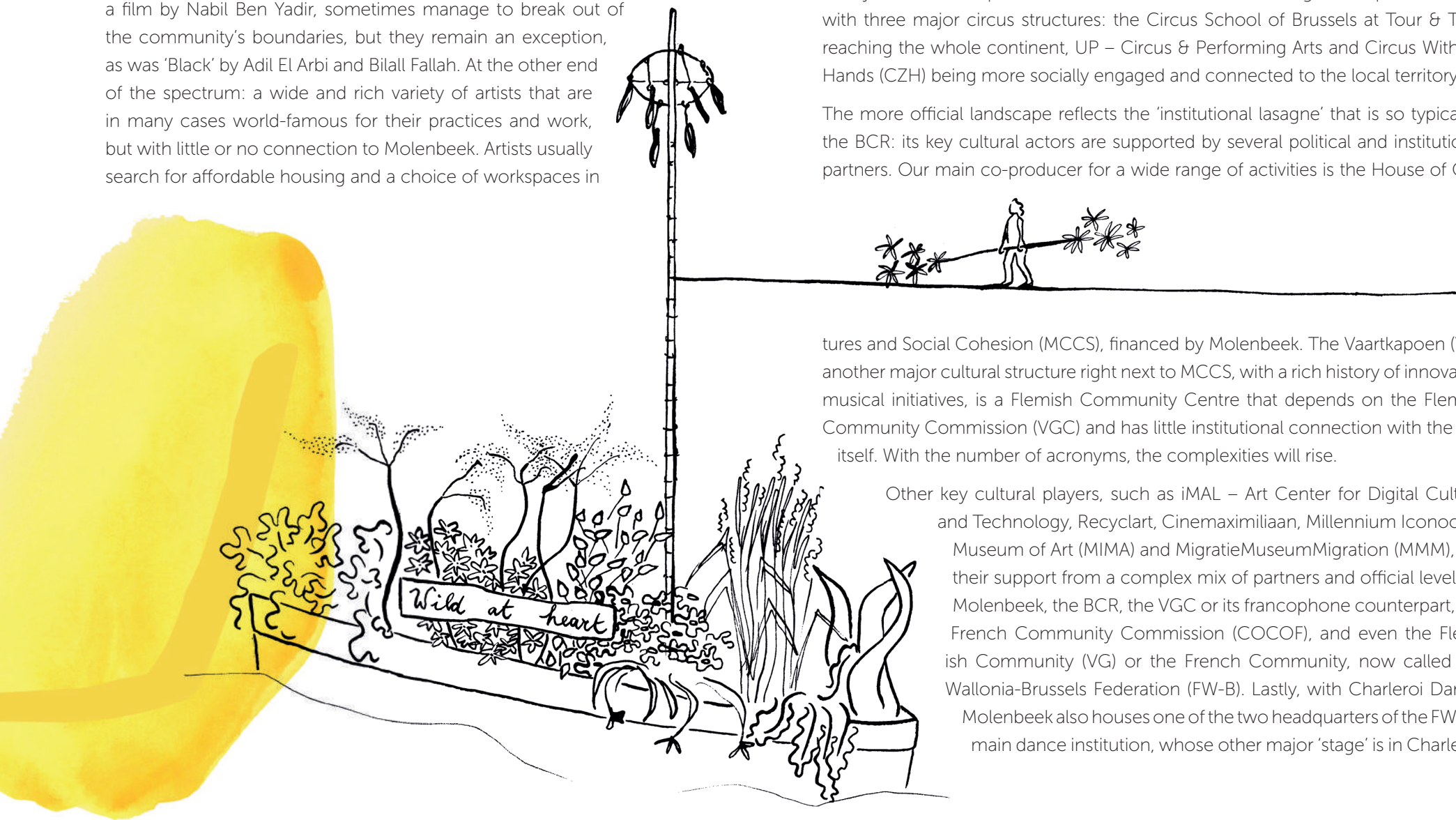


outside the communities involved. The huge amount of informal cultural production too rarely appears on the 'institutional' radar, with some exceptions like Ras El Hanout. For the relatively young, hip hop and urban cultures from Molenbeek are still a driving force. Cultural industry products, such as fashion with Erratum Fashion and Timendotes, or cinematographic products like 'Les Barons', a film by Nabil Ben Yadir, sometimes manage to break out of the community's boundaries, but they remain an exception, as was 'Black' by Adil El Arbi and Bilall Fallah. At the other end of the spectrum: a wide and rich variety of artists that are in many cases world-famous for their practices and work, but with little or no connection to Molenbeek. Artists usually search for affordable housing and a choice of workspaces in

old warehouses, small factories, workshops, which Molenbeek has in abundance. To name but a few: Wim Vandekeybus and Ayelen Parolin (internationally touring choreographers), Miet Warlop (renowned performance maker), Laure Prouvost (Turner Prize-winning visual artist), and Daddy K (DJ with international reputation).

It may come as a surprise, but Molenbeek could well be the global capital of circus, with three major circus structures: the Circus School of Brussels at Tour & Taxis reaching the whole continent, UP – Circus & Performing Arts and Circus Without Hands (CZH) being more socially engaged and connected to the local territory.

The more official landscape reflects the 'institutional lasagne' that is so typical of the BCR: its key cultural actors are supported by several political and institutional partners. Our main co-producer for a wide range of activities is the House of Cul-



tures and Social Cohesion (MCCS), financed by Molenbeek. The Vaartkapoen (VK), another major cultural structure right next to MCCS, with a rich history of innovative musical initiatives, is a Flemish Community Centre that depends on the Flemish Community Commission (VGC) and has little institutional connection with the city itself. With the number of acronyms, the complexities will rise.

Other key cultural players, such as iMAL – Art Center for Digital Culture and Technology, Recyclart, Cinemaximiliaan, Millennium Iconoclast Museum of Art (MIMA) and MigratieMuseumMigration (MMM), get their support from a complex mix of partners and official levels: Molenbeek, the BCR, the VGC or its francophone counterpart, the French Community Commission (COCOF), and even the Flemish Community (VG) or the French Community, now called the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (FW-B). Lastly, with Charleroi Danse, Molenbeek also houses one of the two headquarters of the FW-B's main dance institution, whose other major 'stage' is in Charleroi.

This institutional diversity is a source of richness, but also of mental, material and cultural divisions and borders that always make collaboration challenging, sometimes impossible, at times simply not a part of the mental horizon. *MolenFest* (September 2024), organised by MB2030, KANAL and MCCS, with a coalition of Molenbeek partners and as part of the ECOC candidacy, is a first exercise in bringing dozens of partners together for forms of institutional and cultural exchange that simply did not exist before.

Q04_

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

A two-year process of consulting and co-creating with thousands of youths from Molenbeek and the BCR – organised in the framework of *Speak Up* and the *Youth Coalition* and resulting in a rich and dense *Youth Manifesto* – defined the **four central themes of our project: equality and social justice; superdiversity, multilingualism; the return of water and nature to our city; and safe, brave and free spaces that allow everyone to flourish in the future.** The programme is structured along these four themes under the poetic names: Equality Machine; Creole Europe; Wild at Heart; and European Space to Embrace. Given that the transition to a more sustainable society starts with a *change of culture*, MB2030 is committed to finding clues for this change in the everyday reality of the least privileged and their cultural roots, magical modes of survival and secret codes of resilience.

We plan to set up four Seasons that will be a combination of themes, and always with one central lighthouse event or happening: the launching of the *Home of European Sadaka*, the *Euro-Season of the New Us*, the *WildWaterWadi* of the human and non-human, and *Safe and Brave Parades and Ceremonies* for a common future.

For all these projects we start from a 2 + 1 basis: two Molenbeek partners + at least one BCR partner. For all these projects we also include a partner from other transit cities in Europe or connect to international cultural hubs that Molenbeek is intimately linked to.

All major projects are imagined with a legacy that is not necessarily a new building. For the *Home of European Sadaka*, we want to reclaim an existing building; the *Euro-Season of the New Us* needs to become a new European and live rendez-vous at the end of summer, when a new cultural year begins, combining the scale, quality and outreach of the Dream City Festival in Tunis with that of documenta fifteen; *WildWaterWadi* involves more unpacking and revealing than new construction; and *Safe and Brave Parades and Ceremonies* are about creating shared public spaces. All will have an immaterial legacy and a life beyond 2030.

Besides being as much of a zero-emission event in itself (see Q08), MB2030 ECOC aspires to become exemplary in tackling the challenges of a socially just and integrated transition towards a new zero-net normal. Yet rather than enforce incompatible solutions on people who do not have the luxury of dedicating time and thought to a distant future, we want to research the strengths and hidden treasures of their everyday reality in relation to the questions of sustainable living.

With the desire to add and produce more long-term Sadaka, out of Molenbeek, and with solid and long-term European and international partners, leading to a creative European renaissance, we have built a rich and transformative cultural programme that aims to involve a maximum of Molenbeek residents, cultural structures and artists.

It is important to emphasise that all of this has already been piloted and experimented with on several occasions and in various contexts. All these preparations are the backbone of this application. *Speak Up* and the *Youth Coalition* have been ongoing, three Summer and Spring Assemblies in 2022, 2023 and 2024 have boosted Molenbeek's appetite, as will the first edition of the *MolenFest* in September 2024. All of these activities will gain in strength and European connections from 2025 through 2029 and come to full blossom in 2030.

1. Contribution to the long-term strategy

Q05_

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

We could say, bluntly, that there is no overarching cultural strategy in Molenbeek. A much more nuanced approach, however, would be to say that there are four different 'agents' at work on the territory of Molenbeek with concurring cultural strategies.

First, Molenbeek, which, unlike the 18 other municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR), did not outsource culture. The city has two 'associates' to the mayor, responsible for culture, one Francophone and one Flemish. It runs a hands-on policy via the House of Cultures and Social Cohesion (MCCS), prioritising creative participation and intercultural dialogue.

Then, there is the Flemish Community Commission (VGC) and the French Community Commission (COCOF), with exclusive jurisdiction over cultural and linguistic

matters; each has its own strategy: the VGC has the Integrated Cultural Policy Plan (2020–25), the COCOF the Cultural Plan for Brussels (2013). Lastly, the BCR, through its competences related to the international role of Brussels, the overall image of the region, its urban planning and, therefore, its public space. The result of all this: fragmented cultural policies and funding mechanisms.

The Molenbeek council approved the VGC Integrated Cultural Policy Plan (2020–25) for Molenbeek, which is based on a large number of interviews with citizens, workers, associations and civil society. Further, Molenbeek developed the official policy document *Future Vision: Molenbeek 2050*, which aims to transform Molenbeek into a regional artistic and cultural base and which provides long-term guarantees that this policy objective will extend beyond 2030, for the decades to come. MB2030 mitigates this cultural policy fragmentation, and we integrate the policy priorities of these plans into a converging formula:

Priority 1: Strengthening encounters in local cultural spaces

The aim is for every individual, regardless of origin, gender, social condition, sexual orientation, abled or disabled to feel welcome in local cultural spaces. By relying on cultural centres, libraries and other existing structures, we want to create 'safe spaces' where everyone can express themselves and actively participate in the cultural and artistic life. These spaces are designed to be inclusive environments where diversity is celebrated and where cultural and artistic activities can bring people together, fostering greater social cohesion in Molenbeek. The purpose is to ensure that these spaces are accessible and welcoming to all community members, providing opportunities for interaction, learning and collaboration. The belief is that by nurturing an atmosphere of respect and openness, barriers can be broken down and stronger, more connected communities can be built. Also, by programming events that reflect the diverse cultures and interests of Molenbeek's residents, this will ensure that everyone feels represented and valued in the municipality's cultural landscape.

Priority 2: A creative Molenbeek, home to a wide diversity of artists and cultural actors

The aim is to actively support artists from various cultural backgrounds, disciplines and artistic traditions. By supporting a wide range of voices and perspectives, the cultural tapestry of Molenbeek is enriched and mutual understanding among different communities is fostered. Through collaborative projects, exhibitions,

performances and workshops, opportunities are created for artists and the public to engage in meaningful conversations and cultural exchanges. Resources are provided mainly through reliable cultural centre partners, offering vacant industrial spaces through Urban Renovation Contracts (BCR) and support for artists to explore new ideas and creative processes. This includes offering financial support through subsidies (VGC, COCOF, FW-B and VG), residencies, and access to spaces where artists can experiment and develop their work. Support for cultural projects is integrated with broader efforts to promote sustainability, including using environmentally friendly materials, supporting projects that address social and environmental issues, and encouraging practices that contribute to the long-term well-being of communities. *Future Vision: Molenbeek 2050* outlines plans to enhance the infrastructure and resources available to artists. This includes developing dedicated art spaces, improving access to cultural venues, and creating a vibrant network of artists and cultural institutions.

Priority 3: Sustainably strengthening the network of local and regional cultural actors

Efforts are made to encourage overcoming cultural and linguistic divides and to strengthen collaborations between French and Flemish community institutions and the diverse communities settled in Molenbeek and the BCR areas. For instance, the *Molenlight Festival* exemplifies this effort by creating a participative and dynamic festival with Flemish and Francophone official partners and inhabitants. Additionally, a project manager position was created at the MCCA in 2022, specifically tasked with rebuilding and reinforcing ties with local associations

and cultural actors in Molenbeek, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Q07_ How is the European Capital of Culture action included in this strategy?

MB2030 offers Molenbeek and the 18 other municipalities in the BCR a shared vehicle to deliver their separate cultural-policy priorities. Four different policy levels cannot achieve their goals separately. All current policies are incomplete, all policy levels and their institutions lack the delivery capacity to properly and fully implement them. Integrating them would imply making these four 'agents' and their strategies on the territory resonate and work together. They would need to speak together, to define goals and make their strategies converge. This is politically challenging if not impossible. So, we are doing the work for them: they gave a mandate to MB2030 to be a space for experimentation of new inclusive work methods, bringing diverse institutional actors and grassroots associations together. If we can work it out in Molenbeek, we can make it work anywhere.

As a first step, we inject the priorities with visionary artistic innovation and connect them to the urgencies of other Molenbeeks in Europe and beyond. For **Priority 1** we shift from cultural infrastructure to safe and brave public spaces, where artistic and cultural gestures are introduced to citizens. Encounters are staged between people and cultures whose paths sometimes cross but hardly ever really meet. For **Priority 2** we connect international to local talent and offer temporary and permanent artistic workspaces, without further alienating vulnerable populations at

risk of gentrification. For **priority 3**, we enhance collaboration across communities, municipalities and policymaking levels to overcome fragmentation, while connecting the local reality to the wider European and global realities it is a part of. As a next step, we provide the three priorities with six actionable goals:

Goal 1: Beyond Communities: Redeveloping the Molenbeek-BCR cultural ecosystem from fragmentation to integration, producing a superdiverse, hybrid culture across policy, institutions, languages, communities

MB2030's objective will be to accompany and strengthen cultural practices that promote encounter, exchange and co-production that fundamentally transcend community boundaries: we will make sure that urban life, characterised by inherent superdiversity, is better reflected in cultural production and the policies and funding supporting it. We adhere to the legacy of the Brussels Arts Network (RAB/BKO) of producing and promoting a BCR cultural policy. Our objective is to be a co-author of a next cultural plan for the BCR. This new plan should embody the transformation of the BCR as a bi-communitarian city in 2000, to the new reality of a superdiverse city without a dominant majority. We will create facts on the ground and work closely with all levels of policy, constantly challenging them to think and act out of the silo.

Goal 2: Crossing Bridges: Moving society from tribal dynamics to cross-cultural and intergenerational sense of community

Giving value to communities and their cultural expressions should not shut them up in their identitarian target groups, whether these groups are of Flemish or African origin, French-speaking or Polish-speaking, young or retired. It should always foster a more cohesive and harmonious Molenbeek and Europe, building a local and transnational 'New Us'. The paradigm shift we want to bring about is a generous gift of transcending community divisions through culture, something that the whole of Europe can benefit from.

Goal 3: Reinventing Third Spaces: Turning public spaces into community-focused markers of visible, celebratory and accessible solidarity

Taking into account the enormous social and cultural fragility of the Molenbeek population, the transformation of public space into a space of cultural activity is a major goal. By inhabiting places which are symbols of diversity and solidarity (markets, schools, elderly care homes), MB2030's cultural programme

will become an omnipresent element of everyday life for Molenbeek's inhabitants, without the constraints of opening hours or entrance fees. Of course, the first step is to foster spaces of encounter in which all individuals, regardless of cultural background, religious belief or sexual orientation, can express themselves. Enforcing cultural democracy and accessibility is essential.

Goal 4: Connecting to New Centres: Towards a European alliance of selfless solidarity

Our goal is to forge new connections with European urban realities that mirror Molenbeek's challenges and strengths – superdiversity, multilingualism, a young population, deindustrialisation and social fragility, territorial exclusion and a shared experience of stigmatisation – in areas of Rotterdam, Timisoara, Berlin, Jenin, London, Malmö, Marseille, Tangiers, Skopje, Kinshasa. Together, while co-producing MB2030, we aim to stimulate new policies and structures to encourage solidarity at local, interregional and transnational levels.

Goal 5: Grassroots Innovation: Cultivating locally sourced social economies and job creation

Working with the Molenbeek-based entrepreneurial, social and civic communities to organically make MB2030 a driver of jobs and resources for local communities instead of an agent for gentrification and cultural displacement (typical of major cities). We build capacity with grassroots social-innovation projects to grow, create new jobs and social connections, and have an impact across the Molenbeeks of Europe.

Goal 6: Practical Resilience: Tackling the socio-economic challenges of a socially just transition towards a new zero-net normal

Engaging with site-specific and economically accessible notions of care, solidarity, access to green space, food and local production, skills and job creation, mobility and shared infrastructure, recycling and circularity. If transition to a more sustainable society starts with a change of culture, MB2030 will commit to finding clues for this change in the everyday reality of the least privileged and their cultural roots, magical modes of survival and secret codes of resilience, before eco-labelling or top-down technological solutions.



Q06_

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

MB2030's goals are supported by a capacity-building programme to strengthen the cultural ecosystem of Molenbeek, so as to be active and impactful at regional and European level. MB2030 pilots a pedagogy in which acts of unlearning and learning-by-doing across cultural tribes are the starting point to cultivate a radical knowledge democracy. Supported by inclusive, green and digital skills, this programme empowers the cultural agents of Europe's new centres to produce superdiverse culture.

Formal educational institutions in the BCR exclude many of the diverse knowledge systems, including those of indigenous people and excluded racialised groups, and those excluded on the basis of gender, class, disabilities or sexuality. These realities are mirrored in many new centres like Molenbeek, across Europe and the world. MB2030 promotes a knowledge democracy for cultural practitioners. As part of this, institutions, policymakers, independent actors and audiences will acknowledge the equal importance of multiple knowledge systems: organic, spiritual and land-based, frameworks arising from social movements; and the knowledge of the excluded. This knowledge democracy is started by SKILL GIVING, a Molenbeek-started, European-connected platform for informal and formal learning designed by, with and for cultural agents of the European new centres, and contributing to goals, 1, 4, 5 and 6.

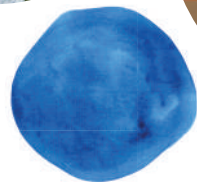
The platform will prioritise the development of three groups of skills:

- * **CROSS-CULTURAL LEARNING:** Skills to produce superdiverse culture which is more than the sum of linguistic and sociocultural parts: new hybrid forms that connect French-speaking, Dutch-speaking, English-speaking, Arabic-speaking and other sociocultural communities into a common collective;
- * **UNLEARNING:** Skills to produce culture in collaboration with social partners (schools, hospitals, non-profits), so as to open cultural and social work to other knowledge systems which improve well-being;
- * **LEARNING BY DOING:** Skills to produce culture in collaboration with entrepreneurial and innovation partners (incubators, businesses, R&D), so as to open cultural and innovation work to informal and DIY business models which improve economic dynamics and the local economy.

The learning mechanism involves people selflessly giving their time, presence and knowledge to work and learn together. SKILL GIVING is divided into three sub-programmes: SPACE GIVING, PRESENCE GIVING, KNOWLEDGE GIVING. Each of these, developed in collaboration with local cultural agents with the involvement of youths and with educational/business/social partners, will design three hybrid training modules that are self-contained, but can be shared further via peer-learning and study-circle activities. Each of the sub-programmes includes the sharing of good practices on inclusion (including language), green and digital practices.

SKILL GIVING is delivered by the *Unlearning Academy* (from our artistic programme, more in Chapter 2) and will offer practical modules directly connected to MB2030 pilots and preparations, which directly feed into the artistic programme. The learning platform is being piloted in collaboration with ICHEC Brussels Management School, within the framework of a European Centre of Vocational Excellence training ecosystem funded by Erasmus+ (funding decision pending). The framework is tailor-made for ECOC-related capacity-building programmes and coordinated by Materahub, involving actors connected to Matera-Basilicata 2019, Kosice 2013, Oulu 2026, Évora 2027, Bourges 2028 and candidate Uppsala 2029 (besides candidate MB2030).

SKILL GIVING will transition into a legacy capacity-building programme for superdiverse cultural production. It will be managed at European level by MB2030's



legacy foundation in collaboration with ICHEC and the New Centres Observatory (NCO), which will implement the monitoring and evaluation plan (see Q8 and Q9 below).

Q08_

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

MB2030 is a tremendous opportunity to overcome and offer alternatives to divisions that weaken and threaten a strong and united 'Molenbeek Us' and 'European Us' in the future. Artistic and cultural creation as envisioned by MB2030, inclusive and transversal, produces real leverage and transformative power to reinforce exchange, collaboration and cultural and social cohesion in Molenbeek and Europe. We aim for that process to contribute to the following long-term impacts: see table on next pages.

Q09_

Outline briefly the plans you will put in place for monitoring your progress in preparing and implementing your title-year and for evaluating the impact of the latter.

MB2030 will rely on a new constellation of strategic partners to deliver the monitoring and evaluation plan: ULB – Free University of Brussels (ULB), VUB – Free University of Brussels (VUB), Brussels Studies Institute, Brussels Academy, and Molenbeek-based experts on impact assessment for non-profits *Maakt Beter!* These partners have collaborated on the citizen participation process at the root of the application (Summer Assemblies of 2022, 2023 and Spring Assembly of 2024) and will continue their work on scientific knowledge-sharing to have an impact in Molenbeek and Europe.

Creation of the New Centres Observatory (NCO)

This constellation, in collaboration with MB2030, will create an independent observatory, named NCO, to analyse and evaluate the urban transformation, social dynamics, economic and cultural impacts generated by the ECOC process from 2025 to 2035. It will be transdisciplinary and multilingual, integrating academic and field expertise to understand the ECOC's impacts in Molenbeek and at various scales ranging from the local to the European level, and establishing interfaces with

the transnational research and impact communities. In practice, when a project is co-produced by MB2030 and its European partners, monitoring and measurement are replicated across locations. The NCO will follow the Guidelines established by the European Commission for the evaluation of ECOC cities, work in close cooperation and will be coordinated with a designated individual from the ECOC team. We will also take into account the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The NCO's research will integrate quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure an integrated understanding of the transformation processes while making the research inclusive, participatory and capable of capturing the complex dynamics of transformation. Quantitative research will involve the systematic collection and analysis of data, while key methods will include surveys and questionnaires, statistical analysis and digital data collection. Qualitative research will provide in-depth insights into the experiences, attitudes and perceptions of individuals and communities, including focus groups, interviews and different studies. An innovative approach of the NCO will be the application of citizen science and participatory/volunteer monitoring mechanisms in its methodology. Public volunteers will help to collect and classify data through community workshops, storytelling, digital platforms and different feedback mechanisms. Local citizens will also be able to initiate projects researching areas of interest in their own communities, following the NCO's ethical and scientific protocols. By working closely with researchers, experts and local actors, the NCO will serve as a platform for exchange and reflection and can serve as a model on a European scale.

Additionally, the NCO will provide base case and interim analyses throughout its period of operation, allowing for adjustments to be made to the project to ensure the achievement of the set objectives. This continuous monitoring will take into account machine learning, natural language processing and computer vision as tools for social impact measurement. In collaboration with local IT partners, we will specify mechanisms for data processing; insight generation and visualisation will be augmented by technology, always considering ethical and environmental challenges.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the New Centres Observatory (NCO)

What Will We Monitor?

The NCO aims to measure the impact of the ECOC initiative through a variety of KPIs focused on social inclusion, cultural engagement, economic benefits and sustainable urban transformation.

	Goals	Desired impact of MB2030	Indicative indicators	Groups of data sources
CULTURAL IMPACT	Goal 1: Beyond Communities	Increase production of new hybrid cultural forms in Molenbeek and Europe	- no. of cross-cultural, multilingual artistic events - no. of non-professional residents performing - % of cast in cultural events of different socio-demographic profiles - no. of languages used in cultural programmes/information - feedback from different communities regarding their sense of representation in the events - no. of participants of SKILL GIVING capacity-building activities	MB2030, partnering organisations and communities, cultural organisations, residents, audience, European partners
	Redeveloping the Molenbeek-BCR cultural ecosystem from fragmentation to integration, producing a superdiverse, hybrid culture across policy, institutions, languages, communities	Widen cross-cultural access to and participation in culture in Molenbeek and Europe	- % of residents who actively participated in ECOC events - no. of events designed to boost participation - feedback from different communities regarding their sense of inclusion and participation in ECOC - no. of volunteers	MB2030, partnering organisations and communities, residents, European partners
		Develop a superdiverse cultural policy for the Brussels-Capital Region	- no. of new cultural policies and structures adopted as a result of ECOC - degree of participation of the BCR and the municipalities in the development of new policies - no. of institutional/political partners adopting new policy - no. of Brussels Arts Network members implementing new policies in their activity - degree of newly developed policies that reflect hybrid cultural integration across different levels of governance	MB2030, cultural organisations, regional and municipal bodies
SOCIAL IMPACT	Goal 2: Crossing Bridges	Decrease socio-spatial division within Molenbeek as well as between Molenbeek and the BCR	- no. of new cultural projects spanning the regional area - monitoring funding allocated for cultural activity to local beneficiaries across the BCR and their spatial distribution - % of citizens travelling to Molenbeek for participation in cultural events - % of Molenbeek citizens travelling across the BCR for participation in cultural events	MB2030, cultural organisations, artists and creatives, residents, audience
	Moving society from tribal dynamics to cross-cultural and intergenerational sense of community	Strengthen the cosmopolitan identity and sense of belonging of citizens in Molenbeek and other Molenbeeks of Europe	- % of participants in cultural events from different socio-demographic profiles - residents' feelings of inclusivity and community-belonging - longitudinal studies tracking self-reported inclusion and identity	MB2030, residents, audience, European partners
		Increase social inclusivity and cultural awareness between cultural communities in Molenbeek and Europe	- residents' understanding and appreciation of local cultures other than their own - no. of new initiatives and projects aimed at promoting cross-cultural awareness	MB2030, residents, audience, European partners

	Goals	Desired impact of MB2030	Indicative indicators	Groups of data sources
URBAN IMPACT	Goal 3: Reinventing Third Spaces	Transform public spaces into spaces for inclusive cultural activity	- no. of transformed public spaces - no. of cultural events held in transformed public space - qualitative data on residents' perceptions of public spaces before and after transformation - residents' feedback on the use of public space	MB2030, cultural organisations, residents, regional and municipal bodies
	Turning public spaces into community-focused markers of visible, celebratory and accessible solidarity	Improve accessibility and inclusivity of public spaces	- % of users of transformed public spaces from invisibilised groups, youth, queer, disabled. - % of active participants in ECOC events from invisibilised groups, youth, queer, disabled. - no. of events made accessible (general and special needs) - feedback from invisibilised groups, youth, queer, disabled. Regarding their sense of inclusion and participation in ECOC	MB2030, cultural organisations, audience (invisibilised groups)
		Enhance the sense of inclusive safety in public spaces	- % of variation in public safety complaints in transformed public spaces - feedback from audiences regarding their sense of safety in transformed public spaces	MB2030, residents, audience, institutional security forces
EUROPEAN IMPACT	Goal 4: Connecting New Centres	Create networks of collaboration among artistic and social actors in Molenbeek and its European counterparts	- no. of new transnational cultural collaborations between Molenbeek and European counterparts - no. of collaborations between artists/cultural actors from Molenbeek and European counterparts - no. of European cultural themes and artists in local programmes - degree of participation in European cultural networks by Molenbeek cultural agents	MB2030, partner organisations and communities, cultural organisations, residents, audience, European partners
	Towards a European Alliance of Selfless Solidarity stimulating innovative policies and structures that foster local, interregional and continental collaboration	Engage more citizens in more solidarity activity at local and international level	- no. of participants in volunteering exchange programmes associated with the ECOC action - demographic diversity of participants in volunteering exchange programmes associated with the ECOC action - qualitative data on learners' perceptions of their knowledge and skills improvement from volunteering exchange programmes	MB2030, partner organisations and communities, cultural organisations, residents, audience, European partners
		Develop innovation in solidarity movements in Molenbeek and Europe	- no. of cultural projects focused on solidarity - no. of new cross-sector and interdisciplinary cooperations - no. of new products/ methods/ for solidarity innovation - monitoring solidarity development through citizen science - attendance and engagement in events related to solidarity in Molenbeek and European partners - qualitative data on residents' viewpoints on European and regional matters	MB2030, partner organisations and communities, cultural organisations, residents, audience, European partners

ECONOMIC IMPACT	Goals	Desired impact of MB2030	Indicative indicators	Groups of data sources
	Goal 5: Grassroots Innovation	Develop a sustainable creative hub supporting social entrepreneurship in Molenbeek	- no. of collaborations between cultural organisations and social organisations in Molenbeek - qualitative feedback from cultural & creative professionals on their perception of the creative ecosystem - degree of collaboration - no. of cultural and creative organisations actively participating in ECOC activities	MB2030, cultural organisations, cultural and creative industry professionals,
	Cultivating locally sourced social economies and job creation	Transform industrial heritage into sustainable and inclusive creative and artistic spaces with a higher economic impact on Molenbeek's economy	- no. of newly established workspaces, studios, and cultural organisations in Molenbeek - no. of cultural and creative professionals who remain in Molenbeek for a longer period – pre-/post-ECOC - overall economic impact of Cultural and Creative Industry (CCI) sector on the local economy – pre-/post-ECOC - no. of alternative revenue streams for cultural and creative professionals – pre-/post-ECOC	MB2030, cultural organisations, cultural and creative industry professionals
		Create new job and learning opportunities in the cultural and creative industries for young Molenbeek residents, at local and international level	- no. of new jobs in the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) - no. of artists/organisations participating in exchange programmes within the BCR and Europe - no. of new capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and mobility opportunities for cultural and creative professionals - demographic diversity of participants in capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and mobility - no. of public cultural knowledge-sharing events - qualitative data on participants' perceptions of their knowledge and skills improvement	MB2030, cultural organisations, cultural and creative industry professionals
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT	Goal 6: Practical Resilience	Develop a zero-emission and zero-waste policy that focuses on the use of local resources (both material and human) and a balanced use of digital media	- no. of new policies/charters related to socially just environmental practices developed for the ECOC - no. of local and European partners adhering to the new policies	MB2030, partner organisations and communities, cultural organisations, European partners
	Tackling the challenges of a socially just transition towards a new zero-net normal	Implement practical initiatives for environmental contributions for economically disadvantaged groups in Molenbeek and Europe, by making better use of alternative knowledge systems	- no. of local initiatives related to energy efficiency, circularity, water-saving implemented - no. of educational events about different knowledge systems related to environmental practices - no. of residents actively engaged in commoning (events and initiatives starting from the concept of the commons) - qualitative data on participants' perceptions of their environmental contribution	MB2030, partnering organisations and communities, residents, audience
		Promote a change of culture among Molenbeek and European citizens about shared responsibilities for sustainable care of the public space and common resources	- no. of events labelled as ESG (Environmental, social & governance) or LEF (Local, ecological, fair-trade) - feedback from event audiences regarding their sense of responsibility for shared environmental resources	MB2030, partner organisations and communities, cultural organisations, residents, audience, European partners



2_Cultural and artistic content

Q10_

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

In 2030, four thematic or topical Sadaka Seasons will allow Molenbeek's residents, artists, visitors and economic and political partners to co-create, offer to and share with Europeans from similar and other backgrounds, its generous gifts. Preparations are under way and will continue through 2025 to 2029. Artistic and cultural projects and ideas are being produced that are directly related to our four topics: equality and social justice, superdiversity and multilingualism, the return of nature and water in our city, and safe, brave and free spaces. How can our continent, out of its Molenbeeks, become a shared space and territory of greater generosity and

solidarity? How can all of us Europeans be better equipped to face the challenges and transitions of the future, thanks to the creative and young energies and dynamics that Molenbeek, and its partner cities across Europe and beyond, will prepare for us in 2030? How can the following actions contribute to this: inclusive circus performances that turn Molenbeek's parks and squares into accessible cultural spaces for all; or a *Home of European Sadaka* that offers concrete propositions for living together with our differences, in European cities where people do not share a common past; or cultural and civic initiatives that make our rivers, valleys and natural infrastructure visible again and transform them into shared cultural infrastructure; or *Safe and Brave Parades and Ceremonies* that make our public spaces inclusive and safe? In short, how can all these projects and processes contribute to a generous and selfless Europe, and to a more equal future for all, humans and non-humans?

This is our challenge: to generously embrace Europe with propositions for a better European future in which Molenbeek and its young creatives take the lead.

Four Sadaka Seasons will be like festivals of solidarity and selflessness to all our visitors: the **Equality Machine** with the opening of the *Home of European Sadaka*; **Creole Europe** with the *Euro-Season of the New Us*; **Wild at Heart** with the launch of the *WildWaterWadi*; and **European Space to Embrace** with co-created *Safe and Brave Parades and Ceremonies* in the public spaces of Molenbeek and Europe. Of course, this will involve a degree of transversality: all these projects, whether material or immaterial, will have a long-term impact on the entire year of 2030 and beyond. The four Seasons will be complemented by the 'quinzaines' or fortnights in the other BCR municipalities. And by the Festivals in our Walloon and Flemish partner cities, Charleroi and potentially Mechelen.

In terms of values and principles, the cultural strategy of MB2030 centres on the following pillars: a new synthesis of, rather than an opposition between, artistic excellence and broad citizen involvement and empowerment; topical and thematic work at the service of the mental and material transformation of Molenbeek and Europe; going from an in-depth local anchoring towards concentric circles that include the BCR, Flemish and Walloon partnerships, a rich European dimension and, last but not least, connections with international cities that are intimately linked

to Molenbeek through its superdiverse population. Finally, a bottom-up approach very much anchored in Molenbeek and complemented by a clear artistic direction (that is not collective) and collaborations with loyal institutions from the BCR, Europe and beyond:

KANAL – Centre Pompidou (KANAL), CIVA – Architecture, Landscape, Urbanism Brussels (CIVA), the Opera House De Munt/La Monnaie, Flagey, the Royal Flemish Theatre (KVS), the Théâtre National Wallonie-Bruxelles, the Kaaaitheater, Les Halles de Schaerbeek, the Avignon Festival, the Dream City Festival in Tunis, the Alcantara Festival in Portugal, among others.

Once again, solidarity, generosity, empathy, selflessness – and, through them, the reinforcement of a 'New Molenbeek and European Us' – are at the heart of our vision and strategy: bringing together artistic, cultural and civic energies that remain extremely fragmented in Molenbeek and Europe; linking new dynamic centres like Molenbeek and its partners with the old and tired capitals of Europe, through shared spaces and times of Sadaka; combining a bottom-up approach with a clear organigram and decision-making processes; and building coalitions between the key operators of Molenbeek, such as the House of Cultures and Social Cohesion (MCCS), the Vaartkapoen (VK), the Circus structures, Cinemaximiliaan, Charleroi Danse or the MigratieMuseumMigration (MMM), and European reference institutions. These coalitions will reinforce our capacity to deliver while also allowing all partners to be revitalised and re-energised by the young, superdiverse and creative forces of Molenbeek and its European partner cities.

Long-term processes with regional and European impact are our basis. Therefore, we have made sure that the foundations of the cultural programme of MB2030 are being laid right away. In fact, the first steps were taken in the summer of 2022 thanks to our first Summer Assembly, with MB2030 providing support for several artists and cultural players that now figure in our culture programme: Molenbeek-based artists like Seppe Baeyens and partners for the projects connected to our theme European Space to Embrace, such as Park Poetik. Obviously, the first edition of our *MolenFest* – the precursor of the *Euro-Season of the New Us*, which includes collaborations with Serge Aimé Coulibaly, the Zinneke Parade, or key cultural partners such as MCCS, Charleroi Danse, VK and KANAL – is also a crucial step towards 2030.

Four categories of projects have emerged:

- * Through what we call our **MILL** projects, we aim for large-scale, co-created and sustainable additions to the cultural, institutional and infrastructural landscape of Molenbeek and its surrounding region.
- * The **BRIDGE** projects will be artist-driven and will produce empowering, inclusive and high-quality cultural processes. On an equal basis, they will bring together very different partners from Molenbeek, the BCR and Europe, which so far have remained separated by all sorts of mental and physical 'frontiers' which remain all too real. They will now commit to working together for the long term in the framework of MB2030: two partners from Molenbeek, at least one from Belgium, and several European partners.
- * **BROOK** projects will produce multi-annual cultural dynamics related to our four themes, in which groups of citizens initiate, define and produce themselves the contours, objectives and methodology of projects.
- * Finally, through our **VALLEYS** and their open calls (both local and European) and protocols, we will open up our cultural programme to a wide diversity of partners and initiatives, in tune with our four themes, and to our overall concept of superdiverse and systemic solidarity, from the Molenbeeks of Europe, to the entire continent and its capitals, in need of fresh ideas and practices.

All MILLS and several BRIDGES and BROOKS are in preparation and will be developed from 2025 on-

ward. We have first and partial commitments from political and cultural partners that could allow us to develop them over the next five years and bring them to full blossom in 2030. *The Home of European Sadaka*, the *Euro-Season of the New Us*, the *WildWaterWadi*, *Chaussée Unique* by Thomas Bellinck, *Girls Make the City*: these new dynamics would never have existed without the preparatory work of the past two years. They will be further developed, strengthened and added to between 2025 and 2030, with key annual activities.

Methodologically, the key choices, pathways and partners are in place. Our entire cultural programme, processes and partnerships will start from and firmly propose protocols that will have a substantial long-term and in-depth impact on 'how' projects are constructed, developed and produced and also on 'what' their outcomes will be. These protocols will be detailed or formalised for the second bidbook, but they have started to be developed for every preparation or past activity of MB2030. For MB2030 it is crucial that all of our projects are sustainable, apply circular economy and zero-waste policies, are inclusive and accessible and have a digital dimension.

Sustainability is crucial to our methodology, but will also determine our content. Reducing the carbon



MOLEN = MILL
BEEK = BROOK

footprint of our projects as much as possible, going for a zero-waste production policy, and achieving all this without putting extra pressures and demands on local Molenbeek populations, but rather mobilising them on the basis of their own cultural knowledge and traditions: these are non-negotiable goals for which we will work together with Molenbeek and BCR structures like the Brussels Arts Network (RAB/BKO) and especially those concerned with culture and sustainability, like PULSE and EventChange.

Naturally, we are also engaged in a permanent collaboration with Architecture Workroom Brussels (AWB), for the *WildWaterWadi* and its Settlements of the Future. Closely connected to sustainability is the practice of circular economy. No credible zero-waste policy without concrete partners and collaborations for practices inscribed in models of circular economy. Partners such as Recyclart (production), In Limbo (recycling), and Cassonade (food) are experts in this field. Based in Molenbeek, they are directly connected to local populations and their practices and will be the production engines of our entire cultural programme. Such is already the case for the first edition of our *MolenFest* in September 2024, a precursor of our *Euro-Season of the New US*.

The digital dimension prioritizes high-quality multimedia creation for channels where people already are and sharing free software and digital skills with wider society as part of the MB2030 projects, exemplified in all MILL projects and *Real Rebel Internetworking*. For an in-depth discussion of the inclusive and accessible dimensions of our project we refer to Q18 and Q19.

Q11_

Give a general overview of the structure of your cultural programme including the range and diversity of the activities/main events that will mark the year.

A. THE EQUALITY MACHINE

A. MILL

Home of European Sadaka

Europe's new centre for a culture of solidarity, offering exhibition spaces, stages and artist workshops alongside micro-housing for the unhoused and the undocumented, or a social restaurant which also trains persons Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEETs) on circular economy models. The Home's weekly programme of cultural activities turns empty buildings such as the Church of Saint-Rémi and the Institut Imelda into a home where we can share our narratives of creative Sadaka and self-organise collective imaginaries up for redefinition by anyone who is at home. Inspired by such short-term occupations as Grands Voisins in Paris and Coco Velten in Marseille, the Home organises long-term and large-scale civic and cultural cohabitation and co-creation between precarious, cultural, environmental and entrepreneurial communities. It invites creators from across Europe to use and recreate the space for exhibitions, performances and workshops, and it encourages all Europeans who visit or stay to share their acts of creative Sadaka with the co-residents. After 2030, the *Home of European Sadaka* will become a prototype for large-scale and semi-permanent co-occupations by artistic and social movements, inspiring new locations

across European cities, and connecting European cultural solidarity movements. *Home of European Sadaka* includes:

1001 Flying Carpets: a participatory, popular and large-scale performance using scenographic carpets as temporary hospitality rooms. Carpets on sidewalks, in parks, on rooftops, trains, smartphones or at the European Parliament become shared discussion spaces hosted by artists, citizens, associations and social actors selected by means of a transnational call. All may receive and welcome others for small acts of culture and solidarity like sharing a poem or a meal, as the carpets migrate through the streets of Molenbeek, the BCR and European cities. The journey of the *1001 Flying Carpets* is followed internationally on social media and activates solidarity-driven fundraising campaigns to give selflessly to some of Europe's most urgent social causes.

European Conference on Radical Housing: an international community gathering and conference addressing the 'European Year against Homelessness'. Hosted at the *Home of European Sadaka* by academic and social partners from all over Europe – Molenbeek, VUB – Free University of Brussels (VUB), ULB – Free University of Brussels (ULB), the Foyer, the BCR and EU institutions –, it will be a learning, networking and advocacy event dedicated to a European discussion on the notions of public and social housing, and of common domestic and cultural space.

Molenbeek co-producers: Communa, Cinemaximiliaan, Espirito Mundo, Recyclart, Ultima Vez, Smoners

Partners in Belgium: Globe Aroma, KANAL, Job Dignity, Syndicat des immenses, RAB/BKO

European & international collaborations: Yes We Camp (Marseille), Plateau Urbain, Coop Eskemm (FR), Free Riga (LT), Alte Mu (DE), L'Asilo (IT), Stad In De Maak (NL), Institut For (X) (DK), Espacio Open (ES), Larnaca's People Museum (CY), Nikšić 2030 (ME) and Social Temporary Use Network (EU), Ufa Fabrik (DE), Bitamine Kultur Elkartea (ES), Fábrica do Braço de Prata (PT), Xarkis (CY), TEH (EU)

B. BRIDGES

New Repertoire of Solidarity & Generosity

The new urban centres of Europe will bring to life, both on the page and on the stage, a series of new and reimagined classics of European urban drama. What if Sophocles' Antigone, Shakespeare's Hamlet and Brecht's Mother Courage were young people living in the superdiverse suburbs of European capitals? Drawing on, for instance, *A Jihad for Love* by Mohamed El Bachiri and David Van Reybrouck, and on *Antigone from Molenbeek* by Stefan Hertmans, a transnational group of artists will create a repertoire encouraging a common imaginary of contemporary life in urban Europe. Yearly and from 2026 to 2029, a network of theatrical and literary partners will commission and co-produce new and reimagined classics of European theatre to reflect on the immaterial heritages of post-industrial Europe: one in Molenbeek, two in Europe, and one outside of Europe each year. They will premiere in Molenbeek before touring Europe. The texts and performances are co-devised and performed with young inhabitants of the Molenbeeks of Europe as co-creators. Their stories of love, solidarity and despair join an online and open archive of European urban mythology, where the new archetypes of hero or martyr are found.

Molenbeek co-producers: *Ras El Hanout, Needcompany*

Partners in Belgium: *KVS, La Bellone, International house of literature Passa Porta, Mechelen, Charleroi, Moussem*

European & international collaborations: *City of Malmö (SE), Centre for Cultural Decontamination (RS), Freedom Theatre Jenin (PS), Collectif d'Art-d'Art Kinshasa (RDC), Companhia Teatro Almada (PT), Makedonski centar ITI/PRODUKCIJA (MK), Heimathafen Neukölln (DE), IETM (EU)*

European Gallery of Social Justice

A series of large-scale topical exhibitions on social justice, human rights and migration, problematising the history and future of (in)equality in European societies: 'Right? By Banu Cennetoglu, on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights', 'Project a Black Planet: The Art and Culture of Panafrica' and 'Realism and Social Justice' are examples of exhibitions in progress. Co-produced by KANAL and other European museums featuring international groups of artists, it will connect satellite exhibitions spread across co-production partners. Each exhibition is anchored in a long-term trajectory of public mediation in Molenbeek and other European cities, engaging local young citizens as co-creators of the exhibitions' associated programme of talks and workshops, showcasing their own concerns about social justice today. The exhibitions are documented and extend beyond 2030 through a multi-platform social media presence dedicated to depictions and discussions of social justice in the history of art.

Molenbeek co-producers: *MMM, Cinemaximiliaan, MCCA*

Partners in Belgium: *KANAL*

European & international collaborations: *Centre Pompidou (FR), Malmö Konsthall (SE), Jacksons Lane (UK), MACBA — Barcelona (ES), Kunsthal Rotterdam (NL), MAC/CCB (PT), Mahal Art Space (MO), Museum of Modern Art Warsaw (PL), Contemporary Art Museum Madre (IT), Arbeitskreis Kommunale Galerien Berlin (DE), Valetta Contemporary (MT)*

Europe's Invisible Workforces

'The people who move us' are the workforce of the Brussels Intercommunal Transport Company (STIB-MIVB) and of other public transport companies of European cities. The invisible stories of these heroes of our daily commuting rituals across Europe will be portrayed and brought to life in photography and literature. Photographer Cédric Gerbehaye and writer Caroline Lamarche will work in Molenbeek before moving to other European cities, portraying the drivers, cleaners and mechanics that take us to work and back home every day. The combined results of the Molenbeek and European Invisible Workforces projects will be published in major metro and bus stations in Molenbeek and other European cities. The works will also be part of a multimedia online exhibition advertised in buses and wagons, together with amateur photography sourced from public transport workers themselves, podcasts and talks about the role of public transport in European societies.

Artists: *Cédric Gerbehaye, Caroline Lamarche*

Molenbeek co-producers: *MCCA, City of Molenbeek*

Partners in Belgium: *STIB-MIVB, BCR, City of Brussels*

European & international collaborations: *Garage Campus (DE), Art on the Underground / Transport for London (UK), Berliner Verkehrsbetriebe – BVG (DE), Metropolitana do Napoli SpA (IT), Marseille Metro (FR), Warsaw Metro (PO), Bucharest Metro (RO)*

European Summer Circus Troupe

All seasons of MB2030 will showcase a large-scale contemporary circus spectacle in which new circus artists from Molenbeek and Europe will perform equal-access, fair and radically inclusive indoor and outdoor shows. Molenbeek has one of the highest European densities of circus structures and schools per capita, and from 2026 onwards the city will in-

cubate annual summer circus schools with culturally diverse, professional and non-professional, abled and disabled participants. These schools will form the *European Summer Circus Troupe*, a collaboration between local and European circus schools, inviting performers from across Europe to train and incubate a new performance on the topics of solidarity and generosity. The new creations premiere in Molenbeek and then the transnational troupe travels with their fresh performances across Europe.

Molenbeek co-producers: UP – Circus & Performing Arts, Circus School of Brussels, Circus Without Hands

Partners in Belgium: Les Halles de Schaerbeek

European & international collaborations: Cirkus Syd (SE), JL Circus (UK), Catalan Art (SP), Circusnext – European Circus Label, Incam, Institut Ramon Llull (FR), Caravan Circus Network (EU), Palestinian Circus School Birzeit (PS), European Federation of Professional Circus Schools, Circusstad Festival (NL), Chapitô (PT), Chamaleon (DE), Circostrada (EU)

C. BROOKS

Beautiful Game Tournament

Molenbeek's love of football will be celebrated at Europe's biggest performative football festival. Football fans of all ages will rediscover why they love Europe's own beautiful game while watching or playing a game with three teams competing against each other in a hexagonal pitch or one crossed by streams where players must invent new playing strategies. An international collective of artists will artistically reinterpret the basic rules of the game: 2 teams, 1 field, 1 ball, scoring goals. Artists then direct intergenerational, intercultural and gender-mixed football matches in which all players are performers. Local teams will meet international teams from across Europe selected by means of an open call – from

local girls' teams to the Homeless World Cup stars – and the winner takes it all. After 2030, the tournament will become a regular meeting point for culture and sports diplomacy, promoting active lifestyles in artistic ways in more and new host locations.

Artists: Ahilan Ratnamohan, Mohamed El Khatib

Molenbeek co-producers: RWDM Girls

Partners in Belgium: all famous and lesser-known Brussels football teams

European & international collaborations: ELSINORE 2032 (DK), Fondazione Ermanno Casoli (IT), Donostia Kultura (ES)

Free-Maker Zone FMZ 1080

FMZ 1080 is a transnational, open, discrimination-free area offering facilities for the design, production, manufacture, digital fabrication, warehousing, trading and sharing of superdiverse creativity across disciplines. Local and international curious minds – artists, designers, activists, prosumers, entrepreneurs, makers and investors – cross paths in Molenbeek at a community of development spaces: LaVallée, Cinemaximiliaan, LionCity, Brussels Events Brewery (BEB), Brasserie Vandenheuvel (MB2030's future visitor centre and headquarters). FMZ 1080 animates the community with transnational workshops, events, fairs and trainings, such as a transnational Film School inspired by Molenbeek's own director Nabil Ben Yadir among others; a hip-hop incubator inspired by local hip-hop stars Rival Prohibe (CNN199) and Pitcho (Festival Congolisation); and a Fashion Week initiated by Molenbeek's popular designers Siré Kaba (Erratum Fashion) and Amine Dadda (Timendotes). All FMZ 1080 projects engage European guests as lecturers, are open to European participants, and will continue operating with regular training cycles after 2030, in dialogue with Europe's creative and cultural

industrial-complex to activate creative employment in the Molenbeeks of Europe.

Molenbeek co-producers: MCCA, LaVallée, Cinemaximiliaan, LionCity, BEB, CNN199, 10.80 Films, Erratum Fashion, Timendotes

Partners in Belgium: MAD, Festival Congolisation, all Brussels film festivals, Moussem

European & international collaborations: Espace Julien (FR), Jupiter & Okwess and Plateforme Contemporaine (DRC), Collectif Debo (TN), Uppsala 2029 (SE), Laboratorium (MK), Tartu Centre for Creative Industries (EE), Bouwkeet (NL), STPLN (SE), Largo Residencias (PT), Fablab Neukölln (DE), European Creative Hubs Network (EU), Cinémathèque de Tanger (MA)

Playing the Market

Molenbeek artist and cultural activist Einat Tuchman reinvents the concept of the market in collaboration with artisans, farmers and entrepreneurs from Molenbeek and Europe. Vendors and shoppers will be invited to reinterpret together the idea of the public market, of the commons, of the exchange of goods, commodities, but also knowledge and values, through market-format cultural happenings in different disciplines (performing arts, food, fashion).

Playing the Market establishes a shared space for the production of new, collective, transnational cultural rituals, and for the production of local, circular and crafted economies. Market happenings across Europe will be connected through an online shopping platform and by groups of travelling merchants visiting each other. Molenbeek and Europe will sell themselves to each other, but will themselves creatively define and produce the products, conditions and exchange rates.

Molenbeek co-producers: Marché Bldy, MCCA

Partners in Belgium: KANAL, Kaaitheater

European & international collaborations: Nikšić 2030 (ME)

D. VALLEY

Playground(s)

Europe's inner child is invited to come out and play at a new generation of artist-initiated and semi-public playgrounds. These are co-designed with children in unexpected coalitions (with, for example, a boxing club, queer association or university for seniors). A transnational open call will be launched by MB2030 between 2026 and 2030 asking for: European creators to co-create safe spaces for cross-cultural conflict through play in Molenbeek and the BCR; and for other European public and private cultural agents to multiply the model in their own country, generating a European route of inclusive site-eccentric playgrounds for big and small.

Molenbeek co-producers: MB2030

Partners in Belgium: KANAL, CIVA, BCR: Anderlecht, Auderghem, Berchem-Sainte-Agathe, City of Brussels, Etterbeek, Evere, Forest, Ganshoren, Ixelles, Jette, Koekelberg, Saint-Gilles, Saint-Josse-ten-Noode, Schaerbeek, Uccle, Watermael-Boitsfort, Woluwe-Saint-Lambert, Woluwe-Saint-Pierre
European & international collaborations: Assemble (UK), Les Grands Bains (FR), Växtverket (SE), Eleusis 2023 (EL)

B. CREOLE EUROPE

A. MILL

Euro-Season of the New Us

Molenbeek's new festival for large-scale, contextual, multidisciplinary, co-created artistic creations. The whole city is a stage, every citizen a co-creator. Over six weeks between August and September, Europe's coolest creators will celebrate the past, present and future of Europe as a superdiverse megalopolis and creatively miscegenate our European cultural traditions into a new collective synthesis greater than the sum of its parts.

This festival of European cross-border co-production engages producers, participants and active audiences from across Europe in every single project for hyper-specific premiere performances in Molenbeek co-devised and recreated in new European and global locations in dialogue with their inhabitants according to common protocols: approach a common European challenge related to equality, diversity, nature or freedom; be co-created by European artists of reference, high-quality performers and non-professional participants; invest in public and semi-public spaces and avoid conventional cultural venues; be intergenerational, intercultural and include abled and disabled participants; offer long-term creation periods and combine minimal technical efforts with a minimal carbon footprint.

After 2030, *Euro-Season of the New Us* will become one of Europe's crucial gatherings marrying artistic excellence and social inclusion and, combining the best of Dream City Festival in Tunis (large-scale, co-created), documenta fifteen in Kassel, and Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin (critical global voices), as a multidisciplinary, cross-cultural artistic space for shared discussions on the future of Europe.

Euro-Season of the New Us includes:

Chaussée Unique: A documentary opera for shop windows along the Chaussée de Gand, a centuries-old trade route turned world-renowned shopping street. A fusion of documentary theatre, advertising music and window-dressing, the opera will be spread across shops visited yearly by 20,000 people from Belgium and Europe for affordable intercultural shopping.

Europe, A Few Years Before: an outdoor collective dance performance co-devised with professional dancers, school children from Molenbeek and other European cities, using non-European dance forms and reflecting on our contested heritages as a challenge to common European futures.

Operaï: a monumental music performance between opera and raï, the North African folk music genre, interpreted by professional musicians and Molenbeek residents. The work reconstructs migration stories from the mythical 'return to the homeland' of millions of 'Maghrebi' families for the summer holidays, sketching panoramas of European-Maghrebi relations based on a melancholy archive of pit stops for overloaded cars and songs from radio cassette players.

Mariage: a performative celebration of a pluriversal wedding ceremony. Inspired by the various unique lives of diverse citizens of Molenbeek and Europe. Professional performers, volunteers and passers-by from Molenbeek, Europe and the world will dance together on the themes of mutual commitment and dedication, interpersonal relationships, love and human rights.

As part of the festival's evolution, a 'New Us' space will gradually be created, housed by (some of) the partners of the festival, bringing together material traces and artefacts. It will connect the superdiverse immigration legacy of Molenbeek to the common future of Molenbeek and Europe that the festival aims to contribute to.

Artists: Thomas Bellinck (Brussels), Serge Aimé Coulibaly (Molenbeek), Mohamed El Khatib and Sonia Chiambretto (Paris),

Seppe Baeyens (Molenbeek), Tiago Rodrigues (Avignon), Miet Warlop (Molenbeek), Samaa Wakim (Haifa)
Molenbeek co-producers: *MCCS and VK, all Circus Partners, MIMA and iMAL, Charleroi Danse, Ras El Hanout, MMM, Voyageurs sans Bagages, Cinemaximiliaan, Atelier Leon*
Partners in Belgium: *KANAL, KVS, Théâtre National, Kaaitheater, Les Halles de Schaerbeek, Beursschouwburg, MOUSSEM, Les Nouveaux Disparus, Rideau de Bruxelles, Bozar, Europalia, VUB, ULB, all Flemish Community Centres (N22) and all Francophone Cultural Centres (La Concertation ASBL), Mechelen, Charleroi RAB/BKO, Europalia*
European & international collaborations: *Kiruna 2029 (SE), Alkantara Festival (PT), L'Art Rue (TU), Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles and Institut Français Kinshasa (DRC), TESZT-Timisoara (RO), 48 Stunden Berlin (DE), Bielsko-Biała ECOC 2029 (PL), Avignon Festival (FR), Zomaar op Zuid (Rotterdam, Holland), Emergency Exit Arts (UK), Campania Teatro Festival Napoli (IT), MOT Festival Skopje (SE), Think Tanger (MA), Lieux publics, centre national et pôle européen de création (FR)*

B. BRIDGES

L3X1C0N 0F e_u

An attempt to co-create a digital mirror of tomorrow's superdiverse Europe and a translingual lexicon for cities, continents and territories which are not unified by language, religion or political structures. This twenty-seven-entry new-media installation composes a multimedia database of electronic text, music and image about the 26 letters of the Latin alphabet used in international communication and 1 rotating, randomly selected letter from a Europe-related alphabet (€ from Ukraine, 1 from North Africa). Each screening of the installation is unique, as an algorithm selects and weaves together a unique set of sounds and images which bring together fact and myth to mobilise different understandings of the history and politics of Europe. The multimedia website is augmented by digitally connected exhibitions at

festivals and museums, co-produced on location by European partners, which also work as 'pixel tunnels', with online and in-person workshops where people and machines jointly mine social media and digital heritages of Europeana and other collections. After 2030 and like all dictionaries, the tools will be made open-source for the online community to use in new and local editions.

Artist: *Ho Tzu Nyen*

Molenbeek co-producers: *iMAL, Yume House*

Partners in Belgium: *Les Halles de Schaerbeek*

European & international collaborations: *Creative Industry Kosice (SK), POCHEN biennale (DE), Drugo More (HR), Kiruna 2029 (SE), Prague Art Week (CZ), transmediale Berlin (DE), LEV Gijon (ES), Kulturværfet (DK), In/visible cities Fest Gorizia (IT), Cyens thinker maker space (CY), Patchlab festival (NL), Altart foundation (RO), Liepaja 2027 (LV), Europeana foundation (EU), Europa Nostra (EU), Manchester International Festival (UK)*

New Synthesis Ensembles

An exploratory journey into music as the universal language of humanity, even when estranged from itself. A series of concerts, choral residencies, impromptu performances, bathroom singing and intimately shared mixtapes will share and mix musical heritages across cultures and borders to find how lullabies, dancing and healing songs resonate beyond language. Inspired by intercultural choirs gathering different people and their music traditions, *New Synthesis Ensembles* will unite singers, musicians, composers, both professional and amateur, from Molenbeek, Europe and the world to perform in Molenbeek and tour transnationally. The Ensembles will evolve after 2030 as a pedagogic and discographic project, as new generations in Molenbeek and Europe sing and dance beyond languages, with new

residencies, performances and online musical releases. *New Synthesis Ensembles* includes:

The World Sings in Molenbeek: A coalition of MB2030, VK and other Molenbeek partners will invite key voices from the countries of origin of Molenbeek's diverse communities (Morocco, Romania, Congo, Poland) to come and perform large-scale concerts in Molenbeek.

Molenbeek for Brussels Orchestra: an experimental orchestra for Molenbeek and European professional musical talents to create new genre-bending music letting musical rituals and ceremonies, practices and visions resonate and collide with Europe's superdiverse reality.

Young Song of Europe: a network of Molenbeek and Europe-based international children's choirs will host annual summer residencies in a European city before a large-scale performance engaging local and international performers, with all new creations performed together at the *Euro-Season of the New Us* in 2030. *Young Song* will then continue as a European and international children's choir festival.

Artists: *Fabrizio Cassol, Zeno Popescu*

Molenbeek co-producers: *VK, Singing Molenbeek*

Partners in Belgium: *Equinox, Flagey Academy, Queen*

Elisabeth Music Chapel, De Munt / La Monnaie, Klarafestival, KANAL

European & international collaborations: *Uppsala 2024 (SE),*

La chorale du Lycée Spécial « Iris » de Timisoara (RO), AMWAJJ

Chorus Ramallah (PS), L'Art Rue (TN), WORM (NL), Spitalfields

Music (UK), TODOS festival (PT), A Song for You (DE), Fondation

Camargo (FR), Horkestar (RS), European Choral Association,

Jeunesse Musicales International (EU), Holland Festival (NL)

Lab of European Mixed Realities

A Cultural Centre for Deconstructive Practices to decentre and supercharge Europe's reflection on its

colonial heritages and how they impact structures of power, justice, racism and anti-racism today. A collective space shared by artists, activists, academics, archivists, heritage institutions and decolonial thinkers from across Europe. It offers a multidisciplinary programme co-curated by European experts, with projects such as the Archive of Narratives, an atlas of stories, decolonial

walks and testimonials in contested heritage places, peer learning events for decolonial agents such as the Agora, using indigenous knowledge for conflict solving, or artistic residencies for diaspora creators to create digital alternate realities about an indigenous counter-colonisation of Europe.

Molenbeek co-producers: MMM, Cinemaximiliaan

Partners in Belgium: Studio 29, CIVA, ULB and VUB, KANAL,

WIELS, Bozar, Royal Museum for Central Africa, Café Congo, This is Us. This is Brussels/Wetopia, KANAL

European & international collaborations: City of Malmö (SE), Bielsko-Biala ECOC 2029 (PL), Black Cultural Archives (UK), oca WIEN (AT), FENIX (NL), Palais de la Porte Dorée (FR), Migration Museum (UK), European Observatory on Memories (ES), MUDEC Milano (IT)

C. BROOKS

European and International Public Poets Network

The poetic voice of Europe comes alive on the page and in the throats



as well as on screens, walls and protest signs. Starting with local citizen Lisette Ma Neza, the first Public Poet Brussels for 2024–25, a European network of public poets will be developed. These ‘poets of the people’ are selected in public competitions and commissioned by European cities to create new literary works in verse, exploring different traditional and emerging oral literature forms (limericks vs spoken word) from across Europe. Critical international poets will also be included. They will meet for annual residencies, each time at a different European city, for poetry festivals with readings, workshops and a long-term collaborative poetry project to rewrite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a new poetic treaty of the European peoples, to be inaugurated in 2030 in Molenbeek. After 2030, a new tradition of ECOC laureate poets will be created, with ECOC family cities designating their public poets in a growing line that will give shape to an epic poem of the European Capitals of Culture.

Molenbeek co-producers: MCCA, MMM, Cassonade

Partners in Belgium: KVS, International house of literature Passa Porta

European & international collaborations: Haringey Creates (UK), Nikšić 2030 (ME), Skopje 2028 (MK), City of Kigali (RW), City of Tunis (TN), City of Tangiers (MO), City of Jerusalem (IL/PS), cipm (FR), MoLI (IE)

Superdiversity Kitchen

A series of large-scale, communal meals in Molenbeek, turning the entire city into an open kitchen and food hall. Molenbeek’s food markets will be the starting point for popup and take-over communal dinners where patrons from across Europe, whether EU parliamentarians or migrant labourers, share the table with a stranger, showcasing creolised world cuisines

by local, European and global star chefs. The meals are designed according to 3 types of artistic protocol:

The Long Table of Europe, about long table holiday feasts that reach across Europe. **Break Bread**, a family picnic exchange programme. **Bring a Neighbour to Breakfast**, inviting unacquainted neighbours to spend quality time together for the first time. These meals and open-air markets will be animated by an accessible cultural programme. After 2030, the meals become a community-led distributed traditional event to mark cultural celebrations with big acts of culture and solidarity.

Molenbeek co-producers: MCCA, VK, Cassonade,

Cinemaximiliaan, Groot Eiland

Partners in Belgium: Cultureghem, Zinneke

European & international collaborations: Bielsko-Biała

ECOC 2029 (PL), Katowice GZM 2029 (PL), Novi Sad (NS),

2022 foundation (RS)

D. VALLEY:

Mural(s)

From cave painting to fresco, from mosaic to post-graffiti, the diverse European traditions of community and public mural art are reinvented and re-mixed for a celebration of the urban space as artistic canvas. A transnational open call will be launched by MB2030 between 2026 and 2030, asking for: European creators to co-create public murals in Molenbeek and the BCR, and for other European public and private cultural agents to multiply the model in their own country, creating a European route of vicinity-inclusive public murals.

Molenbeek co-producers: MB2030, Recyclart

Partners in Belgium: the 18 other municipalities of the BCR

European & international collaborations: Nikšić 2030 (ME),

Urban Konsthall (SE)

C. WILD AT HEART

A. MILL

WildWaterWadi: How to Make the Valley Public Again ‘Wadi’ is the Arabic word for a river valley in arid areas that is dry for most of the year. Cities across Europe have covered, buried, forgotten and sacrificed the rivers and waterways on which they were built. Urbanisation and industrialisation processes continue to disrupt nature’s metabolism in cities, and urban river water is mostly no longer drinkable or swimmable. *WildWaterWadi* brings an artistic and civic torrent to European cities, in order to rewild and recreate the river valleys of Europe. Environmental art interventions and installations, water-based exhibitions and creative workshops will animate the Molenbeek-Charleroi Canal and other European rivers, valleys and watercourses as hubs of urbanistic, activist, artistic and sociocultural initiatives which give water a voice in public discussions about the notions of urban settlement and colonisation. Artists, citizens and scientific experts from across Europe will connect the natural infrastructures of rivers and valleys to people’s urban imaginations and install a series of Settlements of the Future in Molenbeek and European cities in which human and non-human forces connect and reinforce each other. After 2030, this immaterial network of European water-tangible Settlements of the Future will drive forward the cultural, scientific, urbanism and advocacy work for safeguarding healthy waters for people and nature in Europe. *WildWaterWadi* includes:

Free-Flowing People: a trajectory of exhibitions on ecological and environmental migration, focusing

on knowledge systems and traditions that came to Molenbeek from other parts of the world, are now dormant and could be reactivated. European and non-European partners will present, nurture and share these indigenous and mobile knowledges about living with nature, in all its material aspects, in dense urban and post-industrial environments.

Still Here / Making the Senne Public: a research and long-term performative project establishing an alliance of care for the Senne. The aim is to grow a systemic relationship between the river's ecosystems and local Molenbeek communities, to form an alliance of 'Senne guardians' to co-write and co-create a 'Living Bill for the Senne'. The bill will seek to achieve legal recognition of the river's rights in the Belgian Constitution. The project connects to the European Parliament of Rivers that undertakes similar endeavours in several European countries.

Artist: Maria Lucia Cruz Correia

Molenbeek co-producers: City of Molenbeek, La Fonderie, MMM, Espirito Mundo, Atelier Groot Eiland, Toestand, Decoratelier

Partners in Belgium: AWB, CIVA, KANAL, Brussels Environment, Canal It Up, Coördinatie Zenne, Back2SoilBasics, Cultureghem, Park Poetik, Zinneke RAB/BKO

European & international collaborations: Kiruna 2029 (SE), Arcadia (NL), Oulu 2026 (FI), Foundation ARTeria (PL), Derida Dance Centre (BG), L'Art Rue Tunis (TU), Banlieues Climat (FR), Sakya Ramallah (PS), Think Tanger (MO), Fluctuations (FR), Parliament of Rivers (EU), Homo Faber Foundation Balaton (HU)

B. BRIDGES

Unlearning Academy

A capacity-building programme for young talent from Molenbeek and European partner locations, and the delivery vehicle of SKILL GIVING, MB2030's learning trajectory to incubate superdiverse cultural produc-

tion skills for Molenbeek and Europe's cultural ecosystems. Delivered via transnational ateliers, workshops, study visits, volunteering and internship exchanges, the *Unlearning Academy* asks: what will the police force or swimming pool of the future look like if the young citizens of Molenbeek and other Molenbeeks of Europe design it? The *Unlearning Academy* will be a space for imagining, developing and building our common spaces, institutions and everyday tools of the future, drawing lessons from past mistakes, unlearning old habits that have become obstacles and forming new coalitions of future-oriented knowledges and practices. Before and after 2030, the *Unlearning Academy* will connect to Cap@city, a potential Erasmus+ Centre of Vocational Excellence co-developed and co-implemented with other ECOCs.

Molenbeek co-producers: Decoratelier, Youth Coalition (MB2030), JES, Foyer, D'Broej, In Limbo

Partners in Belgium: ART2WORK

European & international collaborations: Bielsko-Biala ECOC 2029 (PL), Katowice GZM 2029 (PL), Larnaka 2030 (CY), Materahub and Matera-Basilicata 2019 (IT), Creative Industry Kosice (SK), Oulu 2026 (FI), Universidade de Évora (PT), Uppsala 2029 (SE), Bourges 2028 (FR), Independent School for the City (NL), Novi Sad 2022 (RS), Conexiones Improbables (ES), Budweis 2028 (CZ)

Oui Grow

An artistic adventure of solidarity, celebrating the value of freedom and connection with nature by supporting flora's trespassing into man-made structures and encouraging the growth of nature within inner cities and deprived areas. Laure Prouvost's project manifests in Molenbeek as an art installation, a solidarity call to action, a performance, a song and a flower store. With the aim to trade grey, blistering concrete areas for more colourful and cool green

avenues, *Oui Grow* is a transnational call to action that invites European artists, cultural institutions, citizens and anthomaniacs (i.e. people who are fond of flowers) to support the project through donations and the purchase of an artist edition of the site-specific works. The project is accompanied by associated and guest interventions and performances by European artists, in both Molenbeek and other European locations, inviting us to merge nature and art, allowing them to grow within one another, transcending boundaries and flourishing together.

Artist: Laure Prouvost

Molenbeek co-producers: Studio Laure Prouvost, City of Molenbeek
Partners in Belgium: the 18 other municipalities of the BCR
European & international collaborations: Studio Mohammed Bourouissa (FR), Katowice GZM 2029 (PL), Massia (EE), Novi Sad 2022 (RS), SODAS 2123 (LT), The Mothership by Yto Berrada (MA), Salzkammergut 2024 (AT), Jerez 2031 (ES)

Walks on the Wild Side

Starting from the immaterial and archival heritages of CIVA, which is at once a museum, archive, library and place for encounters and debate, we will develop a programme of walking tours and exhibitions in Molenbeek: tours of feral Molenbeek and micro-safaris of the flora and fauna that live in the city as well as tours of projection-mapping artworks and performances recreating the natural path of the now covered river valley. A main exhibition about how Molenbeek and the BCR covered and will gradually uncover its rivers and valleys in the future will be the starting point for local inhabitants, visitors from the BCR and Europe to meet and walk side-by-side as cultural and environmental tourists. After 2030, the best cultural and environmental practices of MB2030 will join a European map of urban rewilding

and creative agents working in new ways, and relating to the New European Bauhaus principles.

Molenbeek co-producers: La Fonderie

Partners in Belgium: CIVA

European & international collaborations: Derida Dance Centre (BG), Rio Neiva Community Lab (PT), Nikšić 2030 (ME), Salzkammergut 2024 (AT)

Opera Metamorphosis

A 2030 revival of Bernard Foccroulle's opera *Cassandra*, which has at its heart the unheard cry of the young generations for urgent action against the climate crisis. The revival is inspired by Molenbeek (the youngest city in Belgium), and the environmental and activist practices of its young inhabitants, the Molenbeek youth houses, and the MB2030 *Youth Coalition*. A year-long trajectory of cultural mediation and preparation will propose a public programme of encounters and debates in Molenbeek, connected to the performances at De Munt / La Monnaie. The operatic production and its mediation trajectory in Molenbeek will connect to similar processes engaging young activist communities in different European locations where *Opera Metamorphosis* will have co-producing partners and where the revival will tour. In all locations, a transnational group of young citizens will be actively engaged in the performance. De Munt / La Monnaie will provide a substantial number of accessibly priced tickets for every performance, exclusively reserved for Molenbeek citizens, and the mediation programme will continue as an international best practice after 2030.

Artists: Bernard Foccroulle

Molenbeek co-producers: D'Broej, Cinemaximiliaan, MMM

Partners in Belgium: De Munt / La Monnaie, VUB, ULB

European & international collaborations: Festival d'Aix-en-Provence (FR), Staatsoper Berlin (DE), Malmö opera (SE), Stichting Opera Rotterdam / O. (NL), Teatro di S Carlo (IT), Op-Art (PT), Opera Europa network (EU)

C. BROOKS

Rebel Black Soil

A long-term project to rewild, connect and open up the small gardens and green plots unused throughout the over-urbanised upper Molenbeek to the whole city and citizens from Molenbeek and other Molenbeeks in Europe. Guerrilla gardens, community orchards, edible public spaces will grow and pop up from 2026 onwards, creating interactive green spaces for new cross-cultural encounters. The project is led by Back2SoilBasics, a collective of superdiverse activists focused on decolonising nature through culturally diverse practices. Together with Molenbeek residents they will cultivate a living lab of radically participatory architecture which is economically, ecologically and socially sustainable in 2030. Afterwards, *Rebel Black Soil* evolves into a safe gathering space for non-white environmental activist groups from Europe, furthering decolonial gardening activities across European borders.

Molenbeek co-producers: Back2SoilBasics

Partners in Brussels: Toestand

European & international collaborations: Farmstudio Association – Centre for Arts and Culture, Nikšić 2030 (ME), Växtverket (SE), Budweis 28 (SK)

D. VALLEYS:

Fountain(s)

As water scarcity and urban heat endanger the life of our cities, we recover water sources as a place for drinking, bathing and socialising, in a new generation of artist-initiated public fountains. These are co-designed with neighbourhood and social partners with more-than-human beneficiaries in mind. A transnational open call will be launched by MB2030 between 2026 and 2030, asking for: European creators to co-create public fountains in Molenbeek and the BCR and for other European public and private cultural agents to multiply the model in their own country, creating a European route of life-sharing urban oases.

Molenbeek co-producers: MB2030

Partners in Belgium: Coördinatie Zenne / Herbronnen.ressources

European & international collaborations: Leeuwarden (NL)

D. EUROPEAN SPACE TO EMBRACE

A. MILL

Safe and Brave Parades and Ceremonies

An entire year of public ceremonies, rituals and parades that strengthen what we share, what can connect us better and more deeply, and what can be the fabric for a common European future. Starting from Molenbeek, we will celebrate local and European initiatives from historical and folkloric parades (Ommegang) to inclusive activist parades (Pride) and cultural block parties (Park Poetik, Dia de Muertos), not forgetting the Zinneke Parade. From this dynamic of Molenbeek-initiated ceremonies and rituals, a European dimension will grow: in 2030, hosting a transnational European carnival in Molenbeek and the BCR, with marching partners from all European territories. This carnival parade will showcase the mixed and shared heritages of Europe, not romantic ideas of national culture, and its participants will then travel across thematic parades and local carnivals in different European cities. Associated with the European carnival, European partners will meet for an international conference on the topic of 'Neo-Parades and Ceremonies for cultural identity formation in European cities which need common futures' and lead to the formation of a European network of intercultural parades. On the way to and beyond 2030, the initiative will evolve into a Molenbeek-based production and formation centre of urban culture, focused on sharing knowledge, tools, materials and methods for inclusive participation and the circular management of cultural events.

Molenbeek co-producers: MCCS, Atelier Leon, Recyclart, Dar

El Amal, Maison des Femmes - Move asbl, YouYou Group
Partners in Belgium: Zinneke, Park Poetik, Tas d'os Collectif (Dia de Muertos), MetX, W100, Ommegang RAB/BKO
European & international collaborations: Velvet Carnival Prague (CZ), Masopust Parade Rostock (CZ), Fabrique des Impossibles Paris (FR), ICAF Rotterdam (NL), Parada par Tücc Bologna (IT), Oi Musica Edinburgh (UK), Bielsko-Biała ECOC 2029 (PL), Nikšić 2030 (ME), Zomercarnaval (NL), NGBG Street Festival (SE), NH Carnival (UK), Colombina Clandestina (PT), Karneval der Kulturen (DE)

B. BRIDGES

Making Room(s) for Love:

A series of community-arts projects, focused on dance, theatre and different performative rituals. Working together with fragile communities, artistic encounters will activate semi-public and private places as safe and inclusive spaces for affection, care and acceptance. There has been a lot of heartbreak across European societies resulting in a crisis of affection: post-Covid isolation, digital addiction, war and its horrors, social hostility and growing loneliness have poisoned the neurochemistries of European citizens, and we are growing apart as a result. All we need is love, but there is little room for it. Well, not anymore and not at MB2030, as we recreate cultural spaces and artistic experiences as occasions for kinship, contact and social trust. *Making Room(s) for Love* includes:

Ballroom: an annual series of dance workshop events, conceptualised as both safe and brave spaces, that include dancing partners from all generations and communities of Molenbeek, people with disabilities and diverse minorities, such as the queer community. Initiated by inclusive dance choreographer

Andrew Graham, it reinvents and reappropriates the traditional cultural art and party form of the Ballroom from many periods, cultures and contexts. A protocol for European ballrooms will invite performers and participants to join Molenbeek events, and will multiply and reinvent Ballroom actions all over the BCR and other European cities.

Precarious Situationship: a network of efficient workshops about solo performance writing and production, led by Laurène Marx, a non-binary trans woman artist. Their self-taught methods and skills to write and sell performative work are shared with upcoming and young talent in situations of extreme precarity (proletarian workers, persecuted minorities, invisibilised groups). Workshops are presented in cultural institutions and schools via mediated calls, offering micro-grants for solo performance incubation and for Europe-based precarious performers to take part.

Artists: Andrew Graham, Laurène Marx

Molenbeek co-producers: VK, MCCS

Partners in Belgium: all Community and Cultural Centres of Brussels (VGC and COCOF), Les Halles de Schaerbeek, Mechelen, Charleroi, laGeste (Ghent)

European & international collaborations: Derida Dance Centre (BG), Katowice GZM 2029 (PL), L'Autre Maison (FR), Dream City Tunis (TU), Think Tangier (MO), Plateforme Contemporaine and Centre Wallonie Bruxelles (DRC), European Dancehouse Network, Europe beyond Access (EU)

Home Is Where the Heart Is

A programme of live arts, arts in health, and participatory performances activated in streets, homes and other residential spaces in-between the domestic and the public sphere, celebrating the concepts of safety and braveness in our living environments. A transnational group of artists will reflect on disap-

pearing third places, civil courage, hostile architecture, women's safety at night, housing and the cost-of-living crisis, social isolation among the elderly; the group will work with communities to devise innovative, participatory, inclusive artistic formats that generate new encounters and thoughts about publicity and inhabitation. *Home Is Where the Heart Is* includes:

Cultural Centre of Fully Living: a residential/elderly care home in Molenbeek is transformed into a semi-permanent cultural centre, starting with the curation of micro-museums about the lives of its inhabitants. A long-term, multidisciplinary cultural programme is co-curated with European artists, exploring elderly homes as places where we continue to live, places of resource and vital experimentation, for both residents and supervisory staff, artists, and even residents' families and the general public.

Traverseies: sidewalks across Molenbeek become a playground for shared experimentation in different artistic forms, very contextual, often intriguing and

always benevolent. Travelling furniture, doors open to strangers, sofa talks or cleaning public spaces as part of the house chores are inspirations to shared and participative actions. European co-creators and visitors are invited to explore how streets can be made more homey; the process is documented in multimedia, generating new forms to interact with the actions in remote and asynchronous ways.

Artists: Laurent Boijet, Valia Kardi, Mohamed El Khatib

Molenbeek co-producers: Cinemaximiliaan, MCCS, MMM, papy boom

Partners in Belgium: Les Halles de Schaerbeek, Théâtre National

European & international collaborations: AltoFest (IT), Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture (LT), Centrul Cultural Clujean (RO), Europæisk Kulturregion (DK)

Mini-Festivals of Closeness

A support structure for community-led cultural festivals on micro, mini and small scales, celebrating the small, intimate, playful acts of creativity of everyday life and everyday people. ECOC years often fail to reach many inhabitants who don't even know about the ECOC. Amid a growing trend for the festivalisation of culture across Europe, with the pursuit of mega, multi-day, spectacular, 'Instagrammable' events, not all creators and citizens feel included and intrigued by the format, especially people who don't consider themselves cultural beings. *Mini-Festivals of Closeness* empowers hyper-specific, interpersonal cultural experiences which connect people at the most intense level of proximity, beyond the buzz and flashes of the Instagrammable major festival experience. Hypertext theatre plays performed in the WhatsApp family group, a book-exchange fair in a small street, a singing contest for cousins living in different coun-

tries and who are spending the summer together are examples of proximity-based cultural acts which bring neighbours, families and Europeans into close contact with culture, themselves and each other. *Mini-Festivals of Closeness* includes:

Molenlight Festival: a light parade through the streets of Molenbeek, organised by local arts and social associations. Local citizens and their associations build lanterns together at creative workshops with local and international creators; these lanterns are then used for small-scale parades. The festival explores the aquatic imaginary of the Brussels-Charleroi Canal with the created lanterns and a light show at Karreveld Castle bringing to life fantastic aquatic creatures.

In.Out.Sider Festival: an alternative festival showcasing an inclusive, original and far-from-mainstream line-up. Inspired by the concept of outsider art (and its absence from major cultural festivals), it is co-produced in dialogue with specialists in the fields of disability and artistic practices, and prioritises artists from minorities or with disabilities, creating a common space for the unconventional, the daring and all those who exist on the fringes as well as a programme where styles, mediums and voices collide.

Molenbeek co-producers: MCCS, Recyclart, Patrimoine à Roulettes, City of Molenbeek, LaVallée

Partners in Belgium: Nuits Sonores, European Lab Brussels

European & international collaborations: ArQuente (PT), Basso Profilo (IT), Centre for Cultural Decontamination (RS), Liepaja 2027 (LV), Budweis 2028 (CZ), Eleusis 2023 (EL)

Real Rebel Internetworking

The crisis our democracies are going through is also a crisis of the internet, of social media and of the commercialisation and political exploitation of these



environments, especially as regards our children and young people. *Real Rebel Internetworking* is a humble (but determined) network of real spaces for real people to meet beyond the screen and scrolling, in schools, universities and cultural structures.

We will discuss the question: is a rebel, artisanal alternative to the internet possible, and how can we build it? Exploring issues of technological degrowth, technological addiction, mass surveillance, personal data monetisation, alongside the potential of free software culture and federated networks, pockets of internet enthusiasts and artists will organise info-sessions, workshops, conferences and the incubation of artistic and civic projects using free software. *Real Rebel Internetworking* introduces concrete gestures (free software used in MB2030 projects is then shared with the community) and mediation spaces (technologists and artists translate technical possibilities into accessible uses, or promote safe and responsible online and social media activity in schools). Based on online and offline collaboration between European tech activists, creators and internet culture amateurs across Europe, the programme will open up and develop a European network of cultural and critical tech enthusiasts working on a better internet for all Europeans.

Molenbeek co-producers: iMAL, all schools of Molenbeek, MCCS, Digital House 1080

Partners in Belgium: VUB, ULB, petites singularités (OFFDEM festival), Constant — Association for Art and Media

European & international collaborations: Bielsko-Biała ECOC 2029 (PL), Baltan Laboratories (NL), Art Meets Radical Openness Linz (AT), Dyne.org foundation (NL), Nikšić 2030 (ME), Creative Industry Kosice (SK), Tactical Tech (DE), Društvo LJUDMILA (SI), varia/Traversal Network of Feminist Servers (NL), Xcenter / centre of creative practices - Nova Gorica 2025 (SI), Project Liberty (US)

C. BROOKS

Future Sound Stars Incubator Network

A Molenbeek-initiated and Europe-connected music incubator to grow future music stars at pre-career stage, offering music residencies, composer workshops, feedback sessions, showcase festivals and first public concerts to the future musicians of Molenbeek and Europe. Delivered in a long-term collaboration between musical residency and concert space VOLTA, Fifty Lab's showcase festival and the VK, Ancienne Belgique and Botanique venues, the incubator will support and promote the future stars of future genres, working with young creators in the infancy/latency period of their musical work, and with a focus on upcoming urban music phenomena. The incubator is connected to the European showcase and music talent ecosystem, engaging European experts and curators as supporters, and opening up activities to pan-European talents.

Molenbeek co-producers: VOLTA, VK

Partners in Belgium: Fifty Lab, Ancienne Belgique, Botanique

European & international collaborations: Kanepes Culture Centre (LT), BASIS Vinschgau Venosta (IT), European Music Exporters Exchange, European Network for Live Music Associations (EU)

Girls Make the City

An international coalition of girls across Europe and non-European locations reclaim and reinvent urban public spaces beyond the patriarchal gaze of their designers. Outdoor sports places are boys' areas, and far fewer girls than boys play outside – teenage girls and young women don't always feel safe, don't feel free in the public space, are catcalled and harassed. Through debates, workshops and activist marches, we will form neighbourhood sisterhoods

and new alliances between girls to educate boys and convince urban planners and policymakers of the importance of the female gaze in urban design. The process is accompanied by an online content and advocacy platform where girls in more and new places can connect to their international peers and support each other in changing their city.

Molenbeek co-producers: Wetopia, ZIJkant, Make Space for Girls, Periferia, Molenbeek Rebels, Athlemo, Toestand
Partners in Belgium: Women 100 (W100)

Open and Curated Streets

Heavy traffic streets in Molenbeek are transformed into Open Summer Streets, with a curated cultural and civic programme, including performing and visual arts as well as mural painting engaging partners from Molenbeek, the BCR and Europe. These streets become European discussion spaces about car- and fossil-free streets, based on a knowledge programme and tactical urbanism actions. The European dimension is a two-way street: European artists, thinkers, architects and activists will be creatively engaged and will co-construct the curated streets in Molenbeek, and the cultural agents of Molenbeek will exchange and take part in the cultural programme of open streets in other European and non-European cities.

Molenbeek co-producers: FilterCaféFiltré, Ultima Vez, Atelier Leon
Partners in Belgium: CIVA, KANAL, KVS, Les Halles de Schaerbeek
European & international collaborations: Bielsko-Biała ECOC 2029 (PL), Uppsala 2029 (SE)

D. VALLEY:

Rooftop(s)

The fifth façade and last frontier of European place-making opens up to the public as creative commu-

nity spaces in a new generation of artist-initiated and semi-public rooftops. These are co-designed with building inhabitants and entrepreneurs (with, for example, a school and a solar panel installer). A transnational open call is launched by MB2030 between 2026 and 2030, asking for: European artists to open and intervene in rooftops in Molenbeek and the BCR, and for other European public and private cultural agents to multiply the model in their own country, creating a European route of artist-curated rooftops functioning as open-air studios.

Molenbeek co-producers: MB2030

Partners in Belgium: the 18 other municipalities of the BCR

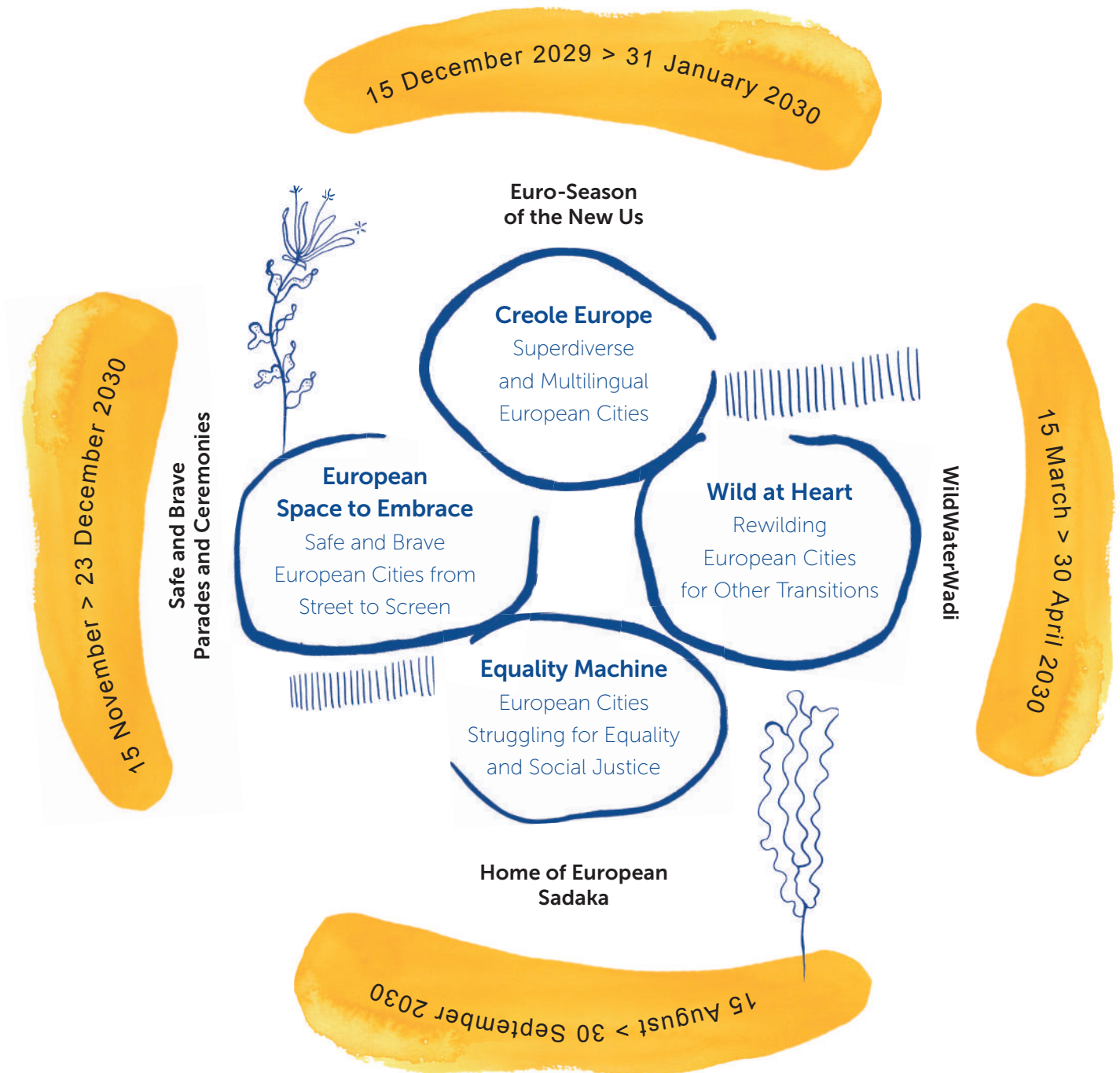
European & international collaborators: Lieux Publics (FR),

L'Art Rue (TN), Wetopia

Kick off MB2030:

Let's Occupy the Canal and its Bridges

The MB2030 opening weekend in December 2029, starting off our first Sadaka Season, will immediately live up to our principal desire: reposition the Canal and Molenbeek at the heart of Europe, thanks to culture. From Friday night onwards, and through Saturday and Sunday, MB2030 will occupy all bridges across the Canal, and the Canal as a waterway itself, with a rich diversity of cultural parades and ceremonies, for and with Molenbeek and European artists and audiences. No cars, motorbikes or trams, only water-based cultural co-creation and connections to celebrate Molenbeek's superdiversity and let a New Us emerge, in which Molenbeek's arts and culture actors take the lead.



Q12_

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

What intangible cultural heritage around sustainable livelihoods is hidden in the roots of this multicultural beehive? What embodied knowledge do the people from the diaspora generously share while cooking, chatting, caring? Can the notion of Sadaka help us to get a deeper understanding of this hidden power and energy?

While it is not up to the ECOC to solve the unsolvable, we can shed light on practices, gestures and ethics hidden behind rituals in languages that not everybody speaks, in stories that linger in kitchens, gardens and salons we do not have access to, in recipes that are only passed on orally.

L3X1CON OF e_u, for example, will mix digitized heritage content from Europeana with personal stories on social media to create new media and augmented artworks.

The goal would be to discover sweet spots and system cracks that can serve as exemplary practices because of their innovative and transversal concepts, based on solidarity and roots in diasporic traditions. Shared households, communal gardens, an inter-generational care system, urban farming as a learn-

ing environment, sheep flocks to mow and fertilise our parks, recycling and repairing as a system of care for common goods, grey water from laundries and car washes, energy communities.

Q13_

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

Molenbeek artists and cultural structures, professional and non-professional, big and small, emergent and established, and also a wide variety of creative Molenbeek citizens have been and will be deeply involved, over the long term, in the cultural programme of MB2030, not just as observers or passive participants, but as active co-creators.

Learning by doing together, in a city where everything is structured so that fragmentation wins and a New Us cannot emerge: this is what we have practiced for the past three years.

We have practised seeing potential and working on it together for the past three years. Through *Speak Up*, the *Youth Coalition*, the Summer and Spring Assemblies, the *MolenFest*, and initiatives such as *MolenYouth* or *Girls Make the City*, especially young Molenbeek and citizens from all over the BCR have already played a key role in defining the key themes and some of the central projects of MB2030.

Over the next few years, a wide diversity of Molenbeek cultural operators will play a key role in developing our cultural programme. We are in active interchange with the MCCS, VK, Charleroi Danse, Recyclart, Cinemaximiliaan, Decoratelier, Ras El Hanout, UP – Circus & Performing Arts, the Circus School of Brussels, MigratieMuseumMigration (MMM), several youth houses and centres, the Molenbeek schools and football club: together we have shared and agreed on co-creative and substantial roles in all MILL, BRIDGE and BROOK projects.

Molenbeek is a treasure box of creative artists and companies, from Aboubakr Bensaihi, Einat Tuchman, to Salim Haouach, Alexander Vanthournout, and Wooshing Machine. Their creative flow will make MB2030 visible and allow a next young generation to stand up while making use of them to change perceptions, practices and, hopefully, mentalities.

Obviously, the main objective of the MB2030 cultural programme remains on another level: to spread Sadaka projects and practices of systemic solidarity from Molenbeek across Europe. Starting from the conviction and the reality that Molenbeek's artists and cultural organisations can and will be the motors of that change, through their creative energies and by working together, we all grow and challenge, share, strengthen Sadaka in Europe.

3_European dimension

Q14_

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

- * Promoting the cultural diversity of Europe, intercultural dialogue and greater mutual understanding between European citizens;
- * Highlighting the common aspects of European cultures, heritage and history, as well as European integration and current European themes;
- * Featuring European artists, cooperation with operators and cities in different countries, and transnational partnerships.

The European mission of MB2030 is to turn creative Sadaka – giving without expecting anything in return – into a core value of European culture.

Europe's culture of giving and solidarity is going through an existential crisis. Can we still credibly pretend to be a generous and welcoming continent? The World Giving Index 2023* asked 150,000 people from 142 countries: in the past 30 days, did you help a stranger, volunteer your time, or donate money to a charity? Europe's answers were miserable. There is no EU member state among the ten most giving communities aggregated by nationality; only three in the top 20, and six in the top 30. Ukraine comes second, Belgium only 55th. Eastern and Southern

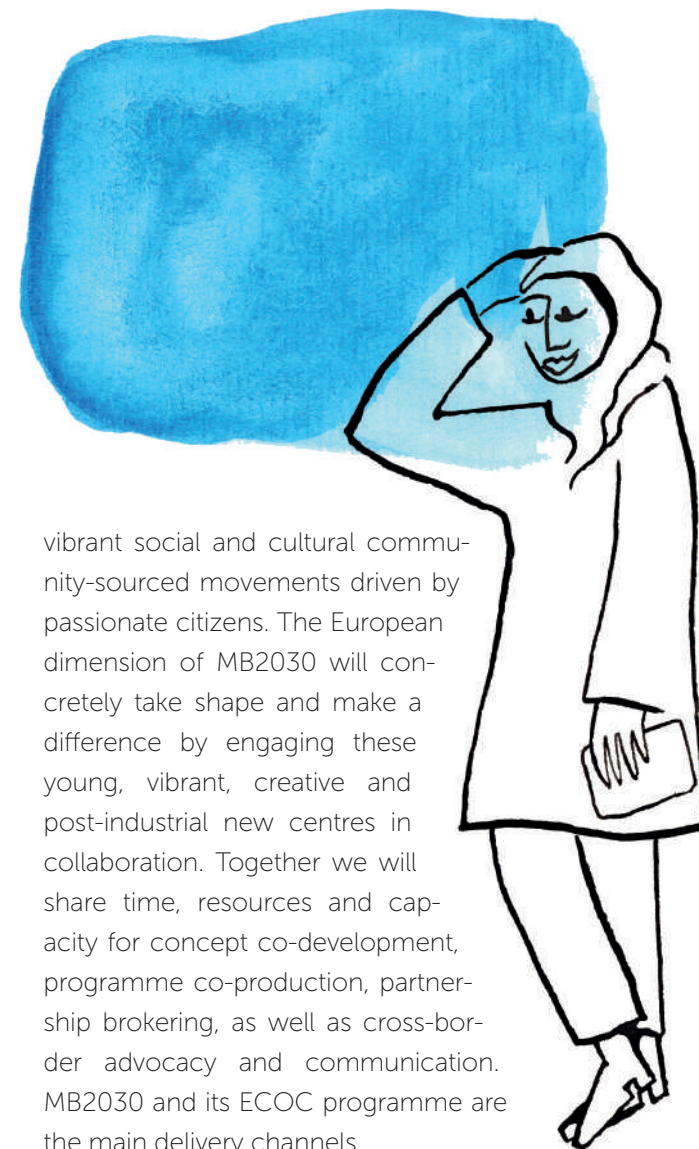
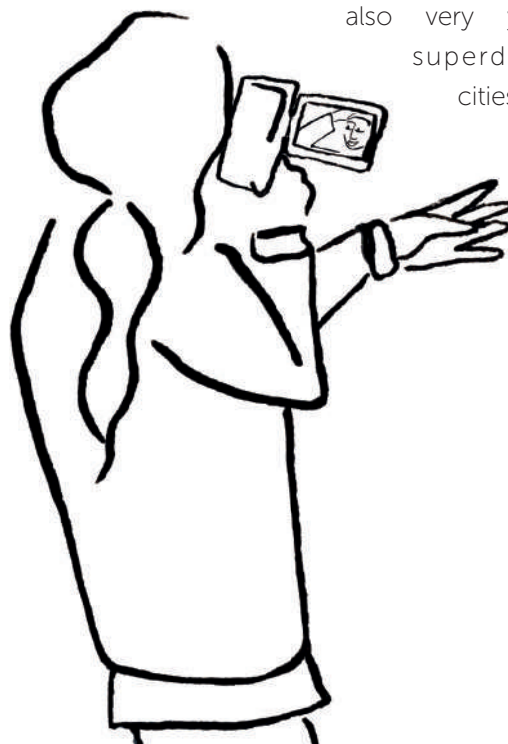
Europe are among the places in the world where people are the least giving. As Europeans struggle with multiple crises, exploding costs of living, major financial crashes, the arrival of millions of refugees crossing its eastern and southern borders, terror attacks in major capitals, and drastic energy spikes amid stagnating wars, we have become self-centred and selfish. And lonely. Several European (geo-) political evolutions, decisions and election results bear witness to this evolution: in some countries, the profoundly European model of the welfare state is being eroded by exclusionary policies on the basis of social, ethnic and potentially illegal criteria; in neighbouring countries such as Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco, the European Union (EU) runs the risk of being perceived as an inhospitable 'fortress' that finances undemocratic regimes on the condition that they keep away fellow human beings in dire need of our solidarity and of safety. The results of the recent European elections might have weakened European achievements for the future, like the Green Deal, that are foundational for our solidarity with the future generations of our continent.

MB2030 aims to respond to these crises, fears and weaknesses among Europeans, which are real and legitimate, with proposals and concrete practices for more solidarity and generosity. We will set up the cultural building blocks that enable cross-cultural and cross-border actions, rooted in a Molenbeek-inspired, European dimension of selfless exchange.

Creative Sadaka is about inspiring new forms of systemic solidarity, crisis-resilient imaginaries and practices, which advance social justice for all (and not

only those who look like us), human and non-human. It goes beyond notions of benevolent charity, mutual aid and exclusionary tribal collaboration, which can all be patronising acts of *othering*. All these inspirations should be pluralistic and, most importantly, benefit from heterogeneous perspectives and diverse cultural backgrounds, practices and codes. So many invisibilised communities and territories on our continent are treasure boxes of solidarity and creativity: we want to connect them, creolise them and share them in a better European future.

This mission is spearheaded by MB2030, but collectively led by a transnational movement of places and communities like Molenbeek. These are precarious, post-industrial cities fighting themselves out of socio-economic inequalities, sometimes furiously as a reaction to systemic and post-traumatic societal pain. But also very young, superdiverse cities with



vibrant social and cultural community-sourced movements driven by passionate citizens. The European dimension of MB2030 will concretely take shape and make a difference by engaging these young, vibrant, creative and post-industrial new centres in collaboration. Together we will share time, resources and capacity for concept co-development, programme co-production, partnership brokering, as well as cross-border advocacy and communication. MB2030 and its ECOC programme are the main delivery channels.

From digital screens to street corners, we will bridge distances and connect people. These connections between European places and people in the artistic programme of MB2030 are visualized in the next map.

The urgencies identified by the *Youth Coalition*, the Chamber of Reflection and the Future Places open call, are the starting point for the European co-development of MB2030 themes:

Themes	Equality Machine	Creole Europe	Wild at Heart
	European Cities Struggling for Equality and Social Justice	Superdiverse and Multilingual European Cities	Rewilding European Cities for Other Transitions
European resonance topics addressed within the content of the cultural programme	Poverty, social exclusion, loneliness and homelessness in so-called Social Europe Social cross-border economies Universal Basic Income Euro-whiteness and unprocessed racisms in contemporary Europe	Cultural superdiversity and mobile citizenship as key drivers of European culture Transnational, digitally connected families Intercultural tourism and cross-border shopping	Urban heat island surplus in densely built urban centres Urbanisation's negative effect on city waterways: too toxic to swim in or drink Urban biodiversity, local food production, circular economy

Each theme is then operationalised as cultural and civic co-creation activities, addressing common European heritages and challenges, delivered via European collaboration across different artistic projects:

	Common heritages	Common challenges	Mechanisms for transnational European collaboration
Equality Machine	Historical progress and milestones of welfare states: Bismarck's imperial decree, Scandinavian commissions, European Social Model	Growing inequality across European societies, especially in socio-economic terms	
Creole Europe	Historical migration waves of European and non-European labourers during industrialisation	Growing polarisation and culture wars across political spectrum	Co-creation, co-production and co-working Exchange of staff, artefacts, citizens and ideas Cross-border cultural tourism Celebration of European symbols and heroes
Wild at Heart	Summer heatwave in 2003, with a death toll estimated at more than 70,000 across European countries Heritage of changes to landscape due to industrialization (covering and pollution of waterways and brooks)	Lack of green space for socio-economically underprivileged areas and negative health impacts Crisis on the future of urban waterways, water crisis at global level	Stimulation of Europe-based creative industry and jobs EU funding and European resources Shift of topics on European sociopolitical agenda Capacity-building for European citizens
European Space to Embrace	Non-violent resistance movements (Singing Revolution, Velvet Revolution, April Revolution, Peaceful Revolution 1989) in relation to successful non-violent revolts in Ukraine (2004), Tunisia Historical reinterpretations of social networking (vs only digital), incl. clubs, secret societies, cant/argot and anti-languages, block and street parties, raves and community festivals	Growing police violence associated with racism in relation to growing violent crime among the young The great rewiring of childhood, social media addiction and cyberbullying, targeting especially young girls.	Promotion of European networks Each project includes three or four of these mechanisms in its design

European Space to Embrace

Safe and Brave European Cities from Street to Screen

Systemic violence(s): crime and police violence, gender violence, rearmament

Digital impact on child development and youth well-being

Data mining, disinformation and trolling

Key project and collaborators

Home of European Sadaka: social co-living and co-creation of cultural activities between artists and citizens from partner countries in France (Yes We Camp), Montenegro (Nikšić 2030) or Italy (L'Asilo)

Euro-Season of the New Us: international co-production of participatory performances with artists and non-professionals from Poland (Bielsko-Biała ECOC 2029), Sweden (Kiruna 2029) or Tunisia (L'Art Rue)

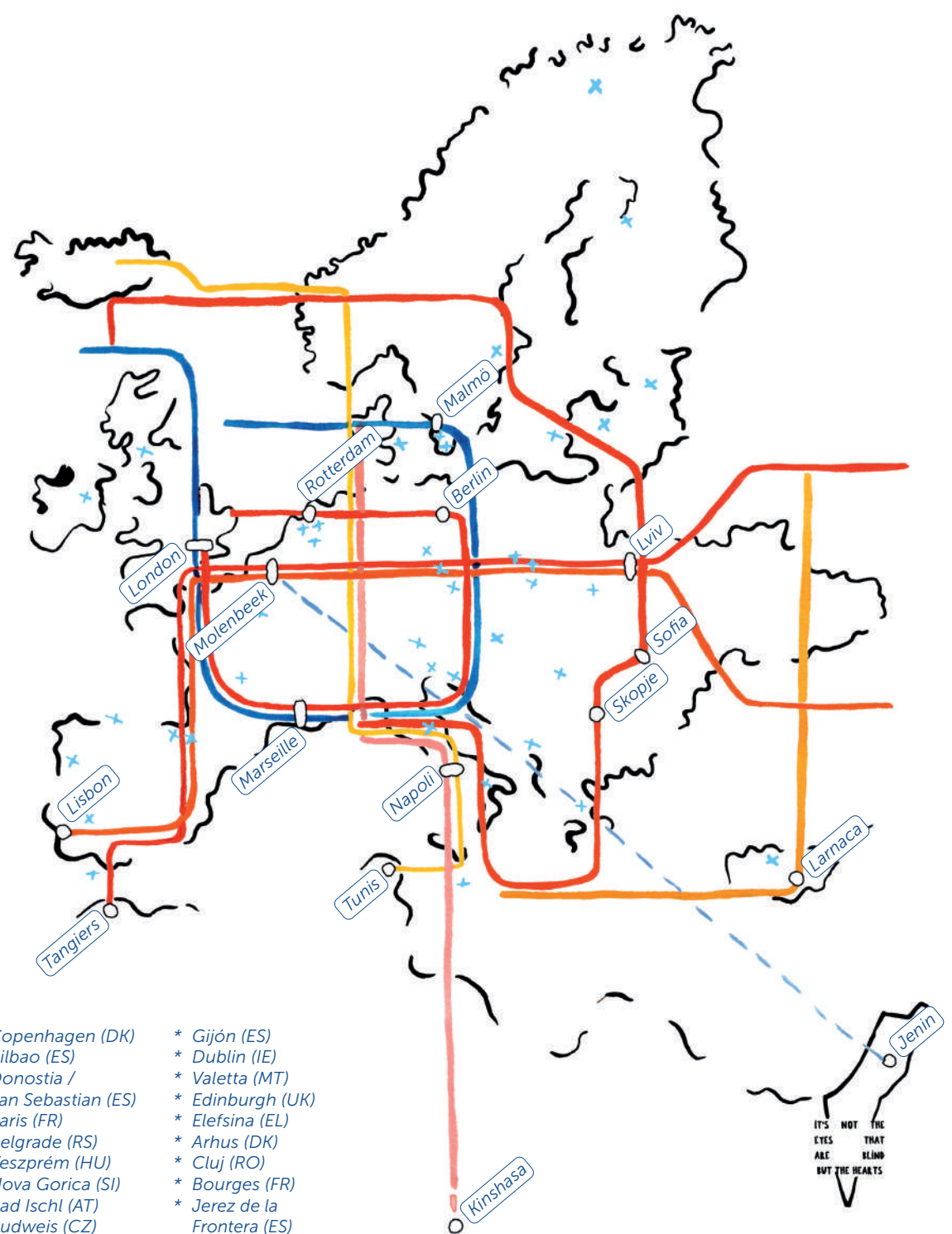
WildWaterWadi: exchange of artists producing site-specific art installations and development of transnational water guardian alliances with partners from Finland (Oulu 2026) and Portugal (Rio Neiva Lab)

Safe and Brave Parades and Ceremonies: artists and citizens travelling across borders to perform together at a pan-European carnival, with partners from Czechia (Velvet Carnival), the Netherlands (ICAF Rotterdam) or the UK (Oi Musica Edinburgh)

- * Leeuwarden (NL)
- * Nikšić (ME)
- * Bielsko-Biała (PL)
- * Helsingør (DK)
- * Fabriano (IT)
- * Uppsala (SE)
- * Tartu (EE)
- * Kiruna (SE)
- * Rijeka (HR)
- * Oulu (FI)
- * Esposende (PT)
- * Zabrze (PL)
- * Katowice (PL)
- * Matera (IT)
- * Évora (PT)
- * Chemnitz (DE)
- * Prague (CZ)
- * Kosice (CZ)
- * Eindhoven (NL)
- * Timisoara (RO)
- * Riga (LV)
- * Amsterdam (NL)

- * Copenhagen (DK)
- * Bilbao (ES)
- * Donostia / San Sebastian (ES)
- * Paris (FR)
- * Belgrade (RS)
- * Veszprém (HU)
- * Nova Gorica (SI)
- * Bad Ischl (AT)
- * Budweis (CZ)
- * Nicosia (CY)

- * Gijón (ES)
- * Dublin (IE)
- * Valetta (MT)
- * Edinburgh (UK)
- * Elefsina (EL)
- * Århus (DK)
- * Cluj (RO)
- * Bourges (FR)
- * Jerez de la Frontera (ES)
- * Liepāja (LV)



Q15_

Explain your overall strategy to attract the interest of a broad European and international public.

Our strategy for international audiences is integrated into our wider marketing and communication strategy (see Q34 for details). Our goal is to make solidarity echo around the world through genuine community engagement, while forming a sense of creolised 'New Us' in Molenbeek and in the other Molenbeeks in Europe. We will do this by activating ***Flip the Script* as a call to action, asking Europeans to create new dialogues between all of us as minorities and push new viewpoints with consistency, autonomy and a bit of flair.** Starting with the 3.23 million people visiting the BCR a year in mind, we will offer them and every potential new visitor a customer journey touchpoint which is an opportunity to become a co-creator and not just a spectator, a temporary citizen and not only a foreigner, to perform a small act of giving, and to contribute a new sense of European Us. *Flipping the Script* means different things to different people, so we will work with four personas (visitor motivation identities), each meet them via the channels they already use as consumers:

1. Transmetropolitan Europeans (42% of the BCR leisure visitors), including the segments of 'highlight seekers, neighbouring countries, empty nesters, generalist city-trip visitors and shopaholics'. Channels to reach them will be targeted offline advertising at Zaventem, Charleroi and Amsterdam airports (plus train, bus and metro stations), dedicated travel packages in partnership with travel agencies, associate marketing via visit.brussels and its network of partners, sponsored content in magazines and online media, including influencers. Projects with the most attraction potential are: *Safe and Brave Parades and Ceremonies*, *Gallery of Social Justice* at KANAL – Centre Pompidou (KANAL), *The World Sings in Molenbeek*.

2. Cultural adventurers (33% of the BCR leisure visitors), including the segments of 'solo travellers, "like-a-local", art lovers, ECOC tourists, Nightlife, LGBTQI+, cultural heritage tourists and creative professionals'. Channels to reach them will be dedicated online and offline advertising in high-end arts and culture as well as lifestyle publications and websites, associate marketing via cultural institutions and European partners marketing channels/email lists, guerrilla and public space interventions in the BCR and other European cities. Projects with the most attraction potential are *New Repertoire of Solidarity & Generosity*, *Precarious Situationship*, *Home of European Sadaka*.

3. Extended family members (25% of the BCR leisure visitors), including the segments of 'visiting friends and family, families with kids, and active seniors', and targeting firstly relatives of the BCR residents, particularly those part of diasporas. Channels to reach them will be a multimedia campaign of familiarity marketing, innovating the use of web messaging app's groups for family and friends, Diaspora networks (including associations, travel agencies, news media, digital interest forums) as well as youth-/child-focused media like YouTube, Facebook. Projects with the most attraction potential are: *European Summer Circus Troupe*, *Beautiful Game Tournament*, *Open and Curated Streets*, *Mini Festival of Closeness*.

4. Screens that touch (remote audiences for streaming-appropriate programmes), targeting remote cultural audiences via TV and web-tailored content, e.g. partial transmission of the opening, opera, music concerts via Mezzo TV, the Flemish Radio and Television Broadcasting Organisation (VRT), the Belgian Radio and Television of the French Community (RTBF). We will collaborate with local TV and radio-channels (BX1 and Bruzz). We also target the lands in which they broadcast internationally, as well as their streaming platforms, as well as MB2030's own channels and those of partners. Projects with the most attraction potential are: the Kick off of MB2030: *Let's Occupy the Canal and its Bridges*, *Opera Metamorphosis*, *L3X1CON OF e_u*.

Q16_

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

Interaction, collaboration and co-creation with other cities holding the ECOC title are integral to MB2030. During the bidding process, we developed collaborations with past, present and candidate ECOCs.

Our transnational movement of places that look like Molenbeek will relate to and challenge the cultural legacy of historical ECOCs like Berlin 1988, Lisbon 1994, Rotterdam 2001, Lille 2004 and Marseille-Provence 2013. In 2023-24, we attended the ECOC 2023 Forum in Kaunas as well as the 11th and 12th Culture Next Conferences respectively hosted by Leeuwarden2018 and Oulu2026. In Oulu, we presented the MB2030 vision in preparation for our development of European partnerships to 25 other European cities (former ECOCs, candidates or former candidates).

We attended the opening of Bodø 2024 to network with the ECOC family and learn about the practical details of organising an ECOC opening. We co-organised, with Cypriot candidate Larnaca 2030, a special meet-and-greet session for Belgian, Cypriot and third-country candidates, (12–14 May 2024) to facilitate networking and programme co-development, attended by MB 2030 and Larnaca 2030, as well as candidates Leuven, Kortrijk, Ghent, Bruges, Namur, Lemosos, Kourion, Nikosia and Nikšić. As a result, we have agreed on intentions to cooperate with every Cypriot candidate and Nikšić candidate: With Larnaca, we will work on an exchange between the *Youth Coalition* of MB2030 and the *Youth Council* of Larnaca. With Lemosos, we will collaborate on the *Euro-Season of the New Us*. With Kourion, we will collaborate on *Home of European Sadaka*. With Nikšić, we will set



up residencies, workshops and exhibitions in their 'Home of Revolution'.

We co-developed the transnational initiative to set up a European Centre of Vocational Excellence for cultural production with ECOCs as a delivery method, in collaboration with actors connected to past ECOCs Matera 2019 and Kosice 2013, future ECOCs Oulu 2026, Évora 2027 and Bourges 2028, as well as candidates Uppsala 2029 and Larnaca 2030. We had direct conversations with candidates Bielsko-Biała ECOC 2029 and Katowice GZM 2029 from Poland, as well as candidates Kiruna 2029 and Uppsala 2029 from Sweden to find points of connection between European themes which can grow into full-fledged cooperation projects. If we continue in this competition, we plan to talk to candidates for the 2031 competitions in Malta and Spain. A more complete image of the involvement of different ECOCs in MB2030's cultural programme is given by the EU-collaborators listed for each project in Chapter 2.



4_Outreach

Q17_

Explain how the local population and your civil society have been involved in the preparation of the application and will participate in the implementation of the year.

Molenbeek is one of the cities in Europe that is marked by a growing young population. By 2030 these are the people who will be in charge. They should have the greatest say. We combined their aspirations with expert tables, EU-workshops, social design projects and broad calls. The strength of our proposal is in the mix of these different strategies. Note: we consider as locals all those who are in the same situation as us, all over Europe.

Visibilising potential

In our *Speak Up* initiative, 1,000 young people from the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR) shared their most urgent questions about the future. We collected their contributions through workshops in and with

24 schools and 88 youth organisations, a questionnaire, and street interviews on the *Speak Up* digital platform. Out of this material, a group of 100 superdiverse young changemakers – a mix of gender, cultural and social background – that we called the *Youth Coalition* distilled the Manifesto that is the basis for our candidacy: mb2030.eu/youthcoalition.

Next to this, we reached out to 77 civil-society organisations in Molenbeek, active in the arts and culture as well as in sports, nature, urbanism, youth and solidarity at the *Great Rendez-Vous*. We met with more than 2,500 citizens in three major assemblies: Summer 22, Summer 23 and Spring 24. With W100, we mobilised 100 diverse women in Molenbeek to reflect on the gender balance of the MB2030 programme and outreach. And we held a series of conversations with around 1500 residents of our city in the 12 neighbourhoods of Molenbeek called *Molenbeek Speaks to Europe*. With *This is Us*. *This*

is Brussels, we collected 250 interviews led by 90 local citizens, we organised ten talks and defined the common heritage in Molenbeek. Our BROOKS projects like *Girls Make the City* are the result of these encounters. In general, our three years of encounters also mobilised stakeholders such as the two principal Brussels Universities, the broad cultural and economic sector, civil society and citizens at large.

Expert tables

We were accompanied by a Chamber of Reflection of 20 members, experts in cultural matters. During the EU-workshops in the Summer Assemblies experts exchanged with youngsters, stakeholders and academics on equal foot. An open call for Future Places was launched in January 23 after a broad field investigation, 81 individuals as well as organisations responded. A jury then proposed 7 partnerships as prototypes. The Molenbeek Future Places are further developed as Settlements of the Future under our MILLS project *WildWaterWadi*.

These expert tables and our civil society backed the proposals coming out of the *Youth Coalition* and defined together the four themes that outline the MB2030 programme: equality and social justice, superdiversity, nature in the city, safe and brave spaces.

Becoming actors

Realising the potential of the imaged Molenbeek puts co-creation at the heart of MB2030. Residents and citizens become the dancers in *Mariage* or the gardeners of *Oui Grow*, all of them agents in ma-

jor projects: coupling artistic excellence with civic engagement, based on time and proximity. We will move away from the language of bridging and bonding and actually start to work together. Take *WildWaterWadi*, a collaboration involving artists, engineers, civil society, urbanists, planners and more, starting from imaging transitions to more nature and softer mobility, into working it out together with a mix of people willing to leave their silos.

All these projects are being prepared in a long-term perspective, with *MolenFest* in September 2024 as the starting point to engage the population in the implementation of the programme.

Becoming captains

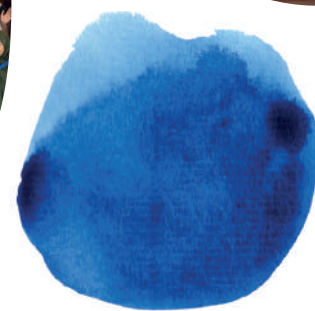
The *Youth Coalition* will transform into *MolenYouth*, the ambassadors for the programme in 2030. They will become interns or employees and collaborators. We are committed to fostering young and diverse talent, facilitating work experience in the wider cultural sector. We will work with Biel-sko-Biała 2029, Nikšić 2030 and other ECOC partners to exchange young talents and create job opportunities for young people.

European participation

Our volunteer programme *Art of Giving* is deeply committed to inclusivity, viewing volunteering not as a privilege but as a fundamental opportunity accessible to all.

Therefore, all citizens, local or EU, engaged in our volunteering programme will receive a fee (max. €41.48 a day according to the Belgium system). It will broaden our reach to include those who typically do not participate in volunteering activities. We offer a diverse range of opportunities which individuals can join based on their skills and interests. They will be trained by professionals and/or organisations.

A team of volunteers will support cultural events and our communications staff. But we will also establish a dedicated group for specific missions: a translation team, hands on the ground, caretakers of safe spaces, guides for people with reduced mobility or the elderly, fighting loneliness and social isolation.



Q18_

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

It is hard to single out minority groups in a fragmented Molenbeek: most citizens can be considered socially marginalised in some way or other, and among them there is reciprocal exclusion. It is always a combination of disadvantages and context. You can be a young black woman from a working-class background who cannot find a job because of discrimination. You can be upper-class and feel marginalised because you cannot find a Dutch-speaking doctor (Dutch being one of the three official languages in Belgium). You can be an older white man and feel marginalised because you are queer, or an unemployed woman with a PhD from the land you fled and with no place to live.

During the three years of preparation, we spent a lot of time on co-creation and co-development with the local population at large. In the coming years we will focus more on invisibilised groups: firstly, young people identified as NEETs, that is, one out of three young adults in Molenbeek, in some areas up to 40%. Also, single-parent families, the poverty-stricken, the homeless and undocumented people. Our approach will be intersectional, always keeping an eye on our main goal: to create this 'New Us'.

Labelling a 'target group' is a tool; you want to identify them, reach them and connect them. We have already introduced the *Youth Coalition*. Next year we will have *The Senior Squad*, and the year after *The Disability Pride*, until the *Year of Homelessness*

in 2030. Each year, we will focus on a different target group so that the network continues to grow and, through a number of pilot projects, participation of target groups increases.

Particularly disabled people (both physically and mentally) are unfairly considered a 'niche', while about 15% of the population has care needs. As our disability expert says: we are all only temporarily abled bodies. Citizens on wheels, people with Down's syndrome and psychic vulnerability will share their dances in *MolenFest* with a special edition of the inclusive *Ballroom* project by L'Autre Maison (Marseille) and laGeste (Ghent).

Accessibility of cultural information, physical accessibility of public spaces and transport as well as financial accessibility are priorities for MB2030. To this end, we are partnering with the informal network of people with disabilities and organisers of five festivals, led by and a part of Lasso, the Brussels platform for cultural participation. We started collaborating in the context of *MolenFest* to improve the experience and prototype. For example, how do we apply their accessibility protocol, developed for indoor venues, in the public space? How do we make the programme more accessible, not just in terms of infrastructure, but also for the hearing- and sight-impaired, for those who cannot leave their house?

Our goal for cultural participation is to provide a **twin-track: general accessibility (offering cultural activities that are adaptable, available, affordable, accessible and acceptable for minority and disadvantaged groups), paired with special needs by demand, working intersectionally.** Stages of the work

will be intersectional diagnosis (2024–25), repairing (2026–28), developing best practices (2028–30) and sharing via digitisation (after 2030).

Inclusion is at the core of our mission. We want to break boundaries.

The question is always:
Who is not there yet?
Who is missing?

Whether in the team, in the volunteer group, in the programme; from societal strata, from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Whose stories are we not hearing, whose presence are we not honouring, whose potential is not being valued?





Q19_

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

We define audience development as active participation through co-creation and co-realisation: our audience is on stage! This starts in the programme, the heart of MB2030, with tools that activate communities as performers, and continues with mixing and blending audiences who identify with these communities.

Many people don't see themselves as cultural beings. This reality is shaping the programme of MB2030. That is why our audience development strategy has set five goals:

- * For more Molenbeek residents to encounter cultural activities by chance in their daily lives;
- * For participants in cultural activities to connect and mix with creators and participants from communities other than their own;

- * To engage the precarious target groups suggested in Q18 as co-programmers of cultural activities;
- * To make every encounter with cultural programmes an opportunity for people to start considering themselves as cultural beings;
- * To communicate about cultural activities in the programme using the informal, hidden, alternative, digital channels already shaping the social fabric of Molenbeek.

Our projects will focus on dance and music to overcome linguistic obstacles, like in the *Superdiversity Kitchen*; we celebrate popular art forms like hip hop and circus, as in the *Molenlight Festival*; markets and public spaces become platforms for presentation like in *Home is Where the Heart Is*; we aim for artistic métissage; and we invest in translation where needed.

We will even develop extended audiences, with a focus on digital audience development via social media and streaming. Participants from Molenbeek will want their families in their countries of origin to share in what they are proudly producing. Instead of individuals providing snapshots on WhatsApp and other live messaging apps, we will provide proper multi-camera live streaming, in collaboration with Molenbeek-based digital and social entrepreneurs like Yume House, BubbleTech and Molenzine. This will create a feeling of familiarity with the programme, even if not physically present.

Let's return to those physically present. Schools, obligatory and free for all, are the best place to start audience development. Schools in Molenbeek

should be places with the least fragmentation, impacting not just pupils but also parents, siblings and teachers. But, as in the rest of the BCR, there are big differences between education on the Flemish and the Francophone sides, between government-run, denominational and private schools. Schools are not the Equality Machines they should be. We will challenge the 47 schools and directors we have met in Molenbeek, their more than 10,000 pupils and families to work together in VALLEY projects that mix schools, within the context of our theme Wild at Heart, and our *Capital Quinzaine* (a municipal collaborative network of public cultural spaces such as playgrounds, fountains and rooftops).

This is revolutionary, because today there is no collaboration between schools from different educational networks in Molenbeek. We aim to collaborate with European partners as Les Grands Bains (FR) and Edible Playgrounds (UK).

We believe that the best art education is co-construction. Children from different schools across Europe will dance together in *Europe, A Few Years Before*. Molenbeek youngsters will be part of the cast of *Operaï*, and ecological activists will be at the heart of *Rebel Black Soil* with Molenbeek-based Curieu-City and Back2SoilBasics. School choirs, such as the Molenbeek-based Singing Molenbeek, will participate in *Young Song of Europe*.

5_Management & Budget

Q20_

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

Over the 2019–23 period, the city's annual budget for culture averaged €9,806,600, accounting for 4.86% of Molenbeek's average annual budget of €201,578,044.40 during the same period.

This budget supports various cultural activities, including youth programmes, sports, leisure, and media, and covers the salaries of 60 municipal employees. Unlike other municipalities in the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR), Molenbeek has not outsourced its cultural department. Remarkably, despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, there have been no cuts to this budget.

Several partners contribute to the annual cultural budget besides the city of Molenbeek: the BCR, the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (FW-B), the Flemish Community (VG), the French Community Commission (COCOF) and the Flemish Community Commission (VGC) For example, Molenbeek hosts institutions from both the Flemish Community and the French Community, which allocate significant cultural funding to serve the local community.

Year	Usual annual budget for culture in the city (in euros)	Usual annual budget for culture in the city (in % of the total annual budget for the city)
2019	€10,410,000.00	5.4%
2020	€9,127,000.00	4.7%
2021	€9,649,000.00	4.6%
2022	€9,548,000.00	4.3%
2023	€10,299,000.00	4.4%

Investment in cultural actors in Molenbeek (minimum), 2023

Brussels-Capital Region (BCR) & French Community Commission (COCOF)	€5,081,378.63
Wallonia-Brussels Federation (FW-B)	€4,619,446.00
Flemish Community (VG)	€3,392,819.72
Flemish Community Commission (VGC)	€2,174,487.00

Q21_

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

The city’s annual cultural budget remains untouched. Additional funding is sourced from Molenbeek’s general budget, which covers security, the cleaning of public spaces, availability of buildings, offices, staff, and the hours of administrators and planners. We recognise that the demand will change due to the ECOC and the city is open to adjusting budget spending over the next few years to ensure that crucial partners in Molenbeek can grow in terms of capacity.

Q22_

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

Molenbeek plans to continue spending an average of €10.3 million (4.4% of the overall budget so far) per year after 2030. In addition, Molenbeek will invest an extra €80,000 each year in 2031 and 2032, from the budget of the ECOC in legacy projects – a small part of the €4.2 million (3.80%) allocated for legacy by all funding partners. The main impact of the legacy projects is that the city’s cultural communities and citizen groups that worked together will acknowledge and strengthen each other’s capacities and seek further cooperation. Therefore, legacy funding supports institutions and individuals focused on fostering and sustaining this new collaborative attitude. In other words, the ‘ECOC’ feeling ensures that in the following years, institutions maintain the momentum, thereby driving the legacy forward.

The legacy budget will be spent on making these new connections visible, further internationalising them where possible, and encouraging new generations of creatives and artists to join and strengthen these bonds. Dedicated staff will be appointed to support these efforts.

Q23_

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

Total income to cover operating expenditure (in euros)	From the public sector (in euros)	From the public sector (in %)	From the private sector	From the private sector (in %)
€89,610,000.00	€80,610,000.00	90%	€9,000,000.00	10%

The budget is based on experience with the budget arrangements of Mons 2015 and Bruges 2002, among others, adjusted for index growth. The cooperating partners have committed to incorporating the ECOC budget into their financial planning. Formal decisions are being made accordingly, insofar as possible, given the federal and regional elections in June 2024 and municipal elections in October 2024. Detailed investment decisions will be prepared and made between October 2024 and March 2025, if we continue in the competition. These decisions will outline the cash flow schedule for the 2026–32 period, specifying when funds will be transferred to the bank account of the implementing organisation for MB2030. In the preparation phase, most of the budget will cover staff costs, communication and cultural preparations; during 2030 it will mostly cover the cultural programme and production.

Q24_

What is the breakdown of the income to be received from the public sector to cover operating expenditure?

Income from the public sector to cover operating expenditure		in euros	%
Others	Belgium Federal Government	€ 15.000.000,00	19%
	Municipality of Molenbeek	€ 4.000.000,00	5%
	Brussels Capital Region	€ 36.500.000,00	45%
	EU	€ 810.000,00	1%
	Wallonia Brussels Federation	€ 8.100.000,00	10%
	Flanders	€ 8.100.000,00	10%
	French Community Commission	€ 4.050.000,00	5%
	Flemish Community Commission	€ 4.050.000,00	5%
	Total	€ 80,610,000.00	100%

Q25_

Have the public finance authorities (City, Region, State) already voted on or made financial commitments to cover operating expenditure?

If not, when will they do so?

The BCR (in cooperation with the VGC and the COCOF) financed the years 2021-24. After the recent regional elections of June 2024, a final regional government decision on the multi-annual budget for 2025-32 will be made by March 2025 at the latest, in line with the preparations of the past years.

In May 2024, the Molenbeek council unanimously supported the MB2030 candidacy. Furthermore, the BCR and Molenbeek have agreed that Molenbeek will receive from the BCR an amount of €4 million to invest in the project.

Finally, after the initiative of MB2030 to include the Belgian federal government in the negotiations with all candidates, a government decision was made to support the ECOC 2030 project with €15 million. The decision includes funding from the Belgian Federal Government (via the National Lottery of Belgium), similar to the arrangements made for Mons 2015 and Bruges 2002.

Q26_

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

Private sponsorship will be managed via the MB2030 Business Club, a network of companies, entrepreneurs and business-support organisations launched as part of the MB2030 engagement process. After a year of preparations, the Club will have its inaugural meeting during *MolenFest*. Working from a shared passion for topics of repair, generosity, hospitality, sharing, caring and giving without return, the network's insight has defined three strategic priorities for the sponsorship programme: 1) increase employment of young NEETs in Molenbeek; 2) integrate circular and creative business models into the local business ecosystem; and 3) act in the long term and be radically inclusive in promoting crafts and the know-how of Molenbeek residents. The sponsorship plan will provide private funders with four options to invest in and be a part of MB2030:

1. Ambassadorship and advocacy: ten committed entrepreneurs will drive the fund-raising work as ambassadors of MB2030 and engage their network to invest in cultural and artistic projects through the ECOC label, with a particular interest in cross-sectorial and cross-cultural Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects aligned with the bid's themes;

2. Mentoring and support: funding, mentoring and networking will be facilitated for creative start-ups, with LaVallée, Molenbeek's creative co-working space as a meeting point for their collaboration with artists and the cultural programme.
3. Crowdfunding and giving: citizens will be able to invest and donate according to a participatory/cooperative funding model, providing a real sense of ownership. P&V Insurance, one of Belgium's biggest cooperatives, will inspire the model.
4. Business partners and CSR investment: direct co-funding of arts or civic projects, in terms of jobs creation, in exchange for benefits such as tickets, visibility, networking opportunities and more.

This plan will be tested at *MolenFest* (a pilot of the *Euro-Season of the New Us*), engaging local entrepreneurs and start-ups from Molenbeek, the Molenbeek Traders' Association, and municipal business support agents. We discussed with P&V Insurance and the P&V Foundation (already a private sponsor of the *Youth Coalition*) to support the next stages of development for the MB2030 Business Club, with a focus on social economy partners.

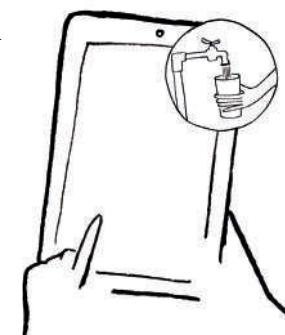
Q27_

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

Programme expenditure (in euros)	€56,454,300.00
Programme expenditure (in %)	63%
Promotion and marketing (in euros)	€17,025,900.00
Promotion and marketing (in %)	19%
Wages, overheads, administration (in euros)	€12,545,400.00
Wages, overheads, administration (in %)	14%
Other - reserve (in euros)	€3,584,400.00
Other - reserve (in %)	4%
Total of the operating expenditure	€89,610,000.00



The salaries of creative individuals working on artistic and cultural projects represent the largest cost, highlighting that this is a people-focused initiative. Evaluation of these projects accounts for 2% of the budget, emphasising the importance of assessing artistic initiatives.



Q28_

What is the breakdown of the income to be received from the public sector to cover capital expenditure in connection with the title year? Please fill in the table below.

	Income from the public sector to cover capital expenditure	in euros	%
	Belgian Federal Government (Beliris)	€ 18.916.097,00	43%
	Municipality of Molenbeek	€ 4.450.000,00	10%
	Brussels Capital Region	€ 13.223.404,20	30%
	EU (Efro)	€ 6.061.000,00	14%
Others	Flanders	€ 750.000,00	2%
	Flemish Community Commision	€ 500.000,00	1%
	Total	€ 43.900.501,20	100%

Q29_

Have the public finance authorities (city, region, State) already voted on or made financial commitments to cover capital expenditure? If not, when will they do so?

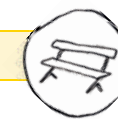
Q31_

If appropriate, please insert a table here that specifies which amounts will be spent for new cultural infrastructure to be used in the framework of the title year.

The following table combines the two questions above (29, 31). You will find the breakdown of the income in the second column (Q31), the financial commitments of the government(s) in columns one and three (Q29)



Envi-sioned date (Q29)	Amount in euros as decided (Q31)	Public finance authority (Q31)	Location	Destination
2029	€2,500,000.00	Belgian Federal Government *	West Station (wasteland, MolenWest, or Brasserie Vandenheuvel)	Visitor centre (purchase of the building)
2026	€8,429,000.00	Belgian Federal Government *	Manchester site	Artistic hub
2027	€2,118,543.65	Belgian Federal Government *	FMZ 1080: Maker spaces, Cultural entrepreneurship and circular economy	Recyclerie (Grande Halle)
2030	€5,868,553.35	Belgian Federal Government *	UP – Circus & Performing Arts, Circus Without Hands	Performing arts (circus and dance)
	€18,916,097.00	Total Belgian Federal Government *		* (Beliris)
2029	€7,875,404.14	Brussels-Capital Region	House of Cultures and Social Cohesion	Local cultural centre
2026	In progress	Brussels-Capital Region	Manchester site	Artistic hub
2028	€5,348,000.06	Brussels-Capital Region	Public spaces	Parc de la Fonderie, Westpark
	€13,223,404.20	Total Brussels-Capital Region		
2026	€4,761,000.00	EU (EFRO)	Manchester site	Artistic hub
2029	€1,300,000.00	EU (EFRO)	House of Cultures and Social Cohesion	Local cultural centre
	€6,061,000.00	Total EU (EFRO)		
2030	€750,000.00	Flanders	Circus Without Hands (Grande Halle)	Performing arts (circus and dance)
	€750,000.00	Total Flanders		
2030	€500,000.00	Flemish Community Commision	Circus Without Hands (Grande Halle)	Performing arts (circus and dance)
	€500,000.00	Total Flemish Community Commision		
2029	In progress	Molenbeek	West Station	Visitor centre
2029	In progress	Molenbeek	House of Cultures and Social Cohesion	Local cultural centre
2027	€1,000,000.00	Molenbeek	FMZ 1080: Maker spaces, Cultural entrepreneurship and circular economy	Recyclerie (Grande Halle)
2030	€3,450,000.00	Molenbeek	Public spaces	Parc de la Fonderie
	€4,450,000.00	Total Molenbeek		
	€43,900,501.20	Grand total		



Q30_

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

The use of EU funding for capital expenditure and infrastructure projects is often limited by regulatory frameworks, with the so-called European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) providing the most suitable instruments to fund this kind of investment. These funds are regulated by the 2021–27 Cohesion policy legislative framework and include, among others, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+); and ERDF Interreg. They are managed at regional/local level, by category of region (NUTS2). For example, ERDF is managed and allocated as EFRO/FEDER BXL in the BCR. The BCR is categorised as a 'more developed' NUTS 2 region within the 2021–27 Cohesion policy, and hence only the European Social Fund (ESF) and ERDF can be used.

For the ERDF, the government of the BCR has created a department within the Regional Public Service Brussels specifically responsible for managing and coordinating the Fund, the ERDF Unit. For ESF, Actiris, the Public Employment Service (PES) for the BCR, is the public authority responsible for the implementation of ESF in the BCR.

Molenbeek as a public authority is eligible to receive EFRO/FEDER and ESF funding, with several grants

already allocated to infrastructure projects (see Q31, Ch5). The MB2030 EU fundraising strategy has two goals therefore:

1. To leverage funding opportunities in dialogue/ cooperation between local, regional and civil society within EFRO/FEDER for capital investments;
2. To fundraise additional funding for equipment, cultural programmes, communication and staff via centrally managed instruments (Creative Europe, Erasmus+ and Interreg).

The strategic priorities for EU-funded infrastructure projects are directly aligned with the strategic goals of the MB2030 bid: development of sustainable public space (Wild at Heart), inclusive playgrounds for children, and employment initiatives in small-and-medium enterprises (Equality Machine). Special attention for additional funding will be paid to the New European Bauhaus Facility 2025–27. MB2030 will have a dedicated team/officer to work with EU funding for capital and operating expenditure.

We will walk the talk from the start: We are part of an Erasmus+ Centre of Vocational Excellence partnership, and key collaborators such as Communa, Charleroi Danse and Circus School of Brussels are engaged in European networks and Creative Europe co-operations. Furthermore, we aim to build new European cooperation projects with MB2030 as the leader, capitalising on our MILLS and BRIDGES projects.

Q32_

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

Governance structure of MB2030

MB2030's governance has been shaped by its engagement with other European cultural initiatives in the region of this scope and ECOCs

If we continue in this competition, a private foundation will be established by the government to implement the second bid book. This foundation will aim to protect the core objectives while optimizing business goals. But here are three starting points. First, we do not include active politicians in the governance model. Next: the model has to reflect the Molenbeek and European dimensions on this bid book. And third: we include the civil society that was at the basis of MB2030. Overall: the governance structure will reflect the genesis of MB2030, out of civil society.

MB2030 operates on four distinct levels:

Level 1: Operational Level, where all the daily work is done!

We employ self-managing operational teams with clearly defined accountability. This structure deviates from the traditional top-down hierarchy, favouring an inclusive and democratic process. Roles and responsibilities within these teams are explicitly defined and assigned to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

Level 2: Executive Management

The Executive Management, consisting of 4 members. It includes:

1. Business Director (BD)

The BD holds responsibility for the business plan and oversees agendas for the Board of Directors and the General Assembly.

2. Artistic Director (AD)

Responsible for the execution and integrity of the artistic plan. Together with the Business Director the AD reports to the Board.

The BD and AD appoint the other Executives:

3. Chief Communication

Oversees communication strategies and operational activities.

4. Operations Officer

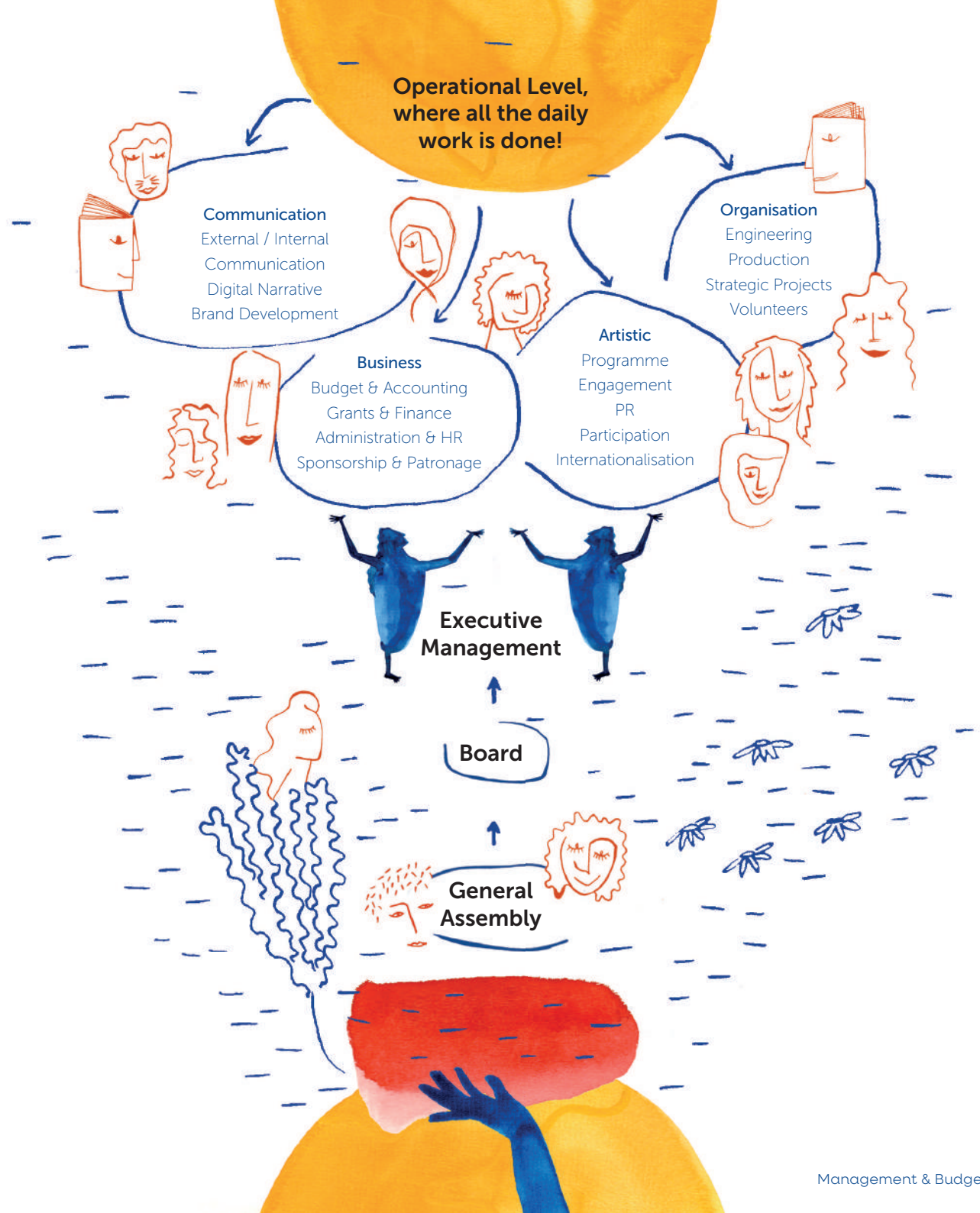
Oversees daily operations and the strategic projects.

Level 3: Board

The Board is composed of a professional chair and six members selected for their expertise rather than their status, language, or political background. We are looking for specific profiles including international experience. The chairperson is dedicating 2 days per month for board activities. The board meets three to four times annually and can establish committees for tasks like financial audits. They may also invite non-member participants, like the BD and AD, for consultations and decision-making.

* **Legal Responsibility:** The board is personally accountable for the organization.

* **Appointment of Executives:** The Board appoints through a committee the BD and AD. The AD and



BD propose the board's agenda to the Chair, who ensures the board's effective functioning.

- * **Strategic Committees:** The Board may establish up to six strategic committees, and convene them as needed.
- * **Government Commissioners:** The supervision is guaranteed by public servants, politically appointed by the main funders. They have no vote in the Board.

Level 4: General Assembly (GA)

The GA consists of representatives from funding organizations, public servants, stakeholders from civil society and cultural field (like members of the Chamber of Reflection or *Youth Coalition*), and members of socio-economic sector or other strategic partners. The assembly meets twice a year, with an option for additional meetings if necessary.

- * **Chairperson:** A chair, voted according to the statutes of the private foundation, will preside over the GA, which appoints the members of the Board and assumes the legal responsibilities as defined in the statutes.
- * **Political and Legal Responsibility:** The GA and its Chair handle political and legal responsibilities, while the Board, led by its independent Chair, manages the organization's legal functions with a pragmatic approach. The joint operational responsibilities lie with the AD and BD.

Q33_

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

Our SWOT analysis for MB2030 was developed through several rounds of workshoping with public, private and civil society partners:

Strengths

- S1 Deep involvement of citizens, artists and civil society, particularly young people, resulting in genuine public support.
- S2 Solid unanimous political support at both the municipal and regional level; all parties in the municipal council, the 18 other municipalities and the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR) officially back Molenbeek as candidate.
- S3 Molenbeek-based cultural production has access to unique assets and talents, so it will challenge world-famous artistic talent to develop and implement high-quality artistic work with a global resonance.
- S4 Whereas Brussel2000, Bruges2002, Mons2015 were dominated by a very tense and politicized Belgian context, MB2030 collaborates at arm's length with a city and region that co-operate well politically, culturally and linguistically.

Weaknesses

- W1 Gaps in cultural infrastructure, with a relative lack of use of locally based venues prepared for world-class cultural productions.
- W2 Complexity of bureaucratic relations between

the BCR, the Flemish Community (VG) and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (F-WB), complicating delivery and financial allocations.

W3 Molenbeek is a city of great social fragility, where social cohesion needs to be strengthened in the long term due to low-income levels, unemployment and similar challenges.

W4 Molenbeek, specifically, the Canal zone, is undergoing a process of urban redevelopment which poses a risk of gentrification and later exclusion of local inhabitants from the development benefits of the ECOC.

Opportunities

- O1 As a direct answer to W1, the local and regional government as well as their partners are already leveraging public funding and efforts to develop and equip cultural infrastructure for the delivery of the ECOC year at world-class level, which will remain as a legacy after 2030 and transform Molenbeek into a global powerhouse of artistic production.
- O2 As a direct answer to W2, broad public support for a common regional project beyond political divisions, with goals for integrated cultural policy and cross-silo cultural production (multilingual, accessible, inclusive) with the potential to democratise the regional cultural ecosystem.
- O3 As a direct answer to W3 and W4, ECOC provides social, creative and human elements to a wider process of urban development, also in upper Molenbeek and other areas in need of development. Not exclusively in terms of infrastructure, but

mostly investment in people so that the project, instead of gentrification, can generate economic and social value for Molenbeek locals.

Threats

- T1 The ECOC project and Molenbeek being targeted by populists and xenophobes, with the slightest incident getting media attention.
- T2 An escalation of conflicts across the globe can ignite proxy social conflicts at local level, creating instability which complicates the production of public events inclusive for all.
- T3 A victim of its own success, if selected, power players and major institutions of the BCR cultural ecosystem overtaking the process at the detriment of local actors who have driven our bottom-up development.

The approach of dealing with the threats is not completely under the control of MB2030, but the general intention is to work with methods that offer space for dialogue beyond communitarianism. Our project is co-owned by political actors who are aware of culture as a concrete tool to build a common future for a fragmented city and region.

Q34_

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

What We Are All About

Molenbeek is already a global brand, just not one which is true or fair. 'Europe's Terrorism Capital', 'The Islamic State of Molenbeek' or 'the European Capital of Jihadism' are false but infamous slogans about Molenbeek that are still alive in international media. It is the only thing a majority of the world associates us with. Many places in Europe share our challenge of being branded 'hellholes', places one should be afraid of. Is all publicity good publicity? Our communication strategy for MB2030 will flip this script and share new stories about Molenbeek and about other Molenbeeks across Europe as places of culture, solidarity and care.

We believe in positive minority influence: active outsiders are at the source of all social change. We are these positive outsiders we have been waiting for. However, in a place like Molenbeek, where superdiversity rules (everyone is a minority in one way or another), we want to inspire change in the form of a co-produced, creolised 'New Us'. We aim to assemble the best parts into a unified whole – not unlike the Belgian national football team. Hoping that all this will inspire other cities, the BCR and the European continent to do the same, on both a small and big scale.

Our objective is to create a conversation and a story in which together, sleeves rolled up, by trying, tasting

and testing, we find the way forward into a creolised cultural future for Europe.

'Flip the Script' as a Slogan and Strategy

Flip the Script creates new dialogues between all of us as minorities and pushes new viewpoints with consistency, autonomy and a bit of flair. It engages on a local and international level by empowering Europeans to express themselves on subjects ranging from art to identity.

Our strategy will be driven by experiential initiatives – doing rather than saying, and proving that our diversity is the key ingredient for creating a new future for Europe. Often seen as a divisive factor, this unique trait will act as the connecting clue of diverse cultures and how they transform from scattered minorities into a solidified collective with distinct voices. Let's get the locals involved! We want to co-create with the community, identify that authentic touch and then export it across Europe and beyond, highlighting what makes the Molenbeeks of Europe tick.

These are our Communication Blocks:

People-First Communication

- * Speak like the locals! We are learning the lingo and its nuances, adapting to Molenbeek and its intricacies when connecting with everyone. We engage in friendly, personable exchanges, making sure our message fits the various social scenes and cultures like a glove. Sadaka is your first new word into local lingo.
- * Bonus points for hinting instead of shouting. We are using subtlety to spark the imagination.

Heartfelt Visual Communication (to Overcome Language Barriers)

People are all about emotions and social connections. We tap into those on their favourite social networks and their channels of intimacy, like webchat message groups for transnational families or diaspora communities, reaching already connected people across many countries. Our vivid approach uses colourful images, visuals and icons to bring everyone together. Think tons of video-related content and future media that transmit real-life experiences. At the same time, we will be teaming up with local groups, influential figures and community advocates to spread our message. Partner and ambassador programmes are a go!

Our Game Plan

So, how are we going to make this happen? Slowly but surely, we will turn ourselves from separate minorities into a superdiverse new collective, where inclusivity is the new norm. Our strategy is articulated around a large-scale initiative in Molenbeek that will generate hype throughout Europe, complemented by strategic partnerships.

It consists of a co-creative art installation, a giant Flipboard that **Flips the Script** on perceptions of Molenbeek and celebrates and communicates all of Europe's voices. The Flipboard empowers Europeans to express themselves on subjects ranging from art to identity and engages them on a local and international level.

It will invite and embrace proud self-expression from Molenbeek and across Europe. We will provide a year-long series of simple prompts: sentences that can be completed by a single word or short phrase meant to engage Molenbeek residents and Europeans from all over the continent. (Example: Molenbeek is _____ or What you don't know about Molenbeek is _____ or What is Europe's greatest cultural strength?) A simple microsite will host the daily prompts; as responses are entered, we get to see the physical and virtual Flipbook change in real time as the world's largest collaborative art installation. We begin prompting in Molenbeek and then tweak the questions to invite input from around Europe. The result is an inspiring, tactile (and Insta-

Target Audiences:

- citizens in Molenbeek and Brussels region citizens
- citizens in other Molenbeeks across Europe and beyond
- volunteers, creative partners, and the cultural scene
- Transmetropolitan Europeans, Cultural adventurers, Extended family members
- companies, foundations, and business organizations
- schools, universities, and research institutes
- local, regional, national, and international media
- European partners and political authorities
- special interest groups, like football or cooking clubs

Tackling Digital and Tech Challenges:

Reach people where they already hang out, online or at their favourite events. We will reach out to everyone by communicating in a decentralised way and by acting platform-agnostic.

Organizing Events and Campaigns:

- Kick off with a high-profile Flip the Script.
- Host workshops and training sessions that create a domino effect both pre and post the activation.

Leveraging Local Influencers:

- Collaborate with community leaders for endorsements.
- Share testimonials from residents.

Communication Channels:

- Local: Community meetings, workshops, flyers, posters, local radio, and newspapers.
- Media: Press releases, articles, and interviews on TV and radio.
- Digital: Social media campaigns, email newsletters, and a dedicated website.

Organizing Events and Campaigns:

- Kick off with a high-profile Flip the Script.
- Host workshops and training sessions that create a domino effect both pre and post the activation.

Grassroots Online Work:

Utilize direct community networks such as WhatsApp, closed Facebook groups, Telegram, Discord, and Signal. Engage local populations to spread our message across European diasporas.

Mobile-First:

Mobile apps and location-based services to stay connected and relevant.

Experimental Communication:

Experimenting with the latest communication tech—think AI, new social media platforms, wearable tech, AR/VR. Building “pixel tunnels” across Europe.

gram-worthy) experience. The Flipboard is installed in an accessible area of Molenbeek; dedicated social channels and a website that features the billboard live shows Europe and the world the responses. We will communicate this billboard of self-expression through various means:

Media buy (Print, Social, Billboards) with a call to action to add your 'Molenbeek Is' to the world's largest collaborative art installation

- * Public Relations Partnerships
- * Behind-the-scenes content involving the creation of this billboard and what it takes to moderate content
- * As this billboard represents a strong symbol of European democracy, we intend to partner with European institutions

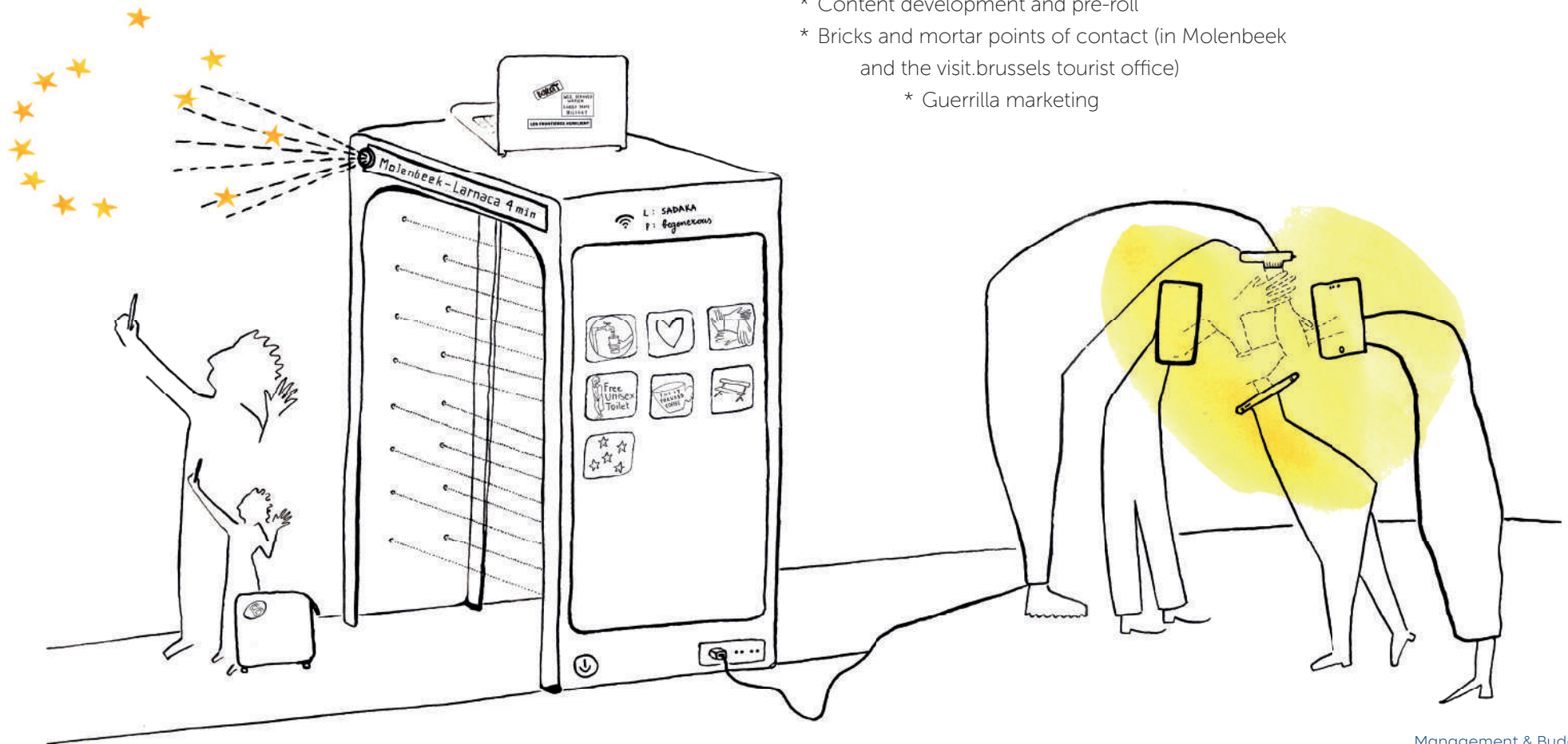
- * Cultural ambassadors of all kinds play a key role in amplifying the effort: local Molenbeek-based cultural voices along with powerful voices from across Europe will play a role in determining the daily prompt, stirring different conversations and bringing different themes to light.

A multichannel content platform and strategy

The pillars of our strategy described above will be anchors to our storytelling and content platform.

These will be brought to life through:

- * The MB2030 app and website
- * Search Engine Optimisation strategy on our ownable keywords
- * Outdoor marketing
- * Media buys
- * Content development and pre-roll
- * Bricks and mortar points of contact (in Molenbeek and the visit.brussels tourist office)
 - * Guerrilla marketing



Q35_

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

MB2030 aims to celebrate solidarity, a goal underlying European Union Treaties. We do it not on paper, but with daily acts of giving without expecting anything in return. The plan to highlight the ECOC as an initiative of the European Union follows this approach, with the following components: see table.

In short, we aim to discover new local heroes by leveraging youth networks within diverse communities, both locally and abroad. More than highlighting symbols like flags, anthems and logos, our focus goes beyond mere representation. We prioritise being actively engaged in areas within our city and beyond, where generosity and collective selflessness are needed, particularly through artistic initiatives, and tell a story of a European Union actively engaged in creative Sadaka and its solidarity actions. The BROOK project of the *European Public Poets Network*, connected to Public Poet Brussels Lisette Ma Neza and part of our theme 'Creole Europe', is an excellent example of how young literary talents from diverse European cities will engage in generously giving voice to their local communities and then going together towards a common European result, with the Declaration of Human Rights as a source of inspiration.

Traditional visibility of the EU	Unconventional visibility of the EU
Visual identity – the EU logo will be placed on all communication material, websites, social media and graphic materials – per official guidelines	MB2030-promoted unofficial competition for a new logo for the EU, based on the theme of 'European solidarity'
Decoration of the buses and trams on Molenbeek routes with the European colours and MB2030 + EU logo	The 'European ride' programme, in which random public transportation users are given a free ticket/ride 'paid-forward' by EU funding
Decoration of official buildings with official insignia and flags, as well as paving and other signage	Production and gifting tents, blankets and sleeping bags to vulnerable groups such as the homeless across European capitals
Inviting representatives of other ECOC (2030, 2029, 2031 and partners from other years) as well as representatives of EU institutions to the opening ceremony, with associated media activities	Associated programme of proximity events between EU institutional representatives and common citizens, like the Long Table of Europe dinners
EU logo featuring on ECOC-related media outputs (TV, radio, periodicals)	MB2030-promoted unofficial EU media released, such as the Brussel-lobbyist simulator mobile game or the EU's street newspaper
Oral mention of the ECOC as an EU action in official speeches	Pairing official speeches to an act of solidarity 'in the name of the EU'
Celebrations of Europe Day on 9 May	Alternative celebrations with indigenous groups and activists to discuss alternative and outsider perspectives on Europe



6. Capacity to deliver

Q36_

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

Six months after the 2016 Brussels Airport and metro terror attacks which shook Europe and the world, then Minister-President of the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR) Rudi Vervoort launched this urgent message: the BCR needs a cultural project that is *representative of the diversity of offerings, institutions and audiences, emancipatory and accessible*. This started off a regional engagement process to apply to become ECOC 2030, in partnership with the municipalities. This ambition was confirmed in the Regional Policy Declaration of 18 July 2019 (after

the elections) and was backed by policy and budget decisions.

As the process gained focus in 2022 and became meaningful for more people, voices from civil society, the artistic ecosystem and the political sphere brought Molenbeek – stigmatised as the ‘European capital of jihadism’ after the 2016 attacks – as the most meaningful choice to spearhead the candidacy. From the spring of 2023 onward, Molenbeek acted as candidate for ECOC 2030, an act that was confirmed on 20 April 2024 by unanimous support of the 18 other municipalities that make up the BCR, under the collective name MB2030.

On 30 May 2024, the municipal council of Molenbeek unanimously approved the candidacy, with

support from centre-left, left, green, centre-right, local and independent political forces. Further confirmation of budget decisions is planned for the spring of 2025.

During 2021, a non-profit organisation at arm's length from the political process was set up with an operational team financially supported by the BCR, and with civil society, regional and municipal stakeholders represented in boards and committees. This team has had trimestrial meetings with the Minister-President of the BCR, the mayor of Molenbeek, as well as 85 meetings with political decision-makers at federal, regional and municipal levels to inform, discuss and anchor the project in the local, regional and national policy landscape. This includes a high-level political meeting between MB2030, the BCR, Mechelen and Charleroi which led to an official decision by Charleroi to cooperate exclusively with MB2030 and by Mechelen to cooperate if we continue in the competition.

In a complex political system with unavoidable changes of persons due to mandate limitation, MB2030 has been developed from a political dimension that is not bound to individuals (so changes of staff in political positions do not jeopardize support to the project) and in which political actors give civil society the space to lead.

Civil servants from Molenbeek – including the head of culture and the head of urban planning/infrastructure – are actively engaged in the development of the candidacy, providing technical and operational support and working as extended members of the MB2030 movement.



1. 09/09/2016: Rudi Vervoort, Minister-President of the Brussels-Capital Region, officially announces his desire to submit a bid for the title of ECOC 2030.
2. 18/05/2019: Regional Policy Declaration positioning the candidacy.
3. Spring 2021: Organisational bodies set up, managers and team appointed.
4. 26/04/2023: Molenbeek formalised as applicant.
5. 10/04/2024: the BCR municipalities formalise support for Molenbeek unanimously.
6. 29/04/2024: Confirmation of €3 million each year from 2025 to 2030 for ECOC 2030 by the Belgian federal government.
7. 30/05/2024: Molenbeek municipal council unanimously supports the candidacy.
8. 06/2024: Charleroi city council supports the candidacy of MB2030; Mayor of Mechelen decides to collaborate with MB2030 if we continue in the competition.
9. 08/08/2024: Rudi Vervoort, the current MP of the BCR, and David Leisterh, in charge of forming the future regional government, confirm the bidbook of MB2030, including its budget.

Q37_

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

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

The ECOC will give private, public and civic cultural spaces in Molenbeek the resources, skills, local and international connections to scale up and make their operations sustainable for and beyond 2030. As it once was the industrial heart of Brussels, Molenbeek will become its cultural powerhouse, thanks to MB2030.

The urgency in Molenbeek is that there are not enough indoor venues, not enough big venues, and existing infrastructures are smaller, underused and not accessible to all. To compensate for infrastructural fragilities and democratise cultural participation, a substantial part of our programme will be taking place in public spaces, to create more accessibility, inclusion and audience diversity. We will activate streets, squares, bridges, parks, waterways like the canal, and newly equipped venues like the Grande Halle for Recyclerie and Circus Without Hands. Molenbeek has three markets a week in different locations, we will use them as cultural platforms. Some

so-called no-go-zones are being reoriented towards leisure and proximity, like Ninoofsepoort, Tour and Taxis with the Circus School of Brussels, and West Station.

MolenFest 2024 will be a first experience of a yearly festival happening largely outdoors and in underused venues, without compromising on artistic excellence. The internationally recognized talent that rehearses in Molenbeek does not perform here. Companies like Peeping Tom and not standing, or Louise Vanneste and Ruda are all willing to open up their rehearsal and production spaces (Studio Étangs Noirs and Gosset site), to Molenbeek and local populations, as well as go out and meet audiences where they are.

The infrastructure we have: Adding up all indoor capacity, there is room to host about 25,000 audience members, spread across various spaces and room types. Some of these are essential partners in the programme.

House of Cultures and Social Cohesion (MCCS)

The MCCS, directly connected to the City, is the key infrastructure in Molenbeek cultural life, producing, hosting and presenting a very wide range of diverse cultural activities, and reaching many Molenbeek artists and citizens. The MCCS will be the main Molenbeek-partner for a large number of our cultural

activities. This will have a long-term positive impact on many levels: several projects, connections with artists and audiences, sources of funding and infrastructural improvements will undoubtedly be the output of this close partnership.

Brasserie Vandenheuvel – Visitor Centre

Today unused, it will become not only a passive visitor centre or exhibition space, or discursive venue. It will also be used as an active, creative maker space, embedded into our BROOK-project *FMZ 1080*, with plans to have filmmaking and fashion creators land at Brasserie during and after 2030.

Performing Arts & Music

Dance is being produced and presented by Charleroi Danse, as the main Francophone institutional player. MB2030 will help them connect with Molenbeek more deeply. Molenbeek is also a hotspot for circus art (UP Circus, Circus School of Brussels, Circus Without Hands). Molenbeek has smaller independent producers that present work in their own small venues, like Ras El Hanout. Some small venues, like Recyclart, present but do not produce small-scale work. The Brussels Event Brewery hosts a major theatre school (RITCS) and diverse, independent, small companies like queer dance space Jezebel Studio. VK and Volta as concert venues play an important role in the nightlife and (electronic) music scene.

Thanks to our BRIDGE Projects *New Synthesis Ensembles*, *European Summer Circus Troupe*, and *Future Sound Stars Incubator Network*, all of these partners will, individually, receive substantial visibility and thanks to the collaboration with MB2030 finally and for the first time form a network.

Cinema

Even if many films are shot in Molenbeek, we have no formal cinema houses. Some partners such as the MCCS and Cinemaximiliaan occasionally organise open air film projections. Cinemaximiliaan is a social film producer with newcomers. They are a key-partner in *Euro-Season of the New Us* with a film-based, associated programme, or in *Home of European Sadaka*, as curators of the film production and presentation programmes.

Museums & Heritage

Molenbeek has four museums: MigratieMuseumMigration (MMM), La Fonderie, MoMuse – Municipal Museum of Molenbeek (MoMuse), Millennium Iconoclast Museum of Art (MIMA) and heritage places such as Karreveld Castle. All of them are partners in our cultural programme, especially the MMM which will be a key exhibition space in *Free-Flowing People*, part of MILL *WildWaterWadi*. La Fonderie is a partner in *Walks on the Wild Side* as both exhibition space and tour stop.

Visual Arts & Design

Molenbeek is a hotbed for visual art creation, with a wide range of ateliers and artist's workshops, from world-famous to the enormous non-professional network behind Molenbeek's open artist studio tours. Some exhibition spaces host contemporary artists both locally and internationally (MIMa, iMAL). All of these, and existing design and maker spaces for professionals (Decoratelier, LaVallée, LionCity) and children (Micro-Folie) will be directly involved in Academy of Unlearning and *FMZ 1080*, as venues and co-producers.

Urbanism

The combination of two serious problems in Molenbeek, the lack of (green) space and the multitude of empty and vacant spaces, or buildings in poor condition, have encouraged several organisations to combine urban innovation, cultural production and social inclusion in (semi-)public space (Parc West, LionCity, MolenWest, Grande Halle). They are venues for *The World Sings in Molenbeek* concerts and for *Superdiversity Kitchen* meals.

Digital Spaces

iMAL, Yume, Molengeek and BubbleTech are hot-spots for digital activities by young creatives and other practitioners – such as influencers and social media content producers. The museum and workspaces at iMAL are a presentation platform and workshop for *L3X1CON OF e-u*. Work and formation hubs like Yume and Molengeek will be active on Real rebel Internetworking.

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

People can move within Molenbeek by bus, train, metro and even boat, offering one of the most extensive public transportation coverage among municipalities in the BCR.

Molenbeek is easily accessible by public transport. We have the largest number of public transport stops/metro stations in the BCR, a huge part of the public transport workforce lives in Molenbeek (check out the project *Europe's Invisible Workforces*).

“Molenbeek is accessible to about 60 million Europeans in under 2 hours by train or plane”

Local and Regional

76% of Molenbeek residents live near a bus stop, 60.5% near a metro station and 68% near a tram line. All four BCR metro lines run through the territory of Molenbeek, with seven stops in total (Ribaucourt, Comte de Flandre, Étangs Noirs, Beekkant, Simonis, West Station, Osseghem). There are 11 bus lines, two tram lines and one in the making, two S-trains (trains that operate within the territory of the BCR) and all three train stations of the BCR are very close to Molenbeek, with connections to the rest of Belgium. It is even possible to reach Molenbeek by water: Brussels-Brabant Waterbus from Vilvoorde has a stop at Saintelette, just in front of our key venue, KANAL –

Centre Pompidou (KANAL). You can rent a Villo bike for the day, and of course, services like Uber, Bolt and Heetch are active in Molenbeek, as well as e-mobility services like Dott and Bird. The public transport (metro, tram, bus) system offers 1-way single tickets with contactless payment at ca €2.60 or a 24-hr ticket with contactless payment at ca €8.

National

Neighbouring Belgian cities Antwerp, Ghent, Liège, Namur and Charleroi are just one hour away by public transport. Within a 1.5-hr travel radius from Molenbeek, the population is connected with an audience of 5 million people because it is so well connected with the centre and the train stations of the BCR. In short, the entire Belgian population could easily join us in Molenbeek.

International

Molenbeek is served by Brussels Airport (23 million passengers/year) with direct flights to 200 destinations in 66 countries, 20 minutes away from the centre by train with a station at the airport and with trains running four times an hour: one-way ticket at €10,80 and €21,60 for a round trip. By bus, the Brussels Intercommunal Transport Company (STIB-MIVB) operates links from the airport to the railway station Brussels-Luxembourg in the European district, €7.00 with contactless payment. With a taxi, it takes 25 minutes to the city centre, with taxis available outside the arrival hall for a fee of €30 and €40.

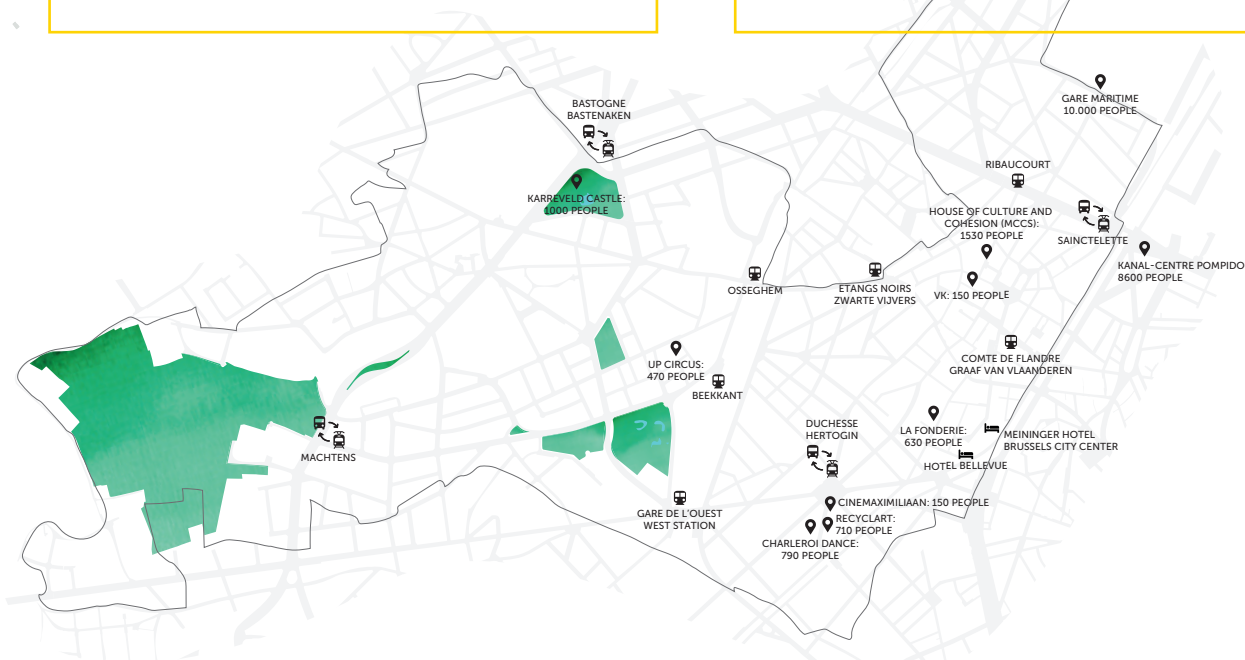
Molenbeek is also indirectly served by Brussels-South Charleroi Airport (6 million passengers/year) focused on low-cost companies and offering direct flights to 100 destinations in Europe. It is located 45 minutes

High-speed rail network:

- * Lille > 00hr34 (6 trains a day)
- * Rotterdam > 2hr (28 trains a day)
- * Paris > 1hr22 (24 trains a day)
- * Berlin > 6hr40 (trains a day)
- * London > 2hr01 (11 trains a day)

Examples of flight times:

- * Malmö > 1hr35
- * Katowice > 4hr
- * Skopje > 2hr40
- * Timisoara > 3hr35
- * Marseille > 1hr45
- * Tanger > 3hr
- * Tunis > 2hr35
- * Jenin > Amman 8hr5
- * Kinshasa > 8hr15



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

Molenbeek alone offers tourist accommodation in the form of: 2 hotels, Meininger Hotel Brussels City Centre, with 150 rooms and 727 beds; and Hotel Belvue, with 29 rooms; 1 aparthotel, Sunrise Apart Hotel with 9 apartments and 7 studios; 1 certified Bed & Breakfast, B&B Leopold II; and 3 other accommodation sites offering a total of 261 beds together, JES Sleep Inn with 89 beds, Generation Europe with 170 beds, and Bridies Bed and Breakfast with 2 rooms. There are about 155 options for private rental locations available, with a pre-Covid average of 23,000 nights booked a year, at an average nightly price of €60.60.

But the excellent accessibility offered by Molenbeek's public transport means visitors do not need to stay in Molenbeek, and our bid can benefit from the tourist accommodation in the BCR: 20,000 rooms, 11 five-star hotels, 50 four-star hotels, and 45 three-star hotels. There are at least 7 new hotel projects planned in the BCR by 2030, with a projected offer of new rooms at ca 1500.

In general, Molenbeek residents are positive towards tourism and putting their city in the limelight. A survey of 1,000 inhabitants in 2021 showed that 88% of the population feels that tourism has positive consequences. 84.5% found that visitors should be encouraged to explore the city outside the traditional tourist areas (meaning that they should discover Molenbeek), and 73% would be proud to have Molenbeek highlighted as a visitor destination.

from Brussels city centre, with shuttles every 30 minutes from/to Brussels-South railway station.

In addition to the strong international connections through Brussels Airport, the BCR and by extension Molenbeek is served by an extensive high-speed rail network (ICE & Eurostar): more than 60 million Europeans can reach Molenbeek in about two hours.

However, Molenbeek also faces a lot of challenges: Molenbeek is not easily accessible for people with physical disabilities and parents with baby strollers. This is partly due to problematic conditions of roads

and busy traffic. Additionally, Molenbeek often suffers from a negative digital reputation and bad press.

Finally, Molenbeek is one of the places with the most polluted air quality in the BCR and Belgium. At night, not all areas are safe, sometimes some places experiencing drug-related violence and harassment of women and queer people. Molenbeek residents do not travel easily outside the area or over the Canal. But it does attract people with a migrant background from neighbouring countries, especially the famous shopping streets.

Q38_

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

The BCR has urban and tourism infrastructure. What is lacking in Molenbeek is large-scale cultural infrastructure. We will activate several cultural hotspots across the city, usually repurposing industrial heritage for civic and community cultural actions:

First contact point:

Brasserie Vandenheuvel (1)

A former brewery at West Station. Shut down in 1974, and offering 5,470 m² of unused potential.

Plan and status of intervention

The acquisition by Molenbeek is ongoing; renovation scheduled by 2029.

Use for year and legacy

It will house the MB2030 visitor centre and offices, FMZ1080 for film + fashion; post-2030 transition to a cultural hub hosting the legacy organisation.

Key engine for the powerhouse:

House of Cultures and Social Cohesion (MCCS) (2)

Molenbeek's cultural and community centre.

Plan and status of intervention

Will be expanded with 900 m² of new artist studios, a sports hall, consultation rooms for child psychiatry, a café.

Use for year and legacy

The MCCS will be a key partner in programme projects such as *1001 Flying Carpets*.

Blockbuster exhibition space:

KANAL / CIVA (3)

The BCR is repurposing a Citroën garage from the 1930s into a museum of contemporary art and an arts centre.

Plan and status of intervention

Under renovation; reopening in autumn 2025

Use for year and legacy

The prime exhibition space for MB2030, partner in *Playgrounds*, and a programme legacy after 2030.

Collective intelligence centre:

Karreveld (4)

Old castle in upper Molenbeek; a multifunctional centre for cultural, sporting or festive activities.

Plan and status of intervention

Owned by the city; will be renovated, starting in 2024.

Use for year and legacy

Hotspot for *European and International Public Poets Network*; legacy as commercial conference centre.

Sadaka in action:

Public Giving Spaces (6)(7)

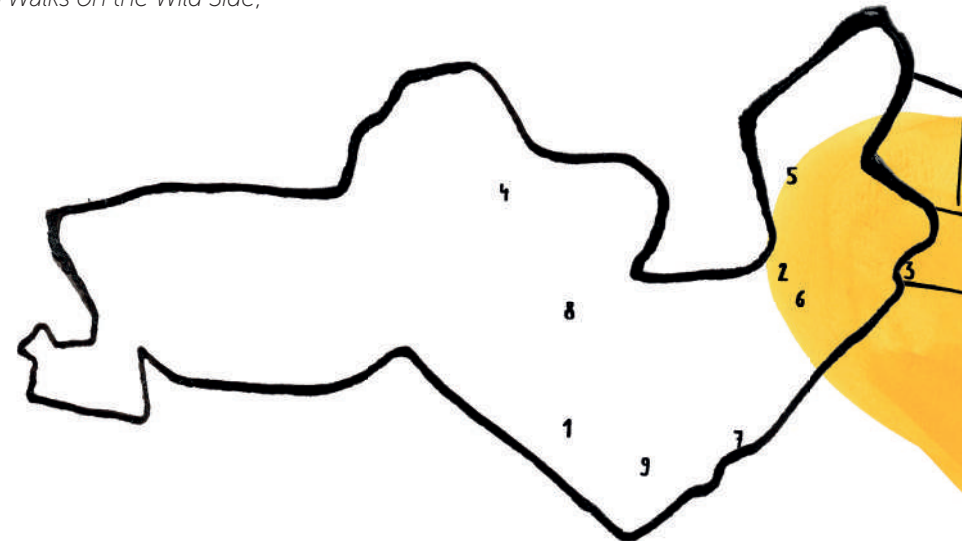
Network of outdoor open public spaces, including *Place Communale*, *Parvis Saint-Jean-Baptiste*, *Parc Porte de Ninove*, *Grande Halle*, *Parc de la Fonderie*, *Scheutbosspark*, *Westpark*, *Anima*.

Plan and status of intervention

Business models confirmed or under development.

Use for year and legacy

Cultural Centre of the *Fully Living* / open spaces for public use after MB2030.



Capacity building: Molenbeek Circus and Dance Community (8)

*UP – Circus & Performing Arts,
Circus Without Hands, Charleroi Danse,
Ultima Vez, Needcompany, Peeping
Tom (on Gosset site), Vaartkapoen.*

Plan and status of intervention

Development of two warehouses, next to la Grande Halle, of 1,070 m² into the HQ of an inclusive circus school, as well as 1,100 m² for stages and 2,500 m² for rehearsal space for new circus company UP.

Works scheduled to be completed by 2026.

Use for year and legacy

Epicentre of the *European Summer Circus Troupe* and *Playing the Market*.

Creative Sadaka street: Manchester (9)

*Recyclart, Cinemaximiliaan, Charleroi
Danse, Cassonade, Santos Palace.*
Cultural and social hub in a former
industrial district.

Plan and status of intervention

Renovation of the first (industrial) buildings is scheduled to start in October 2024.

Use for year and legacy

This street will host and co-produce our cultural and social activities, like the *In.Out.Sider Festival*.

Training and entrepreneurial skills: *FMZ 1080*

LionCity, RECYCLART FABRIK, Decoratelier, Korenbeek, Parc West, Groot Eiland. A city block of creative Maker Spaces, LaVallée (artist studios, co-working and event production) and Grande Halle (Recyclerie).

Plan and status of intervention

Molenbeek development of 40 to 80 micro-spaces providing start-up spaces for new artistic and social initiatives.

Use for year and legacy

The basis for the *Unlearning Academy*.

Digital + CCI:
iMAL, Molengeek, AGE + Fablab'ke,
LaVallée

Maker spaces linked to urban and digital transitions.

Plan and status of intervention

Business plans under development

Use for year and legacy

Important breeding site for digital artists and entrepreneurs, connected to the project *Real Rebel Internetworking*.



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Université libre de Bruxelles, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, weKONEKT

Steering committee of MolenFest

KANAL – Centre Pompidou, Maison des Cultures et de la Cohé-
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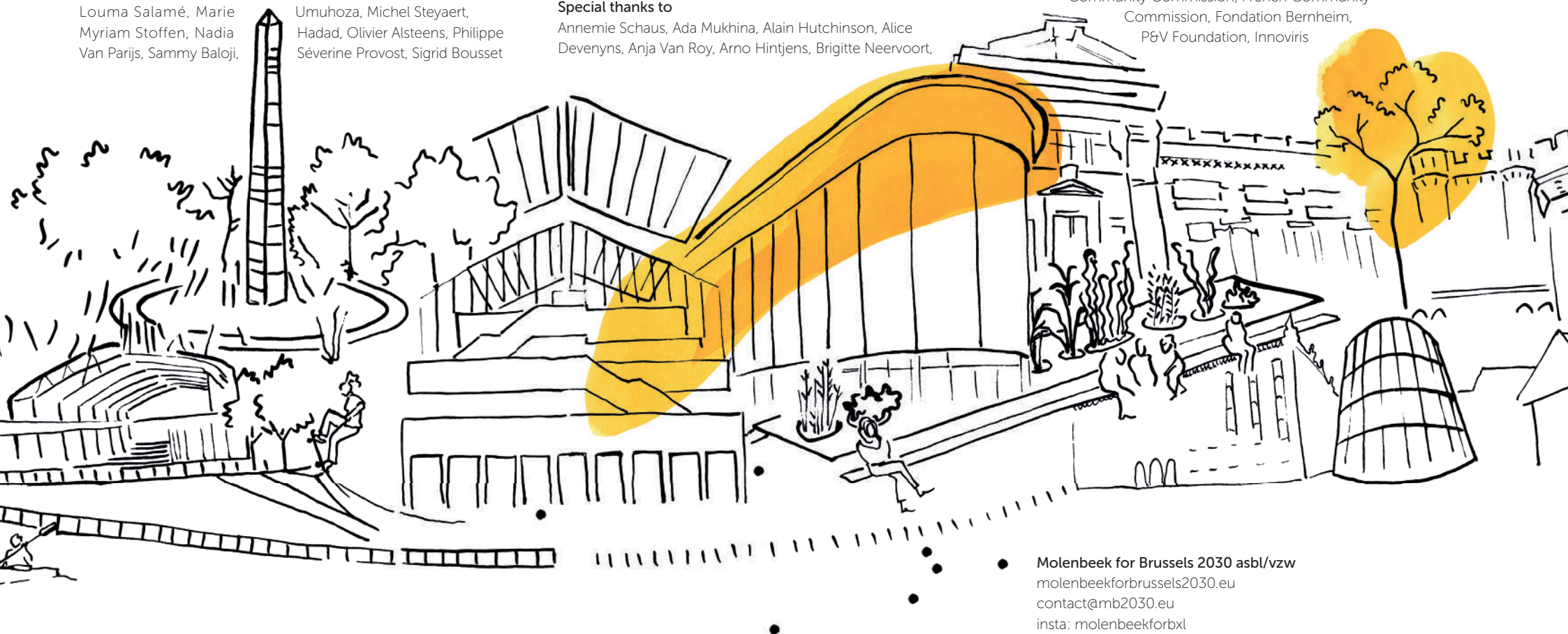
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