

## Leuven named European Capital of Culture 2030

Brussels, 24 September 2025 – An independent international jury today recommended Leuven as European Capital of Culture 2030. The city was chosen over the other finalists Molenbeek and Namur after an intensive evaluation procedure and a jury visit in September 2025. With this nomination, the 45th edition of this European competition is concluded. The organisation was led by the three Belgian Ministers of Culture, in cooperation with the European Commission.

*“The title of European Capital of Culture is much more than the conclusion of a competition. It is a milestone for the selected city, for its surrounding region, and for Belgium as a whole. It shows how culture can be a driving force for renewal, for creativity, and for bringing people together. Locally, nationally and across Europe. It also shines a light on Belgium’s cultural richness within the wider European landscape. As the Ministers of Culture of the Flemish, French-speaking and German-speaking Communities of Belgium, we are particularly proud to have organised this process together, ensuring a level playing field for all candidate cities.”* – The Ministers of Culture of the Flemish, French-speaking and German-speaking Communities of Belgium

In 2030, Leuven will, together with two other European cities, form the cultural heart of Europe. Its programme places art and culture at the centre as engines for a just and sustainable society. The unifying theme ‘HumanNature’ addresses pressing issues such as polarisation and climate change.

Leuven convinced the jury with an ambitious and forward-looking programme that builds on the city’s strengths: exceptional human capital, a clear focus on nature and sustainability, and proven leadership in innovation. Under the title *LOV2030 – Leuven & Beyond*, the city proposes a programme that embraces both Leuven and the wider region, with a strong emphasis on radical connection, European values and social justice.

*“The bids we assessed were very different in their approaches, yet all shared key qualities: pride in local identity, belief in Europe, and a strong commitment to use culture as a driver of transformation. We congratulate the three cities on delivering three exceptional bids. You raised the bar for future bidding cities.”* - Jelle Burggraaff, Chair of the Independent International Panel of Experts

### The process

The title of European Capital of Culture is awarded after a rigorous selection procedure, coordinated by an independent international jury under the supervision of the European Commission. Candidate cities go through a pre-selection and a final round, presenting their vision and programme in a detailed bid book. The jury evaluates applications based on six criteria: long-term strategy, cultural and artistic content, European dimension, involvement of the local population, management, and capacity to deliver.

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## A shared path to 2030

Leuven submitted its candidacy with the support of a broad network of cultural organisations, citizens, educational institutions and local authorities. Over the coming years, the city will further develop its programme in close collaboration with the European Commission and partners in Belgium and abroad.

Leuven commits itself to celebrating culture in all its forms for an entire year, together with cities and regions in Belgium and across Europe. The 2030 cultural programme will appeal to a wide audience with festivals, exhibitions, participatory projects and international collaborations. The city will also invest in sustainable infrastructure and cultural innovation.

**Belgium has previously held the title with Antwerp (1993), Brussels (2000), Bruges (2002) and Mons (2015).** With Leuven as laureate in 2030, Belgium once again has the opportunity to showcase itself internationally as a creative and diverse cultural region.

Discover the programme with which Leuven secured the title: [www.lov2030.be](http://www.lov2030.be)

At [www.ecoc2030.be](http://www.ecoc2030.be) you will find more information about ECOC 2030 Belgium, the preparations, and the pre-selection and final bid books.

ECOC 2030 BE Committee

Managing Authority for the Belgian ECOC 2030 competition

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