THE UNDERSIDE OF TOURISM
LEMESOS 2030 EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE CANDIDATE CITY



PHOTOGRAPH BY PAVLOS VRIONIDES

THE UNDERSTORY

THE PRE-SELECTION BID BOOK OF LEMESOS 2030 ECoC CANDIDATE CITY

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NOTE FOR THE READER:
'Red italic letters in quotation marks' mean direct quotes from the mouths of Lemessolians. You will see a lot of them because we wrote this bid together.

WATER TOWER NOTE:
The Water Tower was one of the most popular answers to the question: 'What would you never change about Lemesos?'. It inspired an illustrated character, imagined as a Lemessolian participating in daily life and culture.

Q1 WHY DOES LEMESOS BID TO BECOME EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE?

'Uncontrollable, impulsive, expensive.'
These are some of the most popular words used in order to describe Lemesos during the 14 months of our extensive outreach process. A city of contradictions, a place of great potential and never-ending activity, while at the same time driving young adults, especially artists and creative professionals, away. Reasons enough to bid for the European Capital Culture, which has already created opportunities for voicing these concerns and bringing out our hidden stories.

As we contemplated our bid for the European Capital of Culture, we attentively listened to the heartbeat of Lemesos, capturing the hopes, concerns, and collective aspirations of its residents. The multifaceted dimensions we explored –from cultural heritage to urban development, safety, accessibility, and the role of culture– revealed a city in flux, grappling with both the gains and the challenges of its evolution. Our ambivalent, *'bittersweet'* relationship with our city reflects the very complexity of our connection. We appreciate its beauty and creative temperament while addressing issues like inequality, feelings of exclusion and a potential loss of identity.

So we need the ECoC...

Because Lemesos is changing beyond recognition
In recent years, Lemesos has been going through a radical transformation. The recent incentivised government programmes designed to promote relocation and economic growth have ushered in a new era of a developing city that is also accompanied by fast-moving gentrification and the emergence of stark contrasts in rhythms, class and capacities among its residents.

High-rise buildings are naughtily scattered around town, urban development *'sprawls horizontally east and west'* and even claims more of the sea. Living costs climb high and the population increases year after year by tens of thousands with new affluent residents.

The city offers bursts of excitement next to suffocation, a multiplicity of grandiose imported entertainment events next to straining attempts of local empowerment. New residents enter the city next to a drain of exposed individuals isolating themselves in their neighbourhoods or searching for a different circumstance outside the city or the country, unable to afford the cost of living or even grasp the speed of *'a soaring city'.*

Lemesos was described as *'an adult in a hard mid-life crisis seeking its younger self in expensive buys, excessive displays of edge and coolness, in the loudest new events and the largest scales'*. And while feeling proud of the city ranking high, in Cyprus and internationally, in gaming, innovation and new technologies, and being the first in sales of land, houses and apartments, this reality emerged in a very short time and took its existing residents by surprise. Lemessolians feel *'hurt'*. For many, life in the city has become challenging and lonely. The ECoC can offer tools for a more human-centred approach, a forum that gives space to reflect on how the citizens can become involved in the change and co-create it.

Because we need a cultural renaissance and civic pride
There is a perspective that the ECoC can accompany an intense innate craving for healing, building momentum *'in the shadows of the skyscrapers'*, where culture becomes present and ready to be reclaimed. For Lemesos, timing is crucial. It is in this atmosphere of urgency that the bidding process for the European Capital of Culture has flourished with great passion.

The overarching expression that emerged during our outreach process is a keen desire for positive change. Citizens have a voice and their voice can be heard, and a cultural renaissance can be inclusive, accessible, and reflective of the city's diverse heritage. From fostering civic pride to addressing the vulnerability of local artists, we realised a common expression of a shared urgency for proactive involvement, collaboration, and strategic planning – all features embedded at the heart of the ECoC initiative.

The younger generations seem closer to Europe and European values compared to the older ones. Being part of Europe offers a sense of safety to them. Especially when it comes to intercepting some of the most embedded mindsets and challenges concerning LGBTQ+ rights, migrant rights, gender equality, political corruption, far-right extremist narratives and fierce disregard for the need to protect environmental and non-human life. At a time when Europe as a whole is also facing these challenges, it simultaneously continues to bring a sense of hope and belief. We sense that, as people, we are moving towards the right direction. The ECoC can be our motor to embody the European dimension. In turn, we can reciprocate and support Europe in dealing with its larger-scale traumas concerning these challenges from our own unique geography and experience.



Because we need to integrate multiple stories
An ethnically diverse city, Lemesos faces new social conflicts, abuse and exhaustion, and seeks to define and share with Europe an exercise of cultural democracy, a process of healing, recovery and celebration of its people. We envision an authentic city where Europe, the Middle East, and Africa are not recklessly declared foreign to our spirit but acknowledged as a long-cultivated multicultural identity. This identity manifests in the way we build our homes, the way we eat, the way we sing, the way we dance, in our language(s), our business ventures, our ambitions. To achieve such self-acknowledgement and to be able to share it, we need the ECoC title to enable us to create a recognised vision that would be supported both by the city and the country.

During the bidding process, we sought moments of coordination and connection. Our plan is to continue doing so, to find and **elevate the stories hidden between the multi-storeys**, and work towards mediating the gap between the different levels of this city. A successful ECoC bid will give us the time to exchange, listen, reinterpret, and understand more narratives, and then to -hopefully- embrace them generously, attend to them amiably, enjoy them fully. **Multiple stories found on the ground will gradually bridge the little separate islands, calm the frustration and heal the burnout.**

This is a critical moment for Lemesos. Because its people are still here and can still negotiate the human pace and the human scale. For this, we strongly believe that culture is the inspiration, the driving force, the catalyst, and the ECoC title is an irreplaceable tool to achieve this.

The bid for ECoC 2030 is a city matter and the city is a matter of all of us. All of us who need to believe that the cultural advancement and the city's maturity can come sooner rather than later, and that we can play an active role in it - with Europe on our side.

Q2 NOT INVOLVING THE SURROUNDING AREAS

The Lemesos district is made up of four municipalities, recently established after a merging of municipalities and rural communities in June 2024. The four main municipalities are: Lemesos, Amathounta, Kourion and Polemidia.

The rural communities are organised into eight clusters made up of a total of 88 villages. So far, we have only involved the Municipality of Lemesos (with 130,000 inhabitants) in our bid, since there is another ECoC candidate (Kourion) in the same district.

Municipality of Lemesos within Lemesos District



Lemesos in Cyprus



Cyprus in Europe



Q3 CULTURAL PROFILE

Although 'Limassol' is the internationally established name for our city, 'Lemesos' is the phonetic match in the Greek Cypriot vernacular, the refocused and closer-to-home choice. The Turkish Cypriots call it 'Leymosun'. It is also a practical way of distinguishing ourselves from the Limassol 2030 Net Zero Mission taking place with the same target year, therefore we are using the name 'Lemesos' and 'Lemesos 2030' throughout this bid book.

A window view of history

As part of Cyprus, Lemesos has seen many rulers throughout the centuries. Mycenaean and Achaean Greeks, then Assyrians, Egyptians and Persians, Alexander the Great, the Ptolemaic dynasty, the Roman and Byzantine empires, then the Franks, the Venetians, the Ottomans, the British. Lemesos has forever been a central point amongst different lands and civilisations. It has been a bargaining chip between empires, yet a constantly flourishing cultural identity and a sight of plenty of mixed marriages! From the famous wedding of Richard the Lionheart and Berengaria of Navarre in 1191 at the Medieval Castle, to the thousands of first generation Lemessolians born today with origins from Lebanon, France, Italy, Britain, Vietnam, Syria, Russia and many more. *'Mixed marriages will solve our bi-communality'* as a solution to our handicapped independence was articulated more than once. Crazy or plausible? Our inherent multicultural spirit and cosmopolitan flavour guide us accordingly.

One could say that Lemessolians are made from multiple colonisations, forced internal displacement, intercommunal and intracommunal conflicts of the past, and neighbouring conflicts. More recently, new immigrants from targeted backgrounds boosting the technology and construction sectors become another part of the Lemessolian mix. What Lemesos is experiencing today is, yet again, a decision coming from above, this time linked to the need for a fast financial boost through passport schemes and other curated migration incentivised programmes. While the influx brings promise and opportunity, it also exacerbates existing challenges, particularly for long-standing residents and marginalised communities.

Closer to Beirut than Brussels

Lemesos hosts the main and biggest cruise port and container terminal on the island, as well as the old harbour and marina which service fishing boats and yachts. At the edge of Europe, we have absorbed and acquired values and aesthetics, ways to celebrate together, cultural expressions, influences and interactions both from Europe and our neighbouring Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries. Some impressions were embedded stronger than others, some were regarded more highly. Nevertheless, they have been integrated into our cultural expressions, language and lifestyles. This allowed for a welcoming environment where diverse industries flourish; business, trade, maritime, technology, tourism, culture. But to flourish without boundaries, risk assessments or management also creates an unstable and detrimental environment for its residents, especially the underprivileged ones.

The Lemesos Vibe

Today, there is a strong sense of what is declared as an authentic Lemessolian vibe. It is narrated by diverse residents, in the spotlight or in the shadows, describing a sense of belonging, of co-existence and of an identity that generously embraces multiple dimensions, such as the long-standing resident of the old town, the queer environmental activist, the single mom theatre director, the intellectual architect, the university student with muscular dystrophy, the first-generation Pakistani immigrant primary school student, the Iranian small-scale contractor and family-man, and so on. Lemessolians are also *'flirtatious', 'naughty drivers', 'yellers', 'huggers', 'easy-goers', 'swimmers', 'open-hearted', 'dangerous', 'party first, work later'* kind of people.

The pioneering municipality

Lemesos is the birthplace of the first gymnastics association of the country, GSO (1892), which led to the construction of a stadium, the first night schools for women (1897), a municipal music school (1965), the Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonic Orchestra with four bands, offering free lessons of various instruments to children and adults. Lemesos is also the city of vibrant large-scale city events like the Limassol Carnival, the Limassol Marathon, the Wine Festival and more. ETHAL, the first professional theatre company and venue founded in 1988, is, to this date, one of the city's main theatre organisations with the municipality being one of its main sponsors.

The city hosts an array of municipal spaces for culture, like the Municipal University Library, the Municipal Arts Centre 'Apothikes Papadaki', two municipal theatres, Pattihio and the open-air Garden Theatre, the Municipal Art Gallery, the Panos Solomonides Cultural Centre, the Cyprus Theatre Museum, the Museum of Folk Art and the House of Arts and Letters managed by the Coordinating Council of Cultural Organisations of Lemesos (1995). There is a permanent collection at the Municipal Art Gallery, and some temporary ones, but opening hours are 7:45 a.m. to 2:45 p.m., Monday through Friday, so locals hardly have any chance to visit. This is also the case for most museums in the city.

The Garden Theatre is located inside the Municipal Gardens and operates mainly during the Summer Season, which is, in fact, quite long here! Pattihio Theatre is one of the fully equipped theatres of Lemesos with an audience capacity of 713 seats. The Municipal Gardens also host the Historical Archives and Research Centre of the city, as well as the Municipal Dance Centre, which is run by Nea Kinisi, the representative body of professional dancers and choreographers of Cyprus.

The Cyprus Theatre Museum and the Water Museum are mostly visited by children via school collaborations and the organisation of interactive and playful visits.

Multiple core non-municipal spaces are well embedded in the city's cultural life. The Rialto Theatre, which co-organises alongside the Deputy Ministry of Culture important annual cultural festivals, is based in one of the most loved squares of the city, the Heroes Square, otherwise known among locals as, well, 'the Square'! Other spaces include the 'ex-space' of Dance House Lemesos, the Vinegar House in the old town, the 'ex-space' of Decorated Bread Museum and Technodromio, Synergeio, and an array of galleries and visual arts spaces, most of which located in the city centre.

Yes, Lemesos has some 'ex-spaces' because we lost venues of important and active organisations due to gentrification and landlords wanting to benefit from their properties in ways that cultural venues cannot afford. 'Ex-spaces' also include six abandoned or inactive cinemas.

Some *'spaces lack infrastructure expertise',* innovation, sustainable and dynamic activity and connectivity with the cultural communities and the people of Lemesos, in general. This was a critical thought that came up plenty of times in our Outreach process and a hard piece of gum to chew. Some municipal spaces need *'creative educational and audience building programmes', 'to open up', 'to become more accessible', 'to invite the cultural professionals in to energise them', 'steps towards more sustainable and less ad-hoc activities', 'interdisciplinary collaborations'* and so on.

Many of the municipal spaces and institutions need a refresher. This is not always easy to admit since, overall, a lot has been achieved thanks to considerable efforts. Lemesos is still a culturally vibrant and rich city, with both municipal and independent forces working hard. The world is moving fast, the city is moving fast, and the cultural stakeholders of Lemesos are losing stamina. Reflecting with a focused mind and open heart, we understand that our current ways are not always relevant anymore; we need to build our capacities and try new paths.

The Carnival

'Lemesos is the Carnival, the Carnival is Lemesos.' This year, the city's largest cultural event welcomed 30,000 parade participants. It feels like, in the ten days it lasts, the city becomes one. We dance and sing in made-up costumes, in squares and streets, in hundreds of private parties and house events amounting up to 100,000 participants from Lemesos and elsewhere.

Come rain, come financial crisis, come political corruption, the ten days of Carnival are, every year, a place of release, of disappearance in the crowds, of becoming another self or one's true self, of coexistence, of collective partying, singing and noise making, of outrageousness and ridiculousness in costumes and in dance. The Lemessolian carnival is an antidote, a painkiller. For the city, it is also a financial and emotional boost, as well as a huge waste generator.

The Carnival, ballroom dances, choirs of all ages and architectural focal points around the city also reveal a *'European orientation'* present from the late 19th century after the arrival of the British. From an admittedly dirty, dark town, Lemesos became a vibrant, active, safe city, and events like the Limassol Carnival began to grow from family and street festivities to urban celebrations.

Dance moves

Dance is a major art form of our city, literally in the blood of Lemessolians, and a vibrant cultural player. Major institutional events hosted in Lemesos, such as the Cyprus Choreography Platform, the Summer Dance Festival and International Contemporary Dance Festival celebrate more than 20 years. Add the numerous dance schools and associations for amateurs or adults, professional dance companies rehearsing for more than 120 performances every year, and you get a city within a city in constant motion.

The Summer Dance Festival began in 2004 as an innovative international venture, but in the last eight to nine years it shrunk, along with its budget, and works mostly locally. It is the first artistic proposition that operated purely in the public spaces of the city with site-specific performances, workshops and gatherings. This was linked to a need for audience development within a newly established contemporary dance scene and the artists' desire to work outside conventional theatrical spaces, showcasing innovation and creativity while staying connected with city life. Frames like this are meant to be boosted and re-sized towards their ambitions and potentials.

In 2007, Dance House Lemesos was established, becoming an anchor of the vibrant community of the city's contemporary dance artists and practitioners. The Dance House also built a rich European network of partners and collaborators. The conflicting reality is that, in 2023, while it had become an official institution funded directly by the Deputy Ministry of Culture, it also lost its venue because of the city's lack of proactivity and support. Almost 20 years after its establishment, Dance House Lemesos is now looking for a home. Regrettably, it is not the only cultural organisation left homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in the next few years. The bidding process acted like a wake-up call, and the municipality is now taking healing steps for the city's cultural stakeholders.

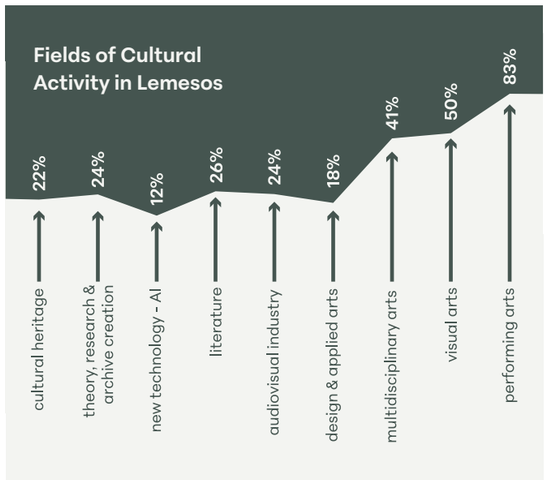
More than dance

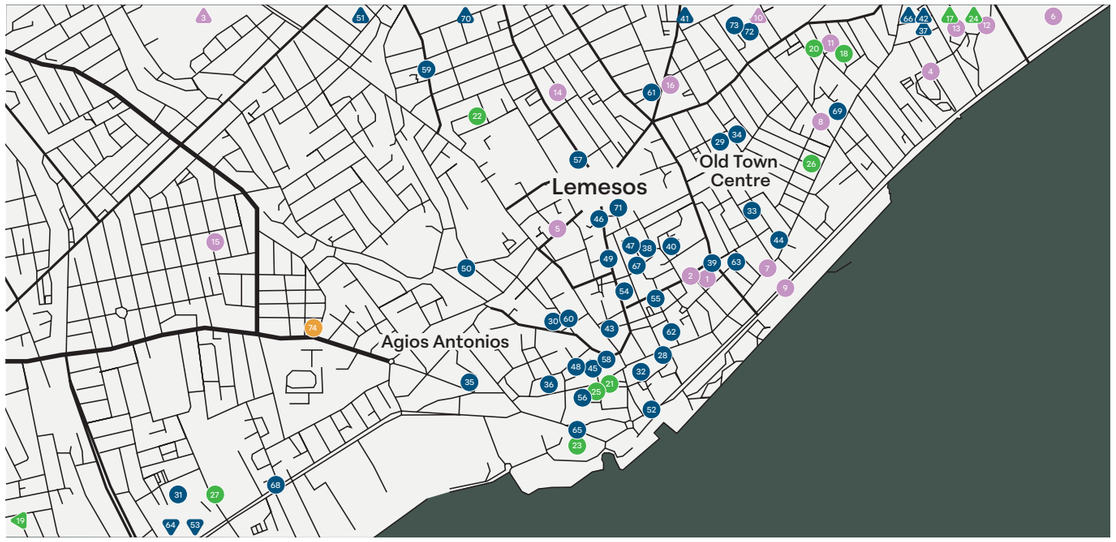
Sardam, an experimental and pioneering performative literature international festival, the Yard.residency programme, the Cyprus International Film Days, the much loved Lemesos International Documentary Festival, the World Music Festival and Fête de la Musique are some of the annual national cultural points of reference happening in Lemesos. Rialto and Pattihio are the busiest theatres of the city each attracting more than 75,000 audience members yearly.

More recent annual events include the Limassol Art Walks, a collaborative event that brought the vibrant visual arts community together and made it more visible and accessible to the general public, Beyond DisDance, an inclusive festival for art practitioners and audiences, the Limassol Book Fair, the Limassol Sports Festival, the Access4all festival, the Philharmonic Bands Festival and many more.

We are doers, not watchers

When it comes to culture, Lemessolians prefer to do things rather than watch. It is easier to get people to join a dance than to sit and watch it, and it is a testament to who we are at heart. Numerous multicultural organisations like choirs, orchestras, literature and theatre groups operate with the participation of hundreds of volunteering Lemessolians and students of all ages. The spirit of Lemesos is a pulsating one, a welcoming one. At heart, we are proud of our multicultural population and exchange with Europe, the Levant, North Africa and the rest of the world. **Lemesos looked towards Europe even before becoming European.**





Municipal / State Cultural Spaces

1. CUT Tassos Papadopoulos Building
2. Cyprus University of Technology Library
3. ENAF Theatre
4. GSO Fitidio Sports Centre
5. House of Arts and Letters
6. Limassol Municipal Art Gallery
7. Limassol Municipal Arts Center - Apothikes Papadaki
8. Limassol Municipal University Library
9. Limassol Sculpture Park
10. Mesa Geitonia Cultural Centre
11. Municipal Cultural Centre Panos Solomonides
12. Municipal Dance Centre/Nea Kinisi
13. Municipal Garden Theatre 'Marios Tokas'
14. Papadakeion Municipal School of Music
15. Pattihio Adult Day Care Centre
16. Pattihio Municipal Theater Limassol

Museums

17. Archeological Museum of Limassol
18. Carnival Museum
19. Cyprus Historic & Classic Motor Museum
20. Cyprus Theater Museum
21. Limassol Castle - Cyprus Medieval Museum
22. Municipal Archive Museum Solonas Michaelides
23. Paradox Museum Limassol
24. Pattichion Municipal Museum Historical Archive
25. Takis Pattichis Museum of Industrial Pharmacy
26. The Municipal Museum of Folk Art
27. The Water Museum

Independent Cultural Spaces

28. Old Vinegar Factory
29. Rialto Theatre
30. Synergeio Performing Arts Center
31. Technochoros ETHAL
32. Theatro Ena
33. 6X6 Centre of Photography
34. ArtStudio55
35. Cornaro Fine Arts Center
36. Cyprus Photographic Society
37. Deryan Gallery
38. Diatehnon Arts & Culture
39. Eins Gallery
40. Exhibit8
41. Hauteart
42. Kapopoulos Fine Arts Gallery
43. Kiklos Mousiki - Live Music Venue
44. Lellos Point Arts & Events
45. Link68
46. MeMeraki Artist Residency
47. Monfik Venue
48. Morphi Gallery
49. NeMe Arts Centre
50. Oasi Space for Visual Experimentation
51. Peter's Gallery
52. Plevsis Hall - Diastasis Cultural Association
53. Psi Foundation
54. Pylon Art & Culture
55. Ravens Music Hall
56. Richard and Berengaria Ball Rooms
57. Rio Cinemas
58. Roots - The Space
59. Rouan Gallery
60. Tapper Bar
61. The Edit Gallery
62. The Gallery 45
63. The Island Club
64. The Warehouse by IT Quarter
65. Trakasol Cultural Centre
66. Views Gallery
67. Ygrasia
68. Kolla Factory of Culture
69. Ad Litteram Cultural Development Centre
70. Centre of Letters and Arts Technodromio
71. Dance House Lemesos
72. Epilogi Cultural Movement & Euro-Arab Youth Music Center
73. Theatriki Poria Lemesou
74. Lemesos 2030 Offices - Municipal Buildings 'Ploutis Servas'

The city has an estimated 100 dance schools, 20 music schools, 15 art schools, and around 30 organisations for amateur adults to sing, to dance, to play music together. There are 17 choirs in Limassol, six of which are for children. Beyond artistic expressions, the city has around 30 volunteer organisations for the wellbeing of children, of health patients, of underprivileged groups. These numbers are a combination of existing yet incomplete records, and our own mapping results.

Sounds amazing so far? All these people attend very few performances or artistic festivals. There is a puzzling gap between participating in some cultural events and not attending others. Even the thousands of students of dance, music, painting, theatre and so on, attend very few professional works and artistic events.

A dynamic but struggling generation

Our artistic languages have been acknowledged, especially in recent years, by many European and international partners. The artistic community grew from the ground the same way that the whole island grew. Lemesos showcases a broad diversity in artistic expression, approach, experimentation and relation to the city. We are imaginative, innovative, and brave. We are adventurers and doers. We say 'yes' more than we say 'no', which gets us far but also in trouble.

In the last few years, the cultural scene of Lemesos is shifting fast following a *'gentrification of the cultural sector'* too. Private companies with great capacity offer a range of large-scale events, from big music festivals like Beonix, cultural fairs like the Cyberness Market, events like the Cyprus International Theatre Festival made possible exclusively from private sponsors and very expensive tickets that most locals cannot afford.

A few of these big companies are also the owners of some of the city's most iconic industrial modernist buildings, ex-factories or large storage spaces like the Coca Cola Factory, the Carob Warehouse, ETKO winery and SODAP co-op; spaces that both the city and the state have failed in the past to expropriate or embed in the city's and country's cultural ecosystem. The task today is none other than to find ways to collaborate and work towards a nurturing co-existence. We need to tend to our urgent needs and raise the ceiling that restricts the potential and capacities of present and future cultural players in Lemesos.

On the cusp of change

It feels like *'the cultural scene in Lemesos stands on the ardour of a few people. What shall become of it when these people grow old or pass away, and their efforts remain officially unacknowledged?'* The concern is real because younger people struggle to survive let alone take over cultural ventures and organisations that have been built over a few decades and still remain vulnerable. Our cultural micro-industry needs to be protected and sustained. The legacy of an ECoC means that both the city and its independent cultural players will have found new ways of working and collaborating.

The city is also busy working on the Mission City Label which was recently gained by the municipality through its participation in the EU Mission: Net Zero Cities by 2030. This is a target that coordinates with our European Capital of Culture bid, and poses a fruitful place of collaboration.

Missing links

Lemesos is more than its luxurious activities and huge parties; it is more than the shiny glass -yet empty- towers casting their shadows both in the city and in our minds. We feel that we live in a city that is *'uncoordinated'*, *'unfair'* and *'reckless'*, yet we still believe in its *'adventurous'* and *'innovative'* side as well as its potential.

We are missing strategic connections between the city, cultural stakeholders and residents, businesses, organised visibility, and efficiency in collaborating with the city's infrastructures and public spaces.

We are missing bridges and connectors so as to facilitate meeting points for the different bubbles and isolated experiences.

We have a city centre that is partly abandoned, largely due to abandoned Turkish Cypriot properties, and we have not established enough frameworks for its revival and accessibility.

We need alternative ways forward through our authentic voices and exercises of collaboration.

We need more ways for engaging and exchanging with our neighbours and Europe's opposite edges.

We imagine Lemesos as a place where public spaces are not obstacles or merely functional but hospitable and aesthetically pleasing, where inclusivity is a cornerstone, and where cultural engagement is seamlessly integrated into daily life.

As Lemesos charts its course towards the future as a luxurious tourist attraction, a tech hub, a maritime hub, a business hub, a sports hub, the bidding process served as a compass, guiding the way toward a more vibrant, sustainable, and culturally rich city.

Q4 CONCEPT

Our concept is **The Understory**. We focus on the stories *'in the shadow of the skyscrapers'*. This intention brings forward the understory, the underbrush or the undergrowth. These are terms that describe life thriving under the shadow of tall trees like our stories often grow hidden in the shadow of the city's highrises. Like the underbrush of a forest co-existing with towering trees, we envision our cultural under-story as one we plan to empower, protect and nurture into sustainable development. **The Understory** is where skyscrapers no longer loom ominously over the landscape. Instead, they coexist harmoniously with the vibrant life of the city below. Underneath their shadow, stories and storytellers have the space and the opportunity to reclaim, transmit, and thrive.

We zoom in on the micro-operations currently overpowered by unchecked development. **The stories on the ground, the stories lying below the visible stories, the sub-stories, the stories of the future.** Our focus is on nurturing strength and cohesion among all our residents, bridging divides, healing our traumas and fostering a sense of belonging in the face of rapid development. We follow the shadows and navigate our capacities in pursuit of resilience, adaptability and empowerment, while advocating for the rights and well-being of all residents, human and non-human, and addressing the challenges and opportunities of a beyond-the-urban-development together.

Growth should not be defined simply in terms of numbers of floors in a building or population density or even diversity. Growth, however it occurs, needs tuning in, coordination with its context, co-existence of its different residents and natural life. It is time to tilt the scales towards a balance where the human scale has as much weight in the city as the weight of its high-rise buildings.

The Understory makes time for the city to deal with its traumas, to heal, to reconnect. Lemesos will be a **CITY IN THERAPY** navigating through vulnerability, different forms of reflection, cultural and city governance, rehabilitation, environmental healing and processes of refocusing. Where almost every city in Europe and beyond has been or is dealing with gentrification and money-seeking development at any cost, we hope to act as an artful example of recovery and stabilisation for current and future similar cases.

The Understory looks for coordination, for connection, for meaningful growth. Stories and storytellers will be **OUT THERE TOGETHER**. We will make space for the city's multiple narratives and realities by giving the stage to the softer voices, the long-standing active and non-active buildings, the small-scale businessmen and businesswomen, the stray cats, the dry rivers, the powerless, the homeless; human and non-human.

The Understory will also make a mess and dance. Opportunities are created for pure experimentation and **CURIOUS FANCY FAILURES**. The city will remember its adventurous side and rediscover its vibrant, exciting, sensitive, innovative and edgy stories. Artists, art lovers, creative individuals currently comfortably or uncomfortably in the darker or less visible parts of the city, the less popular parts of Europe, will find a creative shelter, a safe space to express their 'whatevers' and their 'imperfections'.

The Understory will **IMAGINE A CITY**. Starting from Lemesos, we will imagine a city whose full potential is exercised and utilised. One where a cultural legacy is made possible and, within it, we start to feel rejuvenated because the city will evoke playfulness, joy and pleasure. Youngsters imagine and make their future city by will rather by accident, by choice rather by compromise. We want to imagine Lemesos and every other Lemesos of Europe together; as residents, travellers, neighbours.

We bravely seek to find and acknowledge the different perspectives of Lemesos knowing that they can potentially shift our current viewpoints and burst our bubbles. We dare to tell, we care to listen, we pause to see. **The Understory** captures our desires, our needs and the spirit of our path, and we cannot wait to share this with Europe.

LONG-TERM STRATEGY 1



Q5 CULTURAL STRATEGY

The Cultural Strategy 2024-2034 (CS 2024-2034) was adopted by the Municipal Council on 28/11/2024. The vision for the Cultural Strategy of the Lemesos Municipality, a city abundant with contrasts, is based on the immense potential and the passion of its people, on its past, present, and future. By thinking collectively through a public consultation process, also including a series of questionnaires and interviews, engaging in analytical reflection, and prioritising sustainable change, the Strategy describes the needs and support for the arts and culture in the next 10 years.

The relationship between the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) and the Cultural Strategy is one of cross-pollination. Both carry huge potential for energising the community in different ways, and their differences create greater possibilities when seen together. Bidding for the ECoC title was the encouragement the city needed to invest in drafting a cultural strategy in the first place and the **Lemesos 2030** outreach and mapping work provided valuable information that formed part of the Strategy's premise.

The **CS 2024-2034** is structured around a crossover and interconnected model, based on three pillars each carrying priorities, cross-cutting approaches and a number of actions.

A. Activating the Arts and Creative Economies has **seven** priorities:

1. Rethinking spaces of culture and decision-making management frameworks
2. Capacity-building and skills-sharing for artists and creatives
3. Reimagining public funding
4. Complete and diverse fundraising for the arts sector
5. An all-encompassing ECoC Lemesos 2030
6. Generating Dynamic Cultural Heritage
7. Working with the digital and the virtual

B. Inclusive Development has **seven** priorities:

1. Audience development
2. Democratising space, its development and use
3. Embracing multiple identities: a Levantine and European city, a port and a natural haven
4. Challenging inclusion/exclusion narratives and practices
5. Inclusive reimagining of tradition: 'put the folk back in the folklore'
6. Cultural justice and access for all
7. Activate historic pasts and populations

C. Relationships and Synergies encompasses **four** priorities:

1. Tapping into mechanisms of learning
2. Making skills and competences part of the game
3. Cross-sector collaborations as a spider-web of connections
4. Making space for flagship initiatives: vision, dreams and aspirations

The strategy also has several cross-cutting issues that it engages with, needs that are especially relevant to Lemesos:

- **Spaces of Culture** and their activation, maintenance, and transformation. This requires focused and targeted planning for the care and use of spaces.
- The relationship between **Community Building and Education**, where it connects aspects of the city that are vibrant yet relatively disconnected, and those of formal and non-formal education with the communities that practise art in various ways, as professionals or amateurs.
- **Development and Sustainability** being the constant concern of artists and cultural organisations, as funding and support remains inconsistent or disconnected from the creatives themselves.

Turning Strategy into Action

The abovementioned priorities and cross-cutting issues have formed umbrella action plans for the implementation of the Strategy, which keep it focused and on track. These actions are set out into specific timeframes and under the careful speculation that we could be a designated ECoC in 2030.

- 2024 - 2027: **Evaluations and Planning for Cultural Strategy Implementation,** and **Outreach**;
- 2028 - 2030: **ECoC Planning and Implementation, Inauguration of New Structures** and **Pilot Programmes in Action**;
- 2031 - 2033: **Development and Evaluation** and **setting the ground** for the next Cultural Strategy.

The **CS 2024-2034** closes with the background information that formed the basis for the strategy itself, with an information pool that can function as a reference to the reader:

- Overall **Challenges** faced by the cultural sector of the city, focusing on their relationship with the Municipality, as those have been mapped through the inclusive processes of **Lemesos 2030**, interviews, government/municipal references and other sources.
- A comprehensive (yet not exhaustive) mapping of the **Infrastructure**, the **Cultural Programming** and the existing **Administrative and Management Frameworks** in Lemesos, focusing on the municipal but also referring to important private and other frameworks.
- **Audiences** and their development. The Strategy offers a useful categorisation of the audiences that engage with culture in the city, as the core locals, non-core locals, visitors, and tourists. Each audience category comes with its demographic information, as well as cultural habits, and association with cultural spaces.

The present strategy aims to be informative, but also generative and utilitarian by multiple stakeholders of the city. It will also converse with other strategies and plans of the city like the **Limassol 2030 Net Zero Mission** active since 2023 and the implementation of the **Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan** over the next five years both of which focus on Climate Neutrality and Environmental Sustainability in the city. Ensuring a co-ordinated activity and strategic development between Culture, Urban Planning and Environmental Policy Implementation, Lemesos plans to transform the city in a direction that is not only sustainable, but also a place where the everyday becomes once again a positive and inspirational experience.

Q6 CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SECTORS

It is not by chance that our Cultural Strategy sets its first priority on **Activating the Arts and Creative Economies** as it represents the most urgent of its needs. Aspects of economic growth are central to the strategy, with the first step being awareness-raising, both within the cultural sector, but also within the municipality and other stakeholders (government and the private sector). The Lemessolian scene does not lack internationalisation and this includes its cultural and creative industry players alike. Awareness-raising relates both to possibilities and hindrances; the great potential and the great inequalities that are present in Lemesos. Inequalities manifest themselves mostly in terms of access, to funding and to spaces, to dignity and respect for professional artists, and the possibility for growth, development and sustainability.

But let's see what the cultural micro-industry in Lemesos is made of and how the cultural activity can potentially be distributed:

1. ART AND CULTURE PROFESSIONALS
Composed of local and international artists and designers, art spaces, festivals, residency programmes, a great number of independent productions and events, in an array of languages but mostly Greek, English and Russian. These are characterised by innovation, experimentation, interdisciplinary expressions, contemporary viewpoints and subject matters, as well as conventional artistic expressions, annual events, traditional manifestations and community-specific narratives. The locally-powered scene depends on government or municipal funding and works with low subsidies and weak frames of sustainability in relation to the economic growth of the city, which in turn creates an impact on audience development and visibility. Furthermore, only 20% of the cultural professionals have benefitted from EU funding, but 54% expressed eagerness to acquire knowledge and capacity to access such funding opportunities. On the other hand, in the last decade, well-financed large-scale events and venues funded by locally-based international enterprises have taken on a part of the scene, creating a sharp split in the funding and aesthetic of events in the city.

2. AMATEUR ARTS
A broad spectrum of cultural associations is accessible to non-professional art practitioners, adults or kids/youth, traditionally by Greek speakers, Turkish speakers (as displaced in the northern part of Cyprus since the 1963-1974 period), Cypriot Arabic speakers, English speakers, and more recently by Russian speakers and other migrant groups coming from East Asia and Africa. **Lemessolians practice art more than they attend it.**

3. MUNICIPALITY
A central and active cultural agent, both owning and managing artistic spaces, organising cultural events, and managing a fund for internal use and dissemination to the arts community. The Municipality programmes its own events spanning between big celebrations, festivals in public spaces, exhibitions, cultural gatherings and sports-related events. Funding mechanisms and space management have been characterised by *'introversion and lack of transparency'*. The municipal annual budget for culture amounts to €2m (4% of the overall budget), with the city never until today having applied to EU programmes for culture. The budget allocates 15% to the operation of cultural Infrastructure and 34% to large-scale city events like the annual Carnival and the Wine Festival. A mere 2.5% (50,000 EUR) is offered as funding through an application process to independent cultural activities including both amateur and professional organisations.

4. ARTS EDUCATION
Arts classes are offered throughout the city, with art schools focusing on fine and performing arts, applied arts, street art, literature and others. These classes are partly offered by full-time teachers often through their own business (dance school, art school etc), and partly by artists who teach as a parallel source of income for their art-making. This leads to a limited professionalisation of the field. What remains unexplored are the possibilities offered by a structured non-formal education system through volunteering, internships, as part of the cultural currency of the city, credited in CVs and as currency for working in culture, professionally or as an amateur.

5. iLEMESOS
The virtual life of the city, the use of the physical, the digital and the virtual, as that relates to the cultural field, is a poorly-explored system, powered mainly by the content generation trends of the era. There is a recent vivid aesthetic of how events of all types are promoted or presented in social media and on websites. It is shared among some cultural players of the city and may be described as commercialised, with generic statements of innovation and grandiose statements of emotional transformation. A stunning observation is that Cyprus is a hub for international content creators, with little or no interaction with the local scene.

6. THE CITY AND ITS PEOPLE
One in four people living in Lemesos is not indigenous, but part of a mosaic made of diverse audiences, languages and population groups. A dozen cultures that have made Lemesos their temporary or permanent home, all eager to leave their cultural mark in the space, to create a sense of cultural belonging in new or renovated venues. Indigenous Cypriots include the majority Greek-speaking population, the Turkish-speaking population internally displaced in the occupied part of the island, the few Armenian and Maronite Cypriots, the Latin and Roma communities. Permanent and temporary residents include East Asian economic migrants, refugees, asylum seekers from central and north Africa, the Levantine and Ukraine, and new citizens from Russia, Israel and China.



A disconnected ecosystem
The elements of this cultural ecosystem are disconnected. The **CS 2024-2034** and initial work by **Lemesos 2030** confirm the need to better understand why and how ties are severed, why each sector basically works independently of the other. This results in what we see as the symptoms of the disconnectedness: many artists unable to make a living from their art, inaccessibility for some and not others, lost or abandoned spaces for art, non-transparent municipal funding mechanisms, amateur artists not becoming professional audiences, minimal association with the economy of the city itself, and many others.

Cultural Strategy Plans
The **CS 2024-2034** sets the foundations for a much more interconnected ecosystem where creative economies are established and thrive. Naturally, a successful ECoC **Lemesos 2030** plays a vital role in this ecosystem, as one of the predominant moving agents in the coming years, a catalyst, a crucial mechanism that will move stakeholders, while creating and enforcing connections.

Primarily, the creative economies depend on people, therefore, **Capacity-Building and Skills-Sharing** for artists and creatives is key, along with an inter-dependent reimagining of public funding, in ways that will benefit multiple stakeholders, as part of a diverse fundraising for the arts sector. The creative economies focus will also deal with untapped resources, such as Cultural Heritage and its potential as a dynamic element of culture, in addition to the digital and the virtual, a part of the ecosystem that exists in our day-to-day but is not consciously part of the revenue-generating fabric of the city.

The second element that links the Strategy to the economy are **Spaces**. The great inequalities generated by access to spaces is an element that seriously hinders the full potential of those spaces. However, the high quality of public spaces (the beachfront, cultural heritage sites, etc) and municipal spaces (museums, galleries, theatres, etc), provides an excellent foundation for rethinking and reconceptualising the use of the spaces so as to better serve the arts and the creative economies ecosystem.

The final but crucial topic of **Audiences** and audience development, is both necessary and challenging. The scant information available connecting culture with the economy -and even more crucial links like culture and tourism- is indicative of the need for comprehensive planning. This must take place through the voice and perspective of multiple stakeholders (cultural, commercial, administrative, touristic, academic, others), as there are numerous examples from international practice that link a well-structured cultural product (including spaces, events and others) with growth in economy.

Q7

LEMESOS 2030 AND STRATEGY / STRATEGY AND LEMESOS 2030

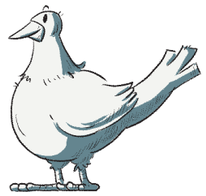
As indicated in Q5 and Q6, ECoC and Cultural Strategy are pollinating each other with their different, parallel or connected ways of building capacity and activating the cultural scene and city alike.

Firstly, the relationship of the two with time is different, since the ECoC is a critical flag post that most of the (long-term) policies build towards and expand from. Therefore, it can be beneficial to plan ahead keeping the ECoC in mind as a milestone, with some long-term outcomes. An excellent example of this is the aim to transition the existing Cultural Office of the Municipality into a larger, more efficient and inclusive entity, which absorbs in part the **Lemesos 2030** entity, with one foot in the Municipal structure and one in the community.

A significant connection is related to diversity, not only of people but also of funding. Thinking in the more outward-looking way inspired by ECoC, the **CS 2024-2034** will create organic and meaningful connections to artists, groups, and funding bodies inside and outside the island, so that the possibilities for artists can multiply, from the confining (many times singular) funding that exists now.

Plurality is an all-around **Lemesos 2030** value, and will serve as inspiration for tackling more ambitious tasks outlined in the Strategy, such as consultations for policies and infrastructure or renovations of abandoned buildings. These efforts aim to resist the powerful push of commercial development and profit-driven motives.

The following diagram marks more specifically where the Strategy meets the ECoC while outlining which objectives of the strategy it responds to.



CS Pillars	CS Priorities	ECoC targets
A. Activating the Arts and Creative Economies	A1. Rethinking spaces of culture and decision-making/management frameworks A5. An all-encompassing ECoC Lemesos 2030	More art in public spaces, in shops, in parks, in unused buildings
		Building towards sustainable and flourishing cultural activities
		Inclusive community engagement & decision-making in cultural activities and even the municipal machine
	A2. Capacity-building and skills-sharing for artists and creatives	Inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary collaborations
		Capacity building programmes for cultural professionals and cultural entrepreneurs
	A3. Reimagining public funding	Enforcing & supporting municipal arts mechanisms and using the ECoC to test and practise different funding schemes
	A4. Complete and diverse fundraising for the arts sector	Fundraising and space activation strategies and approaches exercised, reviewed and sustained
	A6. Generating Dynamic Cultural Heritage	Activation and creative participation programmes for cultural heritage
		Tapping into under-explored industries like design
	A7. Working with the digital and the virtual	Bringing the cultural life of the city in one platform and connecting Europe with Lemesos 2030
B. Inclusive Development	B1. Audience development	Decentralised and participatory projects for all generations
		Collaborations with schools and students of arts
		Intersectional practices and interdisciplinary projects
	B3. Embracing multiple identities: a Levantine and European city, a port and a natural haven	Networks of organisations, geographies, ideas, concepts
		Multiplicity of stories, narratives and voices in cultural programme
	B4. Challenging inclusion/exclusion narratives and practices	Support decolonising philosophy, as a first stint of cultural independence of the sector
		Participation in ideation, targets, design and execution of our cultural projects and processes
		Build new frames of collaboration and outreach
	B2. Democratising space, its development and use B6. Cultural justice and access for all	Accessible spaces and processes for the production of artistic work and/or cultural events
	B7. Activate historic pasts and populations	Reconnecting with our history and re-focusing our questions and stories.
C. Relationships and Synergies	C1. Tapping into mechanisms of learning	Exercising different forms of participation, co-creation, interdisciplinary and intersectional capacity building and learning.
	C2. Making skills and competences part of the game	Building new frames of collaboration between municipality and independent scene
		Synergies between stakeholders of different capacities
	C3. Cross sector collaborations as a spider-web of connections	Network building with other ECOCs & ECOC alumni and other cities and networks for future collaborations
		Infrastructure and legacy projects to sustain exercised collaborations and networking (local - Europe - MENA)
	C4. Making space for flagship initiatives: Visions, dreams and aspirations	Introducing new festivals & institutions
		Elevators for the artistic community and cultural micro-industry

Imagine if next to the **Limassol 2030 Net Zero Mission**, we become a designated ECoC, too. Then, Lemesos really has a good chance to do better, to feel stronger, to work more wisely, to care generously. We began our bidding process convinced that we can make it work and that our **Understory** can truly thrive. The ECoC can be a catalyst for our trans-formation, while nourishing our way forward, towards a new thriving story, or better... chapters of many thriving stories.



Q8 LONG–TERM IMPACTS

Accessibility and Inclusivity of Spaces (public and private)				
Increased Audiences of Cultural Events, Museum Visits and other Cultural Spaces				
Functioning Online Cultural Directory (LEAD see Q19)				
Functioning Networks (local & international)			Confidence	
Embedded Research and Practice			Well-being	
Expanded Cultural Offer in City Centre and Outside			Empathy	
Intersectional Thinking Embedded	Inclusive and Accessible Human Orientated Public Spaces	More days and hours of Museums and other Cultural Spaces, more Income from Entrance Fees.	Wonder	Participation through Consultations on how Public Space is built or refurbished
Dialogue-based Cultural Community	Decentralised Clusters of Engagement and Activity	Income-generating Cultural Projects and Products	Inspiration	Arts-minded Planning
Functioning and Equitable Arts Spaces	Connection between Population Groups	Skills and Motivation to make full use of EU Funding Schemes	Pride	Fewer cars, less noise, less pollution
Monitoring & Evaluation Mechanisms in Place	Monitoring & Evaluation Mechanisms in Place	Digital, Functional Ecosystem with check and balances incl. Public and Private Funding	Respect	Rejuvenated Urban Areas
Consistency in Communication between Municipality and Stakeholders	Consistency in Communication between Municipality and Stakeholders	Equity and Inclusion in Funding Opportunities	Joy	Environmental Agenda Enhanced
Healthy Arts Ecosystem	Accessibility and Inclusivity of Mobility in the City	Solidarity Network for low-income Cultural Professionals	Hopefulness	Accessibility and Inclusivity of Mobility in the City
Cultural	**Social**	**Economic**	**Emotional**	**Urban / Environmental**
LONG–TERM IMPACTS of ECoC				

Q9 MONITORING AND EVALUATION PLANS

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) strategy is set out based on the following main features:

1. Through different media and means, we track how the ECoC is affecting the city, society, the economy and cultural workers.
2. M&E is seen not just as a data collection tool. We involve both public and private spaces, using highly visible and transparent tools and participatory methods as a way to document and inspire change.
3. All results are shared online, allowing them to act as multipliers of change and stimulation.
4. The M&E process is conducted in collaboration with NGOs, academic institutions and research centres, combining traditional social science tools like questionnaires and interviews with artistic methods such as participatory videos and sensory data collection, including sound recordings.

The monitoring process incorporates both qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of **Lemesos 2030** and the **CS 2024-2034**'s impact. By combining statistical measures with personal stories and experiences, we aim to assess not only the tangible outcomes but also the potential changes in the daily life of Lemesos.

Vibesensor Pridesensor

To assess the sense of pride among residents and the Lemesos vibe, we will use interactive boards where our Vibesensor, a simple online questionnaire collecting views (more in Q17), will be adapted and revamped, also including a 'Sense of Belonging' metre, ranging from 1 to 100. Public space installations will be set up every six months, with results shared online to engage the wider community. This monitoring project will collaborate with new media professionals and interactive designers and engineers.

Tracking the Sound of Lemesos

We will document the sound of selected neighbourhoods and public squares to measure the impact of urban changes, human-centred shifts and cultural interventions. This will provide a sensory understanding of how the city evolves over time, how noise calms down, how construction sounds continue or fade, how birdsong and other singing voices emerge. This project will be conducted in collaboration with the Aura Lab of the Fine Arts Department, Cyprus University of Technology.

Measuring Stories*

In collaboration with an NGO, we will use participatory video projects as an M&E tool. For each phase of the project, five to ten individuals will be trained to document their cultural lives for 20 hours a month (about 40 minutes a day). This project will run through 2028, 2029, 2030, and 2031, eventually involving 100 people from underprivileged communities. Selected stories will be edited and shared online, with analysis and reporting conducted in partnership with different research labs of the city's universities.

Monitoring Shifts*

Through the **Burst my Bubble** project, 30 to 50 interviews will be conducted to capture changes in thinking or shifts in comfort zones among audiences and visitors. Selected stories will be shared via podcasts. These insights will be analysed and compiled into reports with support for the city's academic institutions.

*A documentary featuring stories and shifts from these projects will also be produced involving professionals from the local film industry.

Measuring Employment and Funding

We will conduct annual polls on spending and earnings in the cultural sector, statistical analyses of municipal revenue and arts funding, and yearly questionnaires for artists to assess employment trends. Additionally, the project will track the amount of EU funding secured annually by the municipality, **Lemesos 2030** and the independent cultural and creative industry sectors.

Measuring Audiences and Geographies

We will track our audience numbers and where they come from; local, EU, MENA, international, as well as pure audiences or participatory enthusiasts. Volunteers will boost the reach for this monitoring, and easy digital tools will make our process as time efficient as possible.

Overall Monitoring

Every two years, the overall results will be analysed in collaboration with the municipality, university, and participating NGOs, with an external company or entity overseeing and coordinating the process. This comprehensive analysis will feed into the next Cultural Strategy and future plans for culture in Lemesos.

CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC CONTENT 2



Q10 ARTISTIC VISION & STRATEGY

At the core of our artistic vision is the belief that diversity is our greatest asset, and **every resident, regardless of background or circumstance, deserves the opportunity to thrive.** With our artistic programme, we aim to promote understanding, empathy, and collaboration, and to protect and nurture cultural diversity not only in our city but our bigger home, Europe. We envision a future where shadows of a rising urban landscape are also places of comfort, growth, and belonging.

As a premise to our artistic vision, we embrace the following values and strategies:

- Marrying principles of community arts engagement and artistic excellence practices - community art can be impressive!
- Bringing forward multiple stories, narratives and voices - storytelling through literature, song, dance, theatre, visual arts, design, and more!
- Testing methodologies before implementation, e.g. co-creation of walks or artistic interventions.
- Mixing diverse communities and capacities, generations, ethnic backgrounds, professionals and amateurs alike.
- Dusting archives and enabling access to less common sources for artistic production and new creations.
- Prioritising inclusivity through free or low-price and participatory processes - nothing about us without us!
- Digitisation and accessibility through the use of multiple languages, mobile phone apps, 3D digitisation and online platforms for around-the-world accessibility.
- It is not only about what is happening now but charting new possibilities and pushing for change.
- Creating and refining a connection with art in our everyday life, an art habit.

During our bidding process, many expressed concerns that the Lemessolian *'open-hearted and multicultural spirit'* is fading, especially among younger generations who feel that their city is *'pushing [them] away'*. We listened to these frustrations and expressions of exhaustion and crafted a programme that embraces the shared concerns of both privileged and underprivileged residents. By prioritising participation and co-creation, our cultural projects give residents, short or long-term, the space to be heard and to participate as important players, navigators, guides and storytellers of the change that is happening before their eyes.

Through grassroots initiatives and community-led projects, we seek to empower individuals and neighbourhoods to navigate gentrification while preserving our multicultural heritage.

The marriage of artistic excellence and community engagement

Working with participatory processes brings a negotiation: on the one hand, to remain accessible and responsive to what participants bring to the table and, on the other, to create events and work that are artistically excellent. For **Lemesos 2030**, this is a negotiation that is carefully curated and strategically thought out. We are building the means where artistic work brings the WOW factor forward while it nurtures a dynamic relationship with the place and people it does this with. Community work does not have to be inferior, and artistic work does not have to be far from the community!

The beyond-the-urban development

We believe that by focusing on participation, active citizenship, and cultural governance, we can make Lemesos more liveable and sustainable for everyone. Our goal is to create welcoming spaces that support the well-being of all residents, all species. We tackle current challenges while fostering long-term resilience, community bonds, and a future that respects culture and artistic expression.

This is a process of healing and learning, where we soften our fears through awareness and open dialogue. **We are not here to break down everyone's safety nests and burst all our bubbles**, but to care for shared spaces, where people feel comfortable and confident – whether it is an asylum seeker sharing their experience of homelessness or an elderly resident wishing for more independent mobility and activity in the city.

The party where we go alone and leave with friends

Building up to the year 2030, we envision a force of energy that will shift the daily experience of our city, of our wider connections in Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean and of each other. Amid the fear and stress of recent years, we seek to inspire Lemessolians and Europeans to ask new questions, make new friends, and imagine together.

We will celebrate our many narratives through literature, music, dance, theatre, visual arts, and design, making art accessible through free or affordable events. Much of our programme will take place outdoors, in public spaces, on the coast, in natural environments, connecting neighbourhoods and creating connections between communities. Being outdoors will act as our strongest tool for cultural involvement and audience development.

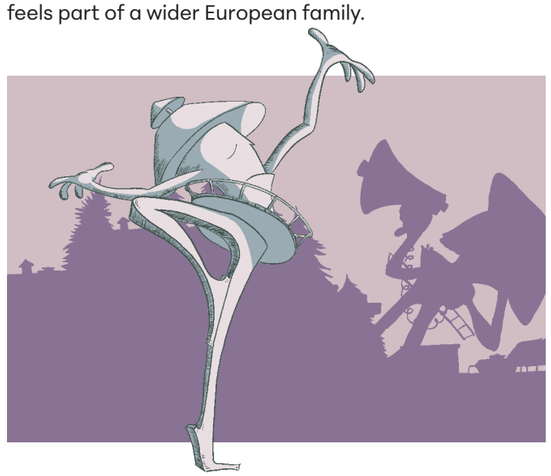
The place of inspiration

We want to continue activating the imagination of Lemessolians and visitors of Lemesos at a time when most of us operate by reaction and task-based routines. Artistic events, interventions and collaborations will elevate this process with inspiration-provoking exhibitions, live performances and public space operations.

We acknowledge that recovery and reconnection are ongoing processes that require collective effort, participation, and commitment from residents, policymakers, cultural stakeholders and urban practitioners alike.

A cultural micro-industry like the Lemessolian one is an undervalued yet brave sector where bold intentions and ideas can be tried out. Given time and space, and a successful ECoC bid, we can bring it forward as an example for the city itself, the country, the European cultural space.

Our artistic vision is that by 2031, we will have found a revitalised sense of ownership and belonging in our city and where we will have reconnected with our own selves as residents of a large-enough-small-enough-city that feels part of a wider European family.



Q11 STRUCTURE OF CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC PROGRAMME

Our Cultural and Artistic Programme (C&AP) is made up of projects and ideas, as well as methodologies and values, that were **co-created with hundreds of people** through our extensive outreach and consultation process. It is a work in progress. You will see some partners referred to as Potential Partners. We are in discussions with all organisations mentioned in our C&AP, and they have all expressed their intention to collaborate with us.



We have set up **four** programme lines:

CITY IN THERAPY
OUT THERE TOGETHER
CURIOUS FANCY FAILURES
IMAGINE A CITY

Each project and activity corresponds to a need in the city, and acts as a 'solution' for each need, each challenge. But before we go into the details, here is what we have in mind as our...

OPENING – TREASURE ISLAND

Boats from various European and Mediterranean ports arrive at the port of Lemesos, carrying art and culture from across the sea: cultural treasures brought to an island of treasures. Paintings, books, songs, stories, ideas, and even artists themselves are brought to the city.

Our LMS Art Platform will livestream the arrival, showcasing the boats entering the port and the container terminal lighting up. The terminal straddlers begin to move, unloading the precious cargo, and the giant machines perform a choreography. One container opens, and delivery riders on electric bicycles and scooters are given objects to transport throughout the city. Riding as a group, they pass through neighbourhoods, 'activating' each one as they go. With every delivery, a light beam shines into the sky, processions depart, music fills the air from local bands and choirs, and the sound spreads and moves from the outside towards the city centre.

Delivery riders and processions continue their journey until they reach the centre, where a stage awaits for the grand performance. Streets and squares have transformed into spaces for bikers, pedestrians, singers, musicians, dancers, actors, and so on. From Lemesos, we deliver a rich multistory to Europe –a vibrant meeting of cultures, a transformative, peacemaking, uniting message of art- one that will be passed on, now changed, to other cities.

From trauma and isolation to recovery and reconnection. We come together to heal our wounds and burnout, and reconnect with our Lemessolian home and our Europeanness. We challenge how the city cares for its people and how we care for our city and the world around us. Our brave artistic propositions and refocused readings of history come through kindness, solidarity and sincerity. We take on the bigger challenges of inequality, climate change, migration and discrimination while also finding everyday joys, and unexpected inspiration. As we process today's pain, we create space for listening, creativity and a shared sense of pride and belonging, within our city and Europe.

CITIZEN OF ALL CITIZENS

Flagship

An **interdisciplinary durational performance and community project**, amplifying softer voices of underrepresented communities. Artistic research, interviews, discussions, rehearsals and performances with everyday people (migrants, LGBTQ+ community members, pensioners, school children, young artists and other minority members) on the one hand, and professional artists, researchers, cultural operators on the other.

A big scale event with principles of community engagement and artistic excellence; horizontal creation processes, critical approaches on ethics and politics of 'amplifying voices', cultural appropriation and 'voice authenticity', power dynamics, and systemic changes needed for long-term empowerment through artistic projects.

Local partners: Rialto Theatre | **International partners:** Maqamat - Beirut International Platform of Dance (LB), Theater Bremen (DE)

OUTSIDE THE MAP

Flagship

This is a **large-scale project** for revealing **fresh perspectives** from countries on the periphery of Europe -territories so far away from the continent they are sometimes omitted from official maps- like Cyprus!

This project fosters dialogue between young people from the periphery of Europe, and between the 'periphery' and the 'centre', in this case, continental Europe. Cities on the periphery have the unique ability to look inward towards the continent, but also outwards. They receive the temperature from the outside and can transfer ideas back and forth. They can act as go-betweens, and facilitate dialogue.

Youth delegates and young artists from Europe's periphery, its centre, and adjacent territories, meet for instigated dialogue, gut responses, **creation of artworks and policy recommendation papers.** This new thought is given to local, national and European authorities, while the new works of art are performed/ exhibited/ screened/ published in participating cities.

Project themes: the impact of climate change and the importance of a socially just green transition; European identity on the periphery, and in which ways we feel European; what peacebuilding looks like in Europe and its adjacent regions today; whether war is preventable; migration and the image of 'fortress Europe'; culture wars: East vs. West; democracy and disinformation; income stability and home affordability for young people and artists; and other issues important to the next generation.
International Partners: Lublin 2029 (PL), Lviv 2030 (UA), LOV 2030 (BE), Kiruna 2029 (SE), Ponta Delgada - Azores, Portuguese Capital of Culture 2026, Victoria 2031 (MT)

WATER STORIES

Legacy Project

We are capitalising on Lemessolians' love affair with the sea, the calming effect of the waves, the open space, and views of/from the water. **Interdisciplinary projects**, **a festival of events and activities** that will bring together technology, science, sports, arts and education, intergenerational and intercultural exchange along with a refreshed connection with our place of residence, and the sea: our liquid edge, our horizon. Existential talks and humour, sweating and slow breathing together, seriousness and ridiculousness, truth-telling and tall stories will coexist, shaking our intellect and our emotions!

So, **we float together**: with events on boats and other sea vessels, on docks and ports. We reconnect with each other and view our city from afar, observe its reality from a distance and imagine its future. Possible connection with events from **Neighbourhoods That Float**.

We move together: we reverse power dynamics by offering cricket lessons to local youth, taught by migrant workers - who are necessary for the city's economy yet rarely integrated and visible in public life. We dance together through an international contemporary dance residency themed around the sea and islands. We energise vertical stories: activating towers on the seafront by holding stair-climbing races, abseiling, storytelling, exhibitions and workshops, enhancing personal interactions.

We discuss and act together: we join the winter swimmers at sunrise and hold unplugged string concerts on the beach, we organise post-swim scientific presentations, workshops, discussions and actions -over our morning coffee- for the protection of the sea and urban natural environment, mental health and well-being.

We eat together: we set the table for hundreds along Molos park on the seafront, to eat and celebrate the culinary traditions and meet the cultures of the various communities living here.

We get inspiration: from international literature on the sea and seafaring and offer creative writing workshops, performances and readings. At the same time, we trace the city's 4,000-year maritime history at 'karnayio' (carenaggio) and its last remaining shipbuilders, by collecting the stories of a unique class of workers, while digitally recording this cultural heritage with 3D scans of shipyards and ships.
Local partners: Dance House Lemesos, Thalassa Festival, Nea Kinisi, Limassol Marathon, Limassol Historical Archive, Coordinating Council of Limassol Cultural Bodies, Friends of the Earth Cyprus, The Cyprus Institute, Limassol Photography Festival, aRttitude | **International partners:** Liepāja 2027 (LV), Kortrijk 2030 (BE), Namur 2030 (BE), Molenbeek 2030 (BE)

HUMAN(C)ITY

Lemesos without all its people is not Lemesos: a city needs to be accessible, inclusive, caring, it needs to be *for -and listen to-* all who inhabit it. This umbrella project addresses themes of democracy, environment, justice, citizen agency, accessibility and inclusion.

KOULLOU MAKKA and **BEYOND DISDANCE FESTIVAL: a performing arts mixed-abilities company** and a **mixed-abilities dance and performance festival** remove obstacles for persons with disabilities to access the arts as dance/theatre performers, as interdisciplinary artists or as audience members. **Proposed/led by:** Synergeio Performing Arts Centre

GENTRIFICATION PROJECT: a multifaceted arts project responds to gentrification and radical change of our urban landscape and its impact on local communities, with think tanks, exhibitions, artistic interventions, performances, visual archives and **a creative documentary** for dissemination. **Proposed/led by:** The Island Club

CoDE - Cost of Democracy: an international visual arts exhibition and discussion circles dedicated to citizen-led activist/political movements of Lemesos and beyond for public space, feminism, ecology, LGBTQ+ rights and more, gives inspiration for future movements and exercises of democracy, citizenship, and collective care.

MAKING DEMOCRACY: a new game is designed that playfully emphasises issues of democracy, human rights and participatory processes made for and with young Lemessolians. **Local partners:** Serious Product Lab (Cyprus University of Technology), Cyprus Interaction Lab (CYENS and Cyprus University of Technology)

PICNIC: co-designed assemblies and picnics, **at the intersection of contemporary art, design and activism,** provide roaming spaces to discuss environmental challenges and propose ways of better coexisting with the local environment. **Proposed/led by:** Xarkis
Local partners: Limassol Historical Archive, Limassol International Documentary Festival, Municipal Arts Centre 'Apothikes Papadaki'
International partners: Art Explora (FR/UK), Schwules Museum (DE), IASPIS - Konstnärsnämnden / The Swedish Arts Grants Committee (SE), Per Art Company (RS), Arttogether- Art of People With and Without Disabilities (GR), Liminal (GR), Artsability Festival - by Unmute Dance Company and Artsscape (ZA), Namur 2030 (BE)

LIVING PEACE

Lemesos is straddling three continents. It is one of the southern-most cities of the EU, in the easternmost corner of the Mediterranean - the closest European city (and port) to the Suez canal, and, as the crow flies, only about 380 kms away from Gaza. Our position results in pragmatic ways of peaceful co-existence: migrant communities that may be at war with each other abroad, but that live peacefully side by side in Lemesos.

With this in mind, **Living Peace** is an umbrella **interdisciplinary project** where we invite artists who have fled war and conflict, and have found a new home here, to present their work, and integrate in the local artistic and cultural ecosystem through **artistic and capacity-building** projects. At the same time we acknowledge and celebrate the city's cultural diversity and its Euro-Levantine influences with immersive interdisciplinary arts projects, as well as joint concerts with meaningful repertory, with musicians from areas of conflict and war. **Potential partners:** Pnam Artist Collective, Pattihio Municipal Theatre, Municipal Arts Centre 'Apothikes Papadaki', Lemesos Intercultural Council | **International partners:** Lublin 2029 (PL), Lviv 2030 (UA), Fort. Mission Festival (UA)

ART FANATICS

Stadium-sized banners, a backdrop of thousands of fans, inventive chants, percussion, music bands, and torch drama: for each match, a spectacle is artfully performed on the bleachers. Sometimes, however, the rivalry extends beyond the football pitch, beyond the 90 minutes of the game, and spills into the street. We would like to explore ways to bring fans from rivalling football clubs closer by showcasing the fans' creativity through online and physical exhibitions. This is a project to bridge divisions between football rivals in the city while tapping into the unexplored field of fan art!

Football Fandom Exhibition: for all teams at the central stadium exposing the complex stories of fans and presenting artefacts and stories of common experiences. Results of these artistic works can be displayed in very short videos during match breaks and on social media; **Ambassadors:** high profile fans (e.g. actors) of each football club who meet publicly, shake hands, wish each other luck, exchange gestures of care before crucial games; **Pre-Match Shows:** Engage children fans to create banners/ chants/ dances for their team - to be presented before a match bringing together early on children from rivalling teams; **Street Art:** inviting clubs to showcase their pride for the city and team through big graffiti in their respective neighbourhoods.

Lemesos has three football clubs and their fans are unparalleled in their passion, building a deep sense of belonging and pride. However, as rivalries can ignite unexpectedly, we have begun a conversation with clubs and fan associations. At the moment, we are starting slowly, discreetly, with grounded expectations, becoming more ambitious incrementally.
Potential partners: United Sports Cyprus, Kanali 6 Radio Station, Limassol Photography Festival | **International partners:** Niksic 2030 (ME)

DEEP COMMUNITY HEALING

The inter-communal fighting in the 1960s and the division of the island after the Turkish invasion of 1974 marked a deep scar in Lemesos. This is a **long-term project for deep mapping and collecting** stories and material on refugees and displacement, while instigating human, artful -and critical- responses to the current division of the island.

A **theatre performance** co-created using devised and verbatim theatre techniques with a mixed cast and staff of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Additionally, we are planning **a series of visual arts exhibitions** with professional artists from across the communities of Lemesos, addressing the existential question of belonging, the mechanisms of nostalgia that come to play with the passing of time, and the role of money in inclusionary and exclusionary practices, of the past and present in the city.
Local Partners: ETHAL Theatre Company, Municipal Arts Centre 'Apothikes Papadaki', Gürgenç Korkmazel, Ahmet Yikik, Esra Plümer Bardak, Nihal Soğancı, Nilgün Güney



'We are different islands on an island, with broken bridges and fog that cuts our viewpoint short.' **OUT THERE TOGETHER** responds to the needs of bringing the diverse communities living in Lemesos closer, even for a bit. The projects of this line energise neighbourhoods, unused areas and urban cracks with small and large happenings. Artists and civil society members are invited to become embedded in different parts of the city and share their unique everyday stories of triumph, struggle, and love.

NEIGHBOURHOODS THAT FLOAT

'Culture needs to get out of the city centre'. An ambitious series of **interdisciplinary and intercommunal festivals** and projects activating whole neighbourhoods! We engage with forgotten corners and stories, old buildings, empty parks, future green routes, homes and street dead ends - and the communities around them. Local communities, amateur arts groups, and local and international artists come together in five different neighbourhoods of the city: **Cine Volos, Agia Fyla, Omonia, Heroes Square** and the **Municipal Garden**.

We will work with principles of cultural democracy and participation. We aim to create a daily art habit, to disperse art outside the city centre as well, and to acknowledge the wealth of neighbourhood stories and wisdoms while building trust between disparate communities.

Human/material infrastructure will be developed and established to make this happen:

1. **Neighbourhood Arts Persons - NAPs:** liaisons, organisers, instigators, connectors in each neighbourhood. Preferably persons from/living in the area, who understand the local situation, population and each street. They create participatory processes, motivate and empower citizens and help them decide which events they would like to co-organise.
2. **Movable Art Kits - MAKs:** Modular architectural elements made of upcycled material that can be pieced together to create meeting spaces in empty lots (e.g. refurbished shipping containers, metal pipes, etc). They provide everything necessary to sustainably implement events including tents, tables, sound systems, screens, projectors, etc. MAKs can be 'claimed' by NAPs and neighbourhoods for specific periods and then returned.

Project leaders: Center of Performing Arts MITOS, Urban Gorillas, Rialto Theatre, Ygrasia Collective | **Local partners:** Nea Kinisi, Friends of the Earth Cyprus, Limassol 2030 EU Cities Mission, Coordinating Council of Limassol Cultural Bodies, Technodromio, EKSO Space, Technodromio, neighbourhoods' schools | **International partners:** Errands (GR), Pla Estel (ES), Le Bloccate (DE), Kortrijk 2030 (BE), Molenbeek 2030 (BE), Namur 2030 (BE), Ghent 2030 (BE), Hend Elbalouty (EG/DE), Orangcosong Art Collective - Chikara Fujiwara and Minori Sumiyoshiyama (JP)

CATALOGUE OF WALKS

Legacy Project

Walking routes that eventually connect all of Lemesos. Artists and civil society members of different ages co-create walks that invite locals and visitors to encounter Lemesos with new eyes, new ears and new, open hearts. **These walks are not the usual touristic city tours.** They tell the multi-faceted stories of Lemesos through its imperfect human experience and its complex history. Small-scale performances, mini concerts, and artistic 'ambushes'; historical facts and conflicting sources for critical thinking; entertaining personal anecdotes; messaging apps, QR codes, postcards, and international 'walking artists' are all expected to fill this new **Catalogue of Walks**.

The catalogue will be populated with walks over the next years through open calls, co-creation workshops, guest artists, and sourcing from an abundance of authentic voices, personal experiences and archives. It will remain as a legacy project and will connect creative industries, tourism and education sectors. These new cultural products may be offered in school programmes, at port arrivals, in various hotels and hospitality venues, and online, for both locals and visitors to connect with Lemesos in fun and profound ways, solo or in groups.

Local partners: Association for Historical Dialogue and Research, Center of Performing Arts MITOS, Limassol Historical Archive, Limassol Art Walks, Pylon Culture and Arts, Eins Gallery, The Island Club, Ygrasia Collective, Friends of the Earth Cyprus, Rialto Theatre, Epilogi Cultural Movement, Cyprus Theatre Museum, ΠΟΛΗΜΠΙΦ, Running Fluent Initiative, Vivliotropio, aRttitude, Limassol 2030 EU Cities Mission, Coordinating Council of Limassol Cultural Bodies | **International partner:** Lov 2030 (BE)

1000 VOICES

Flagship

A meeting of choirs, ensembles and audience members **in a football stadium**, coming together and **sounding as one** as they sing together one single song, one single story. **1000 Voices** will feature choirs and ensembles from across Europe, local choirs from diverse communities, and ensembles from our Mediterranean and MENA region. Audiences of this celebration will be guided by an audience conductor, in a **massive symbolic sing along**. This participatory performance aspect will be complemented by an annual capacity-building program, on creative and technical aspects of choral ensembles.

Local partners: Epilogi Cultural Movement, Jeunesses Musicales Cyprus
International partners: European Choral Association, Liepāja 2027 (LV), Euro-Arab Youth Music Centre (JO/CY/BE), Jeunesses Musicales Internationales



Risky propositions, experimentation, adventurous artistic approaches, and unlikely successes that lead to new ways of thinking about and presenting exciting art. A line of projects to try things out in a new way and embrace the city's and Europe's adventurous sides. We indulge in creative and artistic innovation by taking imperfection seriously and making space for excitement. We remove pressures and open up to renewed meanings of success, beauty and excellence. Stories here do not necessarily have words or a beginning, a middle and an end. What they do have is power, sensitivity, criticality, acceptance and release.

THE PERFORMANCE SHOP

Flagship

An **interdisciplinary performance art project** that proposes a new business model **based on arts entrepreneurship**. It is an actual shop -showroom and performance venue- with live durational performances in its windows. It is also an online store where audiences can choose from a catalogue of performances, services, practices, rituals, and products from the fields of live art, performance, dance, music, and theatre.

The project poses questions on the values and practices that performance can offer to create a fairer and healthier world, as well as notions of capitalism and consumerism in the arts world. The performances on offer focus on empathy and social solidarity; notions of belonging, embracing difference, inclusivity and equality; practices that challenge social norms, the patriarchy, addiction to technology.

Performers are both local and international, while sales/fees help make the project more sustainable in the long run. 'Branches' of **The Performance Shop** in other locations can easily be organised in collaboration with festivals and ECoCs. **Proposed/led by:** Pelma.Lia Haraki | **International partners:** Kiruna 2029 (SE)

SEE CY

Legacy Project

Can you name a Cypriot artist? When was the last time you saw a Cypriot play, exhibition or performance outside Cyprus? If you are having difficulty answering, we don't blame you! There aren't many opportunities for artists from Cyprus to show or tour their work abroad. We want to change that in two main ways:

CY ON TOUR: Showcase events abroad and in Lemesos with invited programmers and through partnerships with festivals and venues. **Artistic exchanges, residencies and fellowship programmes** in Lemesos and abroad. **Elevators** (see **IMAGINE A CITY**) will explore the possibility of establishing a new artists agency closely linked with the city (or even the state) to expand on the current policies and synergies and facilitate presenting work abroad.

LMS ARTS PLATFORM: Expensive tickets and accommodation, reduced connectivity, and long flights (outside the map!) may mean that **Lemesos 2030** might not be easily accessible for everyone. Nor do we believe that burdening the city's infrastructure and the environment with extra carbon emissions for throngs of cultural tourists is the only way to go!

Therefore, we are introducing **a digital platform** to stream signature events and performances and host purely digital projects. For the purpose of capturing stream-worthy video recordings of live events, we will be introducing specialised workshops for video/TV directors and crew in our capacity building programmes. Furthermore, a campaign advertising this platform will take place in various regions through strategic partnerships. For example, other ECoCs and cultural organisations in Europe, cultural centres in the Middle East and cultural foundations in Asia.

International partner: Ponta Delgada - Azores, Portuguese Capital of Culture 2026

ARTS OUT THERE

A series of temporary situations, voice pluralities, stories underground or on the edges.

SESSIONS: AUDACIOUS ACTS AND ENCOUNTERS creates a shared time-space where contemporary performance meets theory and visual art, a pop-up hub and cabaret-style theatre for artists, queers, thinkers, and audiences to connect, share, and engage with new cultural narratives. Curated to blur the lines between performer and observer, **Sessions** bridges local and international voices through selective invitations and open calls, cultivating an inclusive stage for bold, cross-genre experimentation.

This intergenerational, multi-communal space hosts residencies, spectacles, and spontaneous acts, welcoming all as equals to explore and challenge the familiar and the avant-garde. **Sessions** proposes an immersive installation to foster an innovative, transformative cultural practice, celebrating diversity and the intersection of art, theory, and lived experience. **Local partners:** Dimitris & Lex (proposing/leading partners), Ygrasia Collective, Rialto Theatre, Queer Collective CY | **International partners:** Under 500 Fesztival (HU), Y Events (CZ), Braba Platforma (PT)

SARDAM: An **interdisciplinary literature festival** taking place in multiple locations across Europe, and a **Europe-wide mapping of the experimental literary scene**. Sardam Festival is one of the few in its field, focusing on literature and literary performance, including creative writing. Mapping the experimental literary scene of Europe will create a database and publication filled with those authors, artists, performers, organisations, festivals from 21st-century Europe that have an interdisciplinary approach to literature in an avant-garde, innovative sense. Experimental and brave new literary expressions are enabled to navigate our continent and challenge our safe ways. **Local partners:** Artittude (proposing/leading partner) | **International partners:** Nefeli Publishing (GR), Lettretage (DE)

EPHEMERAL ARCHIVES FOR CYBORG BODIES: Arts that are even more out there! **Experimental performances** that expand conceptual binaries, on the one hand, and the quirky, contradictory, **imaginative ways for archiving them** - ephemerally, on the other hand.

Human bodies and new technologies; futurisms and avant-garde performance arts. A way of reimagining the physical body, discussing accessibility, but also offering critique to exclusive social practices. Artistic research, experimentation, workshops and discussions for performative, digital and educational approaches to challenge conventional notions of gender, nature, race and ableism.

Furthermore, a workshop and exhibition turn the idea that archives are meant to record something for posterity on its head. The project plays with ephemeral media: flower petals, rice-printing on rocks, photo printing on vegan gelatine. Political, whimsical, performative and poetic, we are invited to unlikely paths and practices of remembering and forgetting. **In collaboration with:** Synergeio Performing Arts Centre, ITICA lab - CYENS Center of Excellence | **International partners:** Fenia Koutsopoulou (GR/UK)

NEURAL HORIZONS: AI Arts in Cyprus*

This is an innovative project that blends Cyprus' **cultural heritage with AI-powered creativity.** Using the intuitive Comfy UI and other tools, artists and participants explore how neural networks can generate unique, visually striking artworks inspired by the island's landscapes and history. Through workshops, exhibitions, and collaborations, this project bridges traditional art forms with cutting-edge technology, fostering dialogue between human and machine creativity in the digital age. We are also eager to participate in the **discussions on fairness and safeguarding digital creators' rights.**

*This project title and description were generated with AI responding to specific prompts. The future is here and there's no going back.



We finally embark on a journey of collective imagination and co-creation. Building upon the foundation of shared experiences and newfound understanding, we come together to envision and exercise the potential of our future. A line for capacity-building for the arts and culture sector, for entrepreneurship, for networking, for lobbying and thinking ahead. Projects and frames to reconnect, communicate, work better with audiences, with each other, with authorities and make the Lemessolian ECoC legacy a reality. We seek the privilege - no! Necessity! - of imagination, not only survival.

LEMESOS DESIGN DAYS

Flagship
Legacy Project

There is a growing community of designers and creatives -the local universities being the main producers of this community- and it's time to connect them with a wider design ecosystem in the city and abroad. The first **all-encompassing international design festival** in Cyprus is meant to be in Lemesos, with cross-disciplinary practices and extensions in the fields of art, technology, science, education, entrepreneurship, and social impact.

Lemesos Design Days is the place to re-imagine cultural heritage for the contemporary world, examine local vernacular design ways and wisdoms, as well as eco-friendly materials that do not need to be shipped from around the world. High-calibre conferences, cross-industry networking and advocacy meetings, design startup courses, public exhibitions, workshops, playrooms leading to guerrilla publications, digital fabrication and experimental making aiming to empower, rediscover and reimagine the role of design in Lemesos and Europe.

Crucially, Lemesos Design Days coincides with the evolution of the Cyprus University of Technology's School of Fine and Applied Arts (based in the centre of Lemesos) towards Product Design disciplines, and aims to connect design graduates with 'real-world' jobs and the booming tech industry in the city.

To make a realistic start, we will aim for a biannual festival starting small in 2026, growing in 2028 and reaching our first milestone of an internationally-wide event in 2030, continuing to 2032 and so on.

Possible actions and themes include: a new narrative for Lemesos through new souvenirs; New European Bauhaus and the case of Cypriot Modernist Architecture and Design; new products with upcycled materials found locally; sustainable design and new technologies; DIY carnival costume workshops; a sticker and zine convention, the pop-side of design; design ethics and social responsibility; video game coding and design camp; 3D scans to record a particularly interesting or beautiful building, neighbourhood, or view, while also recording testimonies, photographs, videos, etc.; a Cyprus Design Museum with design and technology from antiquity to today; cultural heritage startups events and accelerators. (see Enter Youth below)

More permanent and supportive actions include an Atlas of Information on capacity building, exchange and opportunities, and a patents and certification support agency for design products.

Local partners: Department of Multimedia and Graphic Arts (Cyprus University of Technology's School of Fine and Applied Arts), Serious Products Lab, REC - Reduce, Reuse, Recycling Educational Center, The Cyprus Institute, CAGDI - Graphic Design Association
International partner: Niksic 2030 (ME)

ELEVATORS

Culture stakeholders in Lemesos *'want to meet and talk to each other'*! Artists, collectives, groups, organisations large and small - everyone is so busy producing work, writing applications, and simply surviving, they barely even go to each other's events. This is a proposition for regular meetings between these stakeholders -locally, island-wide and abroad- to discuss pressing issues in their respective 'ecosystems'.

Moderated meetings and focus groups intend to bring the community closer to research the needs, propose solutions for, and **elevate** individual art disciplines, e.g., the book publishing/ theatre/ contemporary dance/ visual arts/ design/ choral music/ museum ecosystems etc. The goal is to create a stronger advocacy voice for the cultural industry, to lobby the local and central government for policy change, and to collaborate with European and international networks.

ELEVATORS includes the creation of networks through a **conference, round table discussions, networking opportunities** on topics of sustainability of cultural work and including representatives from cultural bodies in the EU aimed for local NGOs and artists; a series of **symposia and workshops** for cultural workers around themes of care in the art world; an **international inter-media / interdisciplinary curated exhibition** accompanying the seminars, on the theme of care.

EU FUNDING APPLICATION CLINIC: **a collaborative mechanism to assist organisations apply for funding** from European Union Funding Programmes, with an emphasis on funding for culture, arts, education and related fields (e.g. Creative Europe, Erasmus +, CERV, Cosme, Interreg, Horizon, COST, etc.).

Funding matchmaking, partner search, EU portal introduction, grant-writing principles, elevator pitches, application clinic, peer-to-peer workshops and writing circles, and writing services will be employed to boost the grant-writing capacity of the local arts and culture industry, as well as complement existing Lemesos 2030 ECoC funding.

Local partners: Representative bodies from each 'ecosystem', Neme

BACKSTAGE ACADEMY

Flagship
Legacy Project

A **creative tech and production academy** aiming to fill the void of specialised behind-the-scenes personnel. This is a capacity-building programme focusing on technical-creative, managerial-leadership and administrative aspects of the industry.

A winter camp and regular capacity-building workshops for the next generation of crucial behind-the-scenes personnel. A collaboration between established cultural venues and tech professionals, EU and local tech companies, and individuals interested in hands-on experience and professional development.

New and established stage technologies, aspects of light, sound, projection mapping, video recording live performances for digital screening, how to give and receive creative feedback, ethics and politics of production and artistic leadership, are all themes to be explored and addressed. This project includes paid traineeships in professional settings and one-on-one mentorships between seasoned and aspiring professionals. Backstage Academy will begin early on and provide additional personnel necessary to implement the 2030 ECoC.

Local partners: Dance House Lemesos (proposing/leading partner), ETHAL Theatre Company, Pattihio Municipal Theatre, Rialto Theatre, Limassol Municipal Arts Center - Apothikes Papadaki | **International partners:** The Festival Academy (BE), Liepāja 2027 (LV)

ENTER YOUTH

We direct youthful energy and creativity towards **new approaches and uses for the island's rich cultural heritage**, creating the conditions for a more robust and sustainable ecosystem for local Creative and Cultural Industries, building towards the creation of **a hub for cultural entrepreneurship and innovation** with a focus on youth and the Euro-Mediterranean and MENA region.

Enter Youth introduces entrepreneurship to young people and aims to connect youth from different backgrounds: ideation on needs and opportunities, strategic startup team-building, matchmaking with companies in the 'real' world, mentoring from cultural professionals, prototyping, testing, marketing, sales.

A Startup Competition: challenging high-school and university students to draw inspiration from the living cultural heritage of the island (tangible, intangible and digital) - crafts, spaces, material, techniques, products, design, etc. - and create startups. The project aims to provide students with the necessary skills, knowledge, and tools for careers within the Cultural and Creative Industries.
Potential partners: Junior Achievement Cyprus

Lemesos Regional Hub for Youth Cultural Entrepreneurship: a hub and annual conference with a focus on the Euro-Mediterranean and MENA regions. It gives startup skills and opportunity to young people, and has a peacemaking character, bringing together young people from conflict areas for strategic collaboration.

The conferences will incrementally include: startup pre-accelerator and accelerator educational boot camps; capacity-building workshops (business plans, pitch decks, problem solving, startup ethics, fair trade); incubator programmes with exhibitions, mentorship, investment opportunities, and demo presentations. The Hub will aim to cultivate hands-on skills and mindset for youth to think more entrepreneurially and towards a sustainable career.
Potential partners: Junior Achievement Cyprus, SocialTech Lab, EIT Community RIS HUB Cyprus – CYENS Centre of Excellence

ART-FULL

To tackle a much-felt absence of arts and culture visibility and communication, we are proposing:

LEAD - Lemesos Art-full Directory: A major need in the cultural scene in Lemesos is reaching audiences beyond our usual followers. Currently, there does not exist a comprehensive website/app to communicate information on events taking place in the city, including the underground/experimental scene, the big gala events, the amateur scene and the big established venues. Similarly, information in multiple languages is usually not available, so the communities in the city rarely mix.

Our ambition is to instigate the creation of a smart-phone **application and digital platform** on which all events can be easily found, categorised by discipline (e.g., theatre, visual arts, film, dance, etc.), available in the major languages of the city, with clear information on accessibility (e.g., wheelchair accessible, surtitles, audio-description, etc.).
Local partners: Department of Communication and Internet Studies (Cyprus University of Technology), Coordinating Council of Limassol Cultural Bodies

Delivering Culture: a **project involving a fleet of delivery personnel** on their small motorbikes, scooters and electric bikes. This is a unique collaboration to deliver brochures and free tickets for events with food orders all over the city, but also listen to the stories and needs of a largely silent group of essential workers.

The personnel delivering food orders have been on the news recently, as racist attacks against them have increased. We seek to make them more visible by involving a fleet of them in our communication efforts; to talk about their stories and culture; to participate in the Opening Ceremony, art workshops and community arts events and amplify their voices of protest against organised violence and low wages. **Potential Partners:** Food delivery companies, academics, creative industry professionals

AAAA - Advertising Agencies Adopting Artists: Being an artist usually means being a creator, producer, administrator and promoter for your own work, leaving little time and money for the proper communication of your work. This project **pairs artists with advertising agencies and communication professionals** to promote their work. It also partners them with potential sponsors for out-of-pocket expenses (e.g., billboards, videos, advertising time, etc.).
Potential Partners: advertising companies, strategic partners

SFAAACT!

SFAAACT! - Schools for Future Audiences, Artists, Adults, Citizens, Thinkers is an ambitious school outreach programme, a proposition to involve **elementary, high school and university students in artful, inclusive and engaging practices** - and multiple aspects of our ECoC programme. This is **a wide-reaching, year-round programme** to be developed in collaboration with school principals, teachers, students and their parents/guardians. It draws inspiration from the philosophy of Brazil's Community Education & Social Centres (CESCs) - especially with regard to cultural engagement, social inclusion, active citizenship and youth leadership.

We imagine **SFAAACT!** students participating in arts and sports projects and events from our Cultural Programme: **Neighbourhoods that Float**, **Catalogue of Walks** and **1000 Voices**, **Outside the Map**, **Art Fanatics**, **Water Stories**, **Human(c)ity**, **Enter Youth**, as well as, publishing school newspapers, exploring climate change through AI and paintings of **Nicos Nicolaides** (1878-1945) and more. Our ambition is to help students develop a foundation for a daily art habit - where Lemessolians encounter and make art every day and participate in society. We believe that this is an investment toward long-term audience development.

Active citizenship and youth leadership: teenagers, the adults of 2030, take centre stage to come up with solutions for their own problems and the city's, and allocate available funds from the **ChildrenMAKE** fund (Q26) for these solutions. Collaboration with the city's decision-makers ensures respect to teens' decisions and project implementation. **SFAAACT!** will test the prototype of a new way of multi-stakeholder (intergenerational and intersectoral) engagement and dialogue, in a way that allows for the adults-of-the-future to create and maintain decision-making and leadership roles.

Teenagers Disco: a fun teenager-only weekend organised by, for and with teenagers. Project management, design, curation of music/bands, eco-friendly practices, and budget allocation will all be discussed and decided by teenagers, with some adult supervision.

Finally, we expect that implementing **SFAAACT!** will result in new insights, that can then be proposed as curriculum changes to schools and relevant authorities, to make art a more organic part of students' daily life.
Local partners: multiple schools and universities
International partners: Bodø 2024 (NO), Namur 2030 (BE)

FIESTA FIX

Lemesos is known for its big open festivals counting hundred of thousands of participants every year. No one else can host a party like we can - but we can do it with more care! We aspire to **shift successful events towards more environmentally-friendly and collaborative practices,** inspiring acts of care towards our city, our resources, and the future of our planet.

The city spirit is soaring during these popular celebrations, yet so is plastic waste and trash. Through multi-stakeholder dialogue and action plans between the municipality and waste management, cultural, and environmental organisations, we move towards less trash. Change is hard and takes a long time, so we would like to start introducing small changes on a large scale, leading to a big impact for the city. In celebrations like the **Carnival**, the **Wine Festival** and **Kataklysmos**, we will introduce reusable cups and plates, motivating campaigns, and infrastructure to reduce trash and recycle what is indeed thrown away.
Local partners: Friends of the Earth Cyprus, Limassol 2030 EU Cities Mission | **International partner:** Tartu 2024 (EE)

SPIRITED LEMESOS

STOP THE CITY MOMENT # 1 SPRING

Some of the city's Carnival cultural heritage involves self-made costumes called Pellomaskes (Crazy Masks) and 'kantades' - carnival-themed serenades. In 2030, we will create **a looooooong catwalk in the city's main shopping street** for fabricated and innovative self-made carnival costumes and big puppets to parade, accompanied by young DJs remixing old 'kantades' and introducing newly written ones. Technology and fabrication tools, media and raw craft will bring joy and inventiveness to the front, and will transform the street into a never-before carnival party.

STOP THE CITY MOMENT # 2 SUMMER

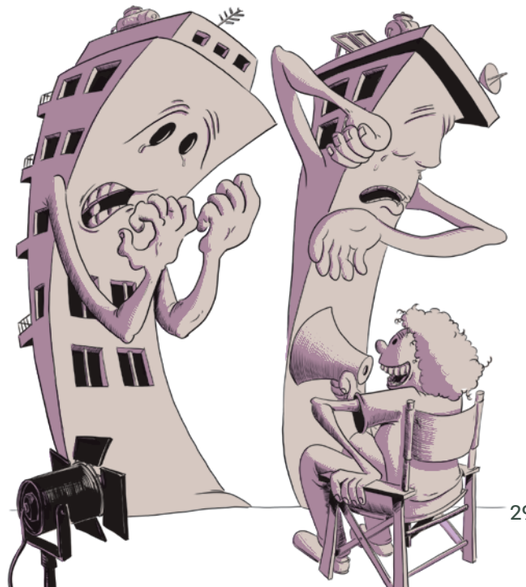
We board sailboats, tugboats, fishing boats and create an artful revival of the historical **Pamboros** boat processions that took place until the 1970s. Water athletes, vessels of all sorts, floating sets and artists will come together for an alternative artful flotilla at the city's seafront. Architects, designers and makers will come along to make it happen!

STOP THE CITY MOMENT # 3 AUTUMN

This event's fate is left to the hands of the young. **SFAAACT!** will be the driving force and decide what this moment will be about and how. The adults in **SFAAACT!** and in public and private schools of Lemesos will support and follow. And, the city will attend.

STOP THE CITY MOMENT # 4 WINTER

Beyond building the capacities of the softer voices, we seek to create new memories with the urban giants of the city and move towards a healing future. We use our frustration, we bring satire and artistry in, and create a new drama, a **Tower Drama.** This will be an interdisciplinary large-scale performance taking place on the facade of and inside a high-rise and attended from the streets with headphones.



Q12

COMBINING LOCAL CULTURAL HERITAGE & TRADITIONAL ART FORMS WITH NEW, INNOVATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS

The Understory becomes the initiator for more dynamic interactions with cultural heritage; tangible, intangible, natural. Our intention is to reveal how closely linked to our daily life cultural heritage is, and could be, and to practise that close relationship often. Existing programmes that digitally map cultural heritage sites are already in place, yet have a very limited scope and prioritise documentation. We are proposing a range of projects that will both document and open the door to an experience, whether physical or virtual. We envision the seamless use of the physical, the digital and the virtual in the creation, dissemination, inclusiveness and sustainability of the creative sector, spaces of culture and cultural heritage.

One of our flagship projects is **Lemesos Design Days**, a new biennial institution that will set a common ground to explore, redefine and reconnect with our cultural heritage through the use of new technologies and contemporary making processes. High-Tech companies, active within niche technological environments, will work in parallel with local skilled workers in their small yet autonomous workshops relying on traditional or previous techniques and technologies. By bridging these worlds, design knowledge can make local craftsmanship and traditional forms relevant today, but also reinvent them through new cultural expressions and technologies. We will critically examine our heritage, and consequently refocus what are considered traditional art and craft forms influenced by our colonial history. Simultaneously, we will create new methods of production, build on our craftsmanship history, produce new ideas with new material and promote sustainability and authenticity. Beyond traditional crafts and house building technologies, Lemesos boasts a modernist heritage evident in its architecture, furniture, and art. We aim to engage with our complex history creatively, understand our city's development, and shape a designful future as a multicultural hub for technology, design and craftsmanship.

We will experience 'kantades' (serenades), linked to our Lemessolian spirit and carnival celebrations, taking new forms and connecting to more 'kantades' in Mediterranean and Eastern Europe as part of enriching the **Limassol Carnival** celebrations. Through our **Catalogue of Walks**, we will experience dynamic storytelling walks in ancient Amathus, in Tourkomahallas, in Akrotiri or the historic centre. Cultural heritage and tradition need not to be 'pushed' into the story for the sake of remembering, but rather to reveal itself as part of our daily lives, as living practices that may co-exist and interact with today's fast paced rhythms and technological advancements. A small number of the walks will be in the form of apps and possible to do individually, with a group of friends or even from afar, offering spaces of interaction with previous or future walkers. Photographs and comments will be shared, thus building new forms of archives and memories while completing our multifaceted narratives as a port-city and a geographical centre of different worlds.

We also envision and plan a long-term deep mapping project, **Deep Community Healing**, that will activate historic parts and populations, collect stories, document and learn crafts and histories of Lemessolians that live in Lemesos, in the occupied Cyprus, in the diaspora. We will track their movement through the last 70 years as a way to decolonise the bigger stories, thus creating our future cultural heritage from which storytellers will write, create, compose and perform anew. We will activate mechanisms of critical nostalgia, enrich or reclaim our multicultural identity and tap into our heritage with fresh eyes and intergenerational sets of hands.

Lastly, and with more plans in the background, we will use innovative forms to promote and practise inclusivity and accessibility for people with disabilities or other restricting realities to interact and be part of, not only of cultural events and our **LMS Arts Platform**, but to also enter cultural heritage spaces and dissemination and learning workshops through our **Enter Youth**, **Human(c)ity**, **Water Stories** and **Ephemeral Archives**.

Q13



INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL ARTISTS & CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS IN CONCEPT & IMPLEMENTATION

From the get-go, we were imagining our legacy and our cultural longevity.

Programme Implementation

The Cultural & Artistic Programme (C&AP) is in a big part proposed by important and active cultural stakeholders that are energetic players in the city's cultural life and have the potential to engage and enrich their own European and international networks alongside new ones. We did this by launching a **Targeted Call in Spring 2024**. We invited local organisations with former experience in multi-level interdisciplinary projects and EU collaborations to send in their ideas, to think aspirationally, to imagine Lemesos, their organisation and their practice differently, to consider their existing audiences and audiences they cannot reach at the moment.

We had individual meetings with each organisation and they filled a form for each project proposal. The form included our thematic focus areas, keywords and filters, based on the priorities that emerged during the previous phase of public consultations. The submitted projects were then processed and strengthened in close collaboration with the organisations, and eventually formed the core of our C&AP. We therefore propose a series of multi-annual projects building on the momentum and activity already taking place, further enabling the capacities of cultural and social stakeholders, and the role each of them may have in co-creating and implementing them. Important projects close to these objectives are: **Catalogue of Walks**, **Neighbourhoods That Float**, **See CY**, **Backstage Academy**, **Sardam**. These projects have both a local and international spectrum of collaborations. **Rialto Theatre, Center of Performing Arts MITOS, Dance House Lemesos, Ygrasia Collective, Urban Gorillas, Neme, Association for Historical Dialogue and Research, aRttitude** and **Coordinating Council of Limassol Cultural Bodies** among others, will enhance already established networks, and simultaneously open up new chapters of exchange and cultural programming in a more consistent and fruitful manner.

We know that to live together, to create and imagine together, we need dedicated time together. Projects like **The Performance Shop** by **pelma.Lia Haraki** and **Sessions** by **Dimitris Chimonas** and **Lex Gregoriou** will propose long-term frames of art practice and togetherness so as to cultivate empathy, inspiration and connection within artistic and other communities. **Deep Healing Community** and **Living Peace** will work through healing and peace-building processes with inquisitive artistic voices like **Jafra Abu Zoulouf, Rony J. El Daccache, Belinda Papavassileiou, Gürgenç Korkmazel, Ahmet Yikik, Nilgün Güney** and **Nihal Soğancı** along with established organisations of Lemesos like **Ethal Theatre Company and Pattihio Municipal Theatre.**

Human(c)ity will hold a series of projects by organisations like **Synergeio Performing Arts Center, The Island Club** and **Xarkis,** which will negotiate our physical spaces, cultural heritage and diverse dimensions of thinking, while including a plurality of voices. We will claim agency over the city's experience, how Lemesos came to be and how it can be shared within and beyond its borders. One of these sharings will happen through **1000 Voices**, which will bring together all choirs of Lemesos, if not Cyprus, with **Epilogi Cultural Movement** on our side along with important international players for a major live-streamed singalong.

Programme Conception

Some would say that it is in the DNA of modern-day Cypriots to accept authority and decisions from above – a narrative of Cypriots as *'passive observers, inactive citizens'*, of subjects instead of engaged participants exercising their agency, affecting change. Our experience with co-creating this bid book is a testament to the opposite of this narrative: people in Lemesos are interested and knowledgeable, have opinions and contribute fruitfully within processes they can trust. Our **Trajectories Working Group** (more in Q17) was a major power for distilling ideas and priorities to emerge in this long participatory journey.

In June 2024, we began testing an aspect of the **OUT THERE TOGETHER** line through a three-day event of walks and actions that reclaimed public space by foot, bicycle, and bus, as a way *'to reconnect with each other and open up to what and who Lemesos is today'*. Artist **Elena Agathokleous** curated the project and guided a process where 15 artists and non-artists worked together to create its content. They developed part of the ideas articulated within our Outreach actions and invited around 60 more organisations and individuals to collaborate and bring it to life.

We began exercising ad hoc creative collaborations with schools (see **Peace is...** in Q19) and public discussions as a means to identify and process the Lemessolian cultural industry's challenges. Cultural directors and operators from **Rialto Theatre, Pattihio Municipal, Dance House Lemesos, Literary Society of Limassol, The Island Club, Fine Arts Department of Cyprus University of Technology (CUT), Vima Art Fair** and **Cyprus International Theatre Festival** took on the challenge of participating in a first public debate-like discussion, unfolding circumstances, choices and ambitions. These next-to-art events help crystallise our focus on how to form bridges and connectors between the different players.

Engaging different professionals of our creative industry sectors for every part of our bidding process was our intention from the start. This includes our visual identity, website and social media, which was done through the **Visual Semiotics and Communications Lab (CUT)** led by **Omiros Panagides** along with designers from the industry, the **Serious Products Lab (CUT)** led by **Eva Korae**, and university students of graphics and multimedia arts. The illustrations of this bid book were made by **Charalambos Margaritis (Kimonos Art Centre)**, one of Pafos 2017's legacy players. We are in conversation with more organisations and collectives who were part of Pafos 2017 -and are still active- like the **C.C.O Chamber Cyprus Orchestra** among others.



Programme Strategies

We want **Lemesos 2030** to act as an initiator, a curator and a facilitator of a programme that will exercise, monitor, process and establish what works, activates and drives the cultural life of Lemesos forward.

A key area of boosting the proposals received was to encourage strategic matchings for each project so as to ensure participation from organisations with relevant expertise from:

1. Lemesos, since there is a clear need to build capacity; to showcase the local artistic and cultural work outside the city; to create lasting networks of cooperation with the potential for more funding and projects; to create more employment opportunities for young artists; and to internationalise careers of individuals and organisations.
2. The rest of Cyprus, as a matter of principle -since we want to unite forces- and as a matter of necessity: we may be competing for the ECoC title, but all participating cities know that whoever wins will need the active collaboration of everyone else to make the ECoC year a success.
3. The EU and other European countries: our natural focus.
4. The Middle East (and possibly North Africa): our geographical neighbours, and traditional commercial and dialogue partners for millenia.
5. The rest of the world: international collaborations, getting the best of what there is on offer.

Pending the results of the preselection, we plan to **open calls for proposals** for several of our large-scale projects like **Water Stories**, **Living Peace**, **Deep Community Healing** and **Lemesos Design Days**, so that art companies, artists and more organisations may find their place in our programme. Lemessolian artists living and building careers mostly in Europe are also on our radar.

Lemesos 2030 is leading a small number of projects, which prioritises untapped territories so as to establish new cultural institutions currently missing while adding advancement and plurality. These include **Lemesos Design Days** in close collaboration with the city and the **Cyprus University of Technology**, **SFAAACT!**, **EU Funding Application Clinic**, **Water Stories** and our capacity-building **Elevators**. We also work closely with the city's cultural stakeholders to navigate our bid's priorities, new ways to collaborate, funding capacities and efficient processes of cultural governance and mobility. For 2030, we seek participation, connection with more communities and civil society groups, while striving for artistic excellence, professionalism and artful care.

EUROPEAN DIMENSION 3



Q14 A/B EUROPEAN THEMES, CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND INTEGRATION

Even before Cyprus became an EU member, Lemesos was European. At the edge of Europe but in the centre of a diverse meeting point, we see a European dimension that embraces our inner needs to live harmoniously, and that carefully interacts with our Lemessolian dimension without necessarily competing with it.

Through the bidding process, we began enabling the European dimension within each of us. Yes, we have been feeling exhausted and incapacitated in the face of a city changing in unfathomable magnitudes without our participation. We are also full of convictions, dreams and ideas of how culture could manifest itself. How the experience of living in Lemesos could unfold in the future. How our long-existing 'Europeanness' could be a source of confidence, inspiration and knowledge to be shared with our European friends.

The more engaged we become in the ECoC process, the more blessed we feel for our unique, troubled neighbourhood and our viewpoint from here. It is quite different when straddling three continents. This is Europe on the periphery, on the frontier. **And there is knowledge to be gained from the periphery, looking at a central, 'other' Europe – but also looking at, and neighbouring with, other continents.** As we said previously, Beirut is closer than Brussels.

This geographical position gives a unique history of interconnectedness between cultures, faiths and points of view. Millennia of mixing and inventing practices, languages and gestures for necessary trade and dialogue are present. Migrant communities that may be at war with each other in their countries of origin coexist peacefully in Lemesos.

Developing links between the cultural programme of **Lemesos 2030** and other European cities has been eye opening and necessary. We live on an island that is so far tucked in the corner of the Mediterranean that it is often entirely omitted from maps. Even official EU maps sometimes stop as East as Poland, as South as Greece – making it hard not to feel neglected or even forgotten.

While in dialogue with other ECoC cities, we are also discovering that we are not alone on the periphery, since other 'inconvenient European geographies' are also left out of maps. Working together, we are able to provide new knowledge to the whole of Europe, unique ways of seeing and doing **Outside the Map**; one of our most ambitious projects that will bring together the edges of Europe all around it in a multi-annual European venture.

Through Lemesos, we see Europe in its most activating and challenging themes:

Multicultural Lemesos // Multicultural Europe
The population of Lemesos, shaped by ongoing migrations and relocations, has made the island's second-largest city, and busiest port a distinctly European place. Our **Vibesensor** confirms this, with *'multiculturalism'* being the top response to 'What makes Lemesos European?'. But with rapid development and a growing population, does multiculturalism remain a positive experience? **People mostly stay within their own cultural bubbles, the understory of multiculturalism**, hinting at a need for more cross-cultural connections to keep pace with the city's vigorous growth.

We envision an authentic city that embraces Europe, the Middle East, and Africa as part of our *'open-hearted spirit'*. Our multicultural identity has been palpable in the way we build our homes, eat, sing, and dance. It is reflected in our languages, our businesses, and our ambitions.

Lemessolians are Cypriots of Greek and Turkish origins, Armenians, Maronites, Latinos, but also more recently of British, Lebanese, French, Russian, Bulgarian, Philippino, Vietnamese, Iranian, Syrian, Egyptian, Ukrainian origins and more. This bid places itself as a carrier of narratives, an inclusive visionary, a composer of multiple viewpoints, a care package, a conveyor and a realiser of the thoughts and dreams that everyone has for themselves both as Lemessolians and as Europeans. We will embrace and nurture the plurality of cultures and coexistence in projects like **Living Peace**, **Deep Community Healing**, **1000 Voices**, **Citizen of All Citizens** and within our **Catalogue of Walks**.

Our ambition is to invite our neighbours from Europe and from the other sides of the island to apply democracy broadly, to try new frames of discussion, participation in city-life, decision-making and co-creation.

Gentrified Lemesos // Gentrified Europe
There is intense noise pollution, excessive use of cars, multiple cranes scratching the sky, density of businesses struggling to survive alongside new waves of offshore companies, and companies establishing in Lemesos from abroad defining the city's economic identity. An intense gentrification process in many areas is happening fast, without masterplans, and is often inflicting a traumatic impact on its residents, its daily life and cultural heritage. Our city experiences rapid growth, and its landscape shifts in profound ways. Environmental sustainability is constantly put last on the list. As each modernist house is replaced by contemporary apartment complexes, the residents part with subtle sounds, smells, and scents which used to define what home is. It happened in London 60 or 70 years ago and in North Amsterdam 8-9 years ago, in smaller cities like Porto, Tallinn, Valencia.

Europe has witnessed developments, neighbourhood upgrades, and transformations; both physical and cultural. Europe is still learning to minimise its effects and nurture positive regenerations. In Lemesos, displacement and dislocation are becoming common experiences. When we feel a loss of control, we tend to act out. We believe our city is big enough to face crucial social and cultural challenges, yet small enough to address them. Together, we are ready to work for a healthier future starting with **Human(c)ity**, **Gentrification Project**, **Catalogue of Walks**, **Water Stories**, **The Performance Shop** and our capacity building **Elevators**.

Re-focused Lemesos // Re-focused Europe
The cultural fabric of our neighbourhoods is colourful yet troublesome, mostly distinguished between financially comfortable residents of the city and financially vulnerable ones. Like many places of Europe, Lemesos hosts colourful bubbles of acceptance, tolerance and co-existence next to fear, violence, racism.

We want to believe that the stress-induced violence that we recently see towards minorities, the loaded political narratives locally and in Europe, and the abusive relationship with our city, are all challenges that, even if we cannot solve at large, as the European Capital of Culture, we can deal with in smaller, healing steps. We aspire to enable capacities and spaces where people have the opportunity to exercise, through culture, values of democracy, empathy, attentiveness and even joy. **Art Fanatics** deals with some of our most embedded cultural challenges. **Sessions**, **Delivering Culture**, **Deep Community Healing** go deep in our minorities and shift the focus from fear and anger to joy and peace.

Owning Lemesos // Owning Europe
Centuries of trade and cultural relation with Europe, the 19th-century women's liberation movement, our volunteers in the first and second world wars, as well as our very own Vasilis Michaelides' 'Disarmament', a poem for world peace, being presented at the Peace Palace in the Hague in 1899 are unknown stories outside Cyprus. Stories and events like these will infuse projects like **CoDE**, **Outside the Map** and **Deep Community Healing**.

We know and see in our history and cultural identity many European influences and traditions. We also see a heavily embedded *'xenomania'* where we value and appreciate what comes to Cyprus from abroad more than what we produce ourselves. It is potentially a syndrome of being colonised almost forever and part of why the city changes so radically and so easily.

Today, Lemesos is full of announcements of grand *'cultural events that will amaze us'* accompanied by excessive advertising and mass visibility. Our forward-thinking and brave artistic players become spectators of a newly appeared industry of art entertainment and *'cultural neo-colonisation'*, calling upon a mission of creating things like the *'brand of theatre'* in Lemesos or Cyprus. This is a rise of an art industry that is privately circulated and expensive to attend.

The tough part is that it has been happening next to shrinking cultural funding, as in many European cities. Some artists manage to fit or work within the cultural agendas of these big players, but most observe from the outside or fight to keep small spaces of work. The ECoC bid gave us a timely cause to activate diverse players of the city, and a successful bid will give us a great boost to continue this process of healing and re-definition. Not to be misunderstood, artistic import is necessary and enriching. But the questions still linger:
Do we undervalue local artistic production?
Are we divesting from ourselves?
Do we lack confidence?

It is very easy to reply yes to these questions, but we have spent the last couple of years building our capacities and making a generous attempt to prove ourselves wrong. Our programme, especially our **Elevators**, our legacy projects **Lemesos Design Days**, **See CY** and **Enter Youth** will show and exercise our authentic and diverse artistic voices, our process to build our confidence and city pride. We will see what happens when we indeed choose to invest more in ourselves; the open-hearted, cheeky, smart, loud, rule-breaking Europeans we are.

Big challenges like climate change, close-by war, financial inequality, migration, racism all place us in a position of facing our own fragility as people at the corner of Europe and in the centre of extreme political turbulence. At the same time, we see ourselves as seekers of the value in the softer voices, the smaller scale, the everyday joy, the inspiration found in unexpected places in the centre and the peripheral centres of Europe.

Q14 C EUROPEAN CO-OPERATIONS AND TRANSNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Lemesos has always had strong connections to Europe, even as it remains firmly rooted in its Eastern Mediterranean neighbourhood. It is our ambition that the overwhelming majority of our projects will be implemented with the participation of partners from Europe (its periphery and centre), from our Mediterranean neighbourhood of the Middle East and North Africa, and even beyond.

We are building on our local partners' strong existing relationships with European and international partners and networks. Artists and collectives, cultural operators and organisations from Lemesos -our local partners- are well-connected with big and small European/international organisations. Through existing relationships, our local partners are proposing partnerships (more in Q11), and have secured initial positive responses (and confirmations) from European organisations. In our **CITY IN THERAPY** line, **Art Explora (FR/UK)**, **Maqamat - Beirut International Platform of Dance (LB)**, the **Schwules Museum (DE)**, the **Swedish Arts Grants Committee's international programme for visual and applied arts IASPIS - Konstnärsnämnden (SE)**, **Arttogether - Art of People With and Without Disabilities (GR)**, **Liminal (GR)**, **Per Art Company (RS)**, **Artsability Festival - by Unmute Dance Company and Artsscape (ZA)**, **Fort. Mission Festival (UA)** are featured. In our **OUT THERE TOGETHER** line, we have **Errands Group (GR)**, **Le Bloccate (DE)**, **Pla Estel (ES)**, as well as artists like **Orangcosong Art Collective (JP)** and **Hend Elbalouty (EG-DE)**. **CURIOUS FANCY FAILURES** includes **Under 500 Fesztival (HU)**, **Y Events (CZ)**, **Lettrétage (DE)**, **Braba Platforma (PT)**, and we are also happy to collaborate with **The Festival Academy (BE)** for our **IMAGINE A CITY** line among others. A lot more is being planned and confirmed as we write this bid book!

Our local partners participate in European and international networks we would like to activate for additional partnerships and networking. These networks include the **Forum of Worldwide Music Festivals**, the **European Dance Development Network (EDN), Aerowaves**, the **International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts (IETM)**, the **European Choral Association**, **Jeunesses Musicales International**, **the International Federation for Choral Music**, the **Euro-Arab Youth Music Center (JO/CY/BE)**, the **Junior Achievement** network, and the **Mission Zero Academy** for eco-friendly festivals.

We are also eager to develop our existing collaborations with cultural centres of diplomatic missions in Cyprus, for example, **Goethe-Institut Cyprus**, **Institut Français de Chypre**, as well as national and local participations with cultural organisations, for example, Cyprus's recent full membership in **La Francophonie**, and **Alliance Française de Limassol**.

Our partners are in the process of inviting their networks' annual assemblies, festivals and meetings to take place in Lemesos. For example, the **Aerowaves' Spring Festival** and the **European Choral Association's Membership Weekend**.

We researched and mapped the Turkish Cypriot artists and groups in Lemesos, or with a Lemesos origin but living across the Cyprus divide or abroad. The results are exciting as unknown facts, stories, and connections begin to come to light. We have already presented events/actions with Turkish Cypriot artists and academics, while projects will be implemented with many more, especially within our **CITY IN THERAPY** and **OUT THERE TOGETHER** programme lines.

We have made the strategic decision to include partner organisations and artists from the Middle East in as many projects as we can, recognising our ancient relationships with our neighbours. As war rages and threatens to engulf the entire region, we tread with sensitivity, respecting processes of survival and mourning. Eventually, we would like our ECoC programme to be part of the healing and peacemaking process through the transformative power of art.

While our local partners are confirming artists from the Middle East and North Africa, **we, the legal entity Lemesos 2030**, have recently joined the **Cyprus Network of the Anna Lindh Euro-Med Foundation for Dialogue between Cultures**. It is active in more than 42 countries and has over 4,500 member organisations. We believe that this will help us further boost our connections with North Africa and the Middle East, and offer opportunities for networking, collaboration and funding - especially useful for our project for **peacebuilding through youth entrepreneurship**.

We recognise and follow up on the assets of Pafos 2017, the first ECoC of Cyprus. Luckily, the Artistic Director of Pafos 2017 is now the vice-president of Lemesos 2030 Board of Directors. Georgia Doetzer brings her experience to and participates in European networks. In the meantime, we are exploring collaborations with Pafos 2017's network of past ECoCs.

Our networking and connecting activities expanded as we participated in the **13th Culture Next Conference in Cluj-Napoca** (Oct. 2024) to explore further potential collaborations with the extended ECoC network.

We would like to engage with Lemesos' active twinned cities to give us further -and farther- access to partners! Connections with the municipalities and partners from Alexandria (EG), Thessaloniki (GR) and Niederkassel (DE) will be pursued. Marseille (FR) is a special case, with more frequent visits and exchanges between municipal delegations - and a successful ECoC in 2013. We would like to take advantage of this relationship, as well as our pronounced similarities in fast real-estate development and connection to the port and sea.

Finally, we plan to tap into the cultural connections retained between the multiple communities living in Lemesos, and their countries of origin. Offshore companies, expats, and cultural organisations that are active here, can be excellent sources of connections for organisations and artists.

Q15 ATTRACTING THE BROADER EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC



Being in Cyprus, we do not need to struggle with the often-asked question 'Why should I leave Southern France or Portugal to come to your ECoC?'. Cyprus is a well-established destination and we probably enjoy more sunshine throughout the year than most ECoCs – except perhaps for Arctic Bodø!

Of course, we share the sunshine with our fellow Cypriot candidates – so, no advantage for Lemesos there! But, we are not seen so much as a tourist destination. That's where our advantage begins. Lemesos' contrasts and hidden facets can appeal to a new -and different- type of visitor.

We have identified groups who might think differently about including Lemesos in their traditional Cyprus holiday, or even choosing Cyprus as an unexpected new cultural destination, but with plenty of sunshine and delicious food, too.

Group after group

We have **those who will come to Lemesos anyway**. Since the average stay duration in Lemesos is over 9 days, we believe we can attract an international crowd from within the island. Visitors will find themselves captivated by the city's dynamic atmosphere of cultural events, city beaches, dense urban development and archaeological sites just a stone's throw away. Festivals and projects offering cultural and artistic experiences can appeal to the 'traditional' holidaymaker, whilst nudging them in the direction of some less obvious topics, our understories. A thriving **Understory** that prioritises the plurality of Europe made up of individual voices and perspectives acting like anchors and grounding forces in the face of remarkable change. Visitors will find those voices vibrating in our projects, our conversations and exchanges, and connecting to similar hidden stories in many European cities.

We have **people new to Cyprus** whose curiosity is tickled by the interplay of a European Capital of Culture in a place they consider a potential travel destination. Our Cultural and Artistic Programme will intensify and multiply the city's diverse experiences through large-scale artistic propositions but mostly softer voices for those who prefer to embed themselves in processes and the realness of a city.

Story after Story

Reacting to the fact that Lemesos is becoming a medical tourism destination, we will have a **CITY IN THERAPY** expanding towards 'Europe in therapy'. Mental health challenges, systemic burnout, stress, fear for the future are all felt while facing big challenges like the climate crisis, financial inequalities, restricting freedoms of expression, the impact of wars and so on. **If Europe had its own therapist, what would they talk about?** Literally anyone who feels disconnected, excluded, queer, unconventional, revolutionary will find a safe entrance into our programme, in a place of sub-stories, loud stories, stories of resistance, love and reclamation.

Maybe we cannot stop gentrification from happening, but we can exercise places for soft resistance, slow living, and inclusive and stimulating discussions centred around the thriving of human experience. Perhaps we will imagine, together, new paths towards a cultural resilience, empowered artistic expression and an exercised cultural democracy.

Question after Question

People who are keen to engage in more in-depth debate and discussion about the sensitive issues that cities face all over Europe. In this context, **Outside the Map** will attract not only participating artists, culture and humanities professionals but also engage and connect with audiences both in Lemesos and across the participating cities and regions. This long-term project will establish strong connections by reflecting on Europeanness and refocusing the European cultural narrative and its multiple stories.

We hope, too, that **business visitors will extend their stay**, listen and contribute to some challenging yet rewarding discussions about how to encourage more sustainable investment and development. For example, tapping into and investing in under-explored disciplines, the newly established **Lemesos Design Days** will introduce and promote an understanding of design as a catalyst of how contemporary societies may operate and be relevant to the future of Europe threatened by global warming, through design thinking, problem solving and unique-to-our-region materials and processes. We also aspire to the dynamic of a design festival between three continents and the cross-disciplined and cross-sectoral audience it could attract. How does the physical and digital environment we live in today reveal new trajectories of design, creating, making, producing? We aim to encourage exciting platforms for debate, and to encourage innovative thinkers to join those discussions.

The wrongs that are right

What if failure could be reimagined as a space for potential and a source for diverse successes? In a world where success is a demand in education curricula, in innovation camps, in sports, in business, even in culture as an industry, when do we play? We are eager to embrace our **CURIOUS FANCY FAILURES** line as a topic of conversation, of thinking outside our boxes and allowing ourselves the time and space to imagine the best way to fail. **What if the burden of success evaporates and the worry of survival is diminished?** What do we see then? Experimental voices of the arts and culture challenge the status quo but also our curated behaviours. We can watch and attend from a safe distance or dive in and play. We will open up conversations with **those who dare all over Europe** through post show talks, 'unconferences' and public discussions. When those 'avant-garders' are not raving in a fog or stretching the limits of arts, they can be endearing voices of wisdom, love, inspiration and care.

Shrinking Distances

Finally, we are preparing for **those who will not come in person**. The environmental crisis demands other ways of staying connected to the world. We reduce the distance **through posting and positioning interesting themes**

in different kinds of media and special interest conferences and debates around Europe. Getting 300 people to Cyprus for a weekend is not always the best choice. Instead, we could bring 20 people from Cyprus to perform in the Belgian ECoC or join an interdisciplinary project on the opposite edges of Europe, connecting through the focused spaces of theatres, cultural venues, as well as public areas. Projects like **The Performance Shop** will exist both online and physically in other cities before and, potentially, after the title year too. It will be a continuously growing community of artists and visitors that connect to Lemesos 2030 all around Europe. An exchange on art making in current or imagined systems and an exercise of connection, coordination and solidarity.

Our overall philosophy is simple and honest. We go out, we share, we listen, we process and share again. It's a conversation. We are not interested in performing a monologue, not in Lemesos, not even in Europe.

Q16 LINKS WITH OTHER ECoCs

A lively ongoing conversation with designated and candidate ECoCs is allowing us to identify common urgencies and themes, and to make practical and meaningful connections in each other's projects.

We are happy to be partnering with **Tartu 2024** to develop Lemesos-specific guidelines for organising environmentally-friendlier versions of our big events and festivals.

With **Liepāja 2027** we share a love affair with the sea, and so the desire to collaborate for our respective festivals and events that engage the sea, the beach and the environment came very organically, through Liepāja 2027's Other Sea Festival and Lemesos 2030's **Water Stories** and **Pamboros**. We are also both committed to building capacity for the youth, in management and leadership especially. We are envisioning exchanges through our various capacity-building programmes, for example **Backstage Academy**. Finally, both cities believe in the unifying power of art, as exemplified through being, singing and sounding together in choirs and ensembles. So, we're delighted to link our **1000 Voices** and Liepāja 2027's Europe Sings Liepāja.

Lublin 2029 is a city on the European frontier with whom we share concerns about war in our respective regions, and understand the urgency for dialogue and peacebuilding. It is only natural, therefore, that Lublin 2029 is participating in our **Outside the Map**, while we're participating in Lublin 2029's Congress of Reunion. Our shared experience on migration is a crucial topic on the European agenda, and it is a valuable opportunity to be participating in Lublin 2029's Port Lublin 2029 / Port Lemesos 2030 / Port Gozo 2031. Furthermore, Lublin's proximity to a war zone makes it an organic participant in our **Living Peace** project for artists fleeing war.

On the subject of youth empowerment and unleashing young people's creativity, we are in conversation with **Bodø 2024**'s festivals for, by and with young people, for a collaboration between our **Teenager Disco** and Bodø 2024's Heartbeat.

Having in mind common urgent themes, we are happy to collaborate with **Lublin 2029**, **Lviv 2030**, **LOV 2030 (Leuven)**, **Kiruna 2029** on war and peace, **Victoria 2031**, in Gozo, on migration, gentrification and loss of cultural heritage, and, **Ponta Delgada – Azores 2026 Portuguese Capital of Culture** (ECoC Candidate 2027) on being and feeling European in the extreme periphery.

A conversation is ongoing to also connect to **Oulu 2026**. In fact, we see a direct connection between our **Outside the Map** and Oulu 2026's Arctic Hinterland / European Heartland concept.

2030 ECoC candidates

We have had the pleasure of meeting all ECoC candidate representatives from Belgium and Montenegro in person in May 2024, nurturing a camaraderie we had already established online with most candidates. And although Kortrijk and Ghent are not ECoC candidates anymore, we are confident that our connections will come to fruition. Here are some of the ways we are connecting to the Belgian candidates:

Both teams of **Namur 2030** and **Lemesos 2030** share a priority for inclusion and accessibility in all aspects of city life and the arts. Therefore, we are delighted to exchange artists, performances, and toolkits from **Lemesos 2030**'s **Beyond DisDance** and **Koullou Makka** projects, with Namur's Faire Société – Sur Scène festival and conference. Capitalising on our robust design community and the creation of our **Lemesos Design Days**, we will identify young architects, designers, design students, artists and workshop leaders to participate in Namur's fascinating Camping Europa for youth, design and electronic music.

Furthermore, we plan exchanges for **Namur 2030**'s Rops and the Climate project, an inspiring idea, recreating classical paintings using AI to imagine the future of the natural environment, as well as habitability with current climate change predictions. We will be implementing a version of this project with high-school students in Lemesos as part of our **SFAAACT!** programme, on transforming classical paintings of **Nicos Nicolaides** (1878-1945).

Finally, we are discussing with **Namur 2030** about participating in their Passeurs de Réel with the documentary produced through our **Gentrification Project**.

We were invited to participate in **LOV 2030**'s EUtopia, where students debate and work on European values and the future of democracy. Similarly, our participation in **LOV 2030**'s Stadhuis - European House of Democracy will allow us to discuss challenges to democracy, encourage agency, and foster a mindset of participation and co-creation.

The exchange between **LOV 2030**'s From Braem to Beel and **Lemesos 2030**'s **Catalogue of Walks** is built on our mutual interest in interdisciplinary, co-created, unifying walks in the city, while Let's Take You to Church lets architects showcase modular design and temporary repurposing of places of worship into cultural venues.

Finally, it is exciting to include **LOV 2030** in our **Outside the Map**, as one of the cities in the European 'centre', as well as continuing our discussion on decolonisation - in a pairing which sees two countries reckoning their colonial past from opposite sides: that of a former coloniser and that of a former colony.

Molenbeek 2030's programme aligns with our ideas of openness, multi-community togetherness and public space, and we are in conversation for exchanges within the context of our participatory outdoor events **Neighbourhoods That Float** and **Water Stories**.

Together with **Nikšić 2030** we discussed and created **Art Fanatics**, a project aiming to bridge divisions between rival football clubs in our respective cities. At the same time, we plan to collaborate on new souvenirs, in the context of our **Lemesos Design Days** and our cultural heritage strategies.

We are in a productive conversation with **Lviv 2030** - even as our Ukrainian colleagues are working in a war zone. Lviv 2030 will be participating in our **Outside the Map**, sharing with the rest of Europe their first hand experience of the war's consequences. Considering the thousands of Ukrainian refugees who have relocated to Lemesos, we are happy to welcome **Lviv 2030** on board our **Living Peace** project for artists fleeing war, in an exchange with their Fort.Mission 2030 festival, which takes place on World War I defensive fortifications on the Ukrainian and Polish border. The conversation continues on other common themes, including Modernist architecture in the two cities.

Based on our shared priority for mental wellbeing, we are happy to exchange artists and experts with **Kortrijk 2030** for their In the Mood Festival and our **Water Stories** and the project's mental health aspect. We are delighted that our **Out There Together** line has inspired new dimensions for **Kortrijk 2030**'s From Disruptive Places to Hidden Gems, and opportunities to exchange practices, artists, supporting mechanisms and methodologies.

Finally, we share **Kortrijk 2030**'s intention to submit an **Erasmus+ application** for a project in youth and dance, based on our city's legacy in contemporary dance and the current needs of the dance scene. In this application, we will be happy to participate as partners together with **Budweis 2028** and **Elefsina 2023**.

We are also eager to continue talking with **Ghent 2030**. Our discussions to potentially participate in their Water Toop - a multi-stakeholder thematic atelier for raising the cultural and ecological significance of water, and climate change, are major themes for Lemesos as well. We are looking forward to including them in our **Water Stories** and possibly our **Opening Ceremony**.

And a few others

Kiruna 2029 will host **The Performance Shop** as one of their 100 Stages, and we continue working together to define artistic and storytelling exchanges.

We will be working with **Ponta Delgada - Azores 2026** on best practices to implement our **LMS Arts Platform**, a digital platform to stream signature events and performances, since they will have already implemented a similar platform by 2026.

Finally, we have several conversations in progress to invite participation in projects with -and to receive advice from– **Trenčin 2026** on modernist architecture and the New European Bauhaus, **Leeuwarden-Fryslân 2018** on ECoC legacy and 'passing the baton' to young people, **Donostia - San Sebastián 2016** on housing affordability for young people in the city, **Elefsina 2023** on archiving and legacy, and **Chemnitz 2025** on micro-project financing - an important proposition for participatory budgeting processes.

OUTREACH 4



Q17 INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL POPULATION & CIVIL SOCIETY

Since Spring 2023, we have reached out to the people of Lemesos through 117 sessions with groups from all walks of life, comprising 1,289 participating individuals. The Outreach actions began with a call: **Imagine a City**, a call that eventually inspired and became one of our programme lines. On the one hand, asking Lemessolians to imagine offered a generous invitation to exchange and think about a different scenario for our city; on the other, it was almost a provocation for an act that was previously suppressed and sidelined.

'This is the first time we are sitting around the room thinking together about something that we want to do in the future'. We found that the people of Lemesos are rarely consulted or asked about what they think of the city's plans. This has provoked, in the past years, several dynamic demonstrations and organised activism, especially when public spaces or specific buildings/areas were in danger of destruction or replacement. To ask them to imagine their city was not only an invitation but also a positioning act - positioning the Lemesos 2030 organisation with the people of the city when so many expressed feeling *'alien'*, *'kicked out'*, *'alone'* and *'excluded from the developing momentum of the city'*. We have the feeling that our consultations helped people feel involved in ways they had not experienced before. The people of Lemesos actively participated and offered their own reasons for 'Why Lemesos?' along with imaginaries for the future.

How do we experience Lemesos today? As residents, as workers, as visitors? What kind of place is this city today? What kind of people are Lemessolians? What does Lemesos need? How do we imagine 2030 and beyond?

Whether we were in a room with artists, social workers, children or NGO representatives, the questions formed a common frame, and the personal experience, challenges and aspirations came forth. Our home, our temporary residence, our working place to be better, more inclusive and fairer.

We saw those who felt incapacitated but also some of those who are assumed to *'run the place'*. The *'live-work-play'* Lemesos of *'international meetings and events'* along with the *'violent, class-controlled and uncaring'* Lemesos that students and young adults have described to us. An African asylum seeker felt *'challenged by Lemesos but happy to try new things'*, a Russian culture worker expressed being *'perceived as a bucket of money'*, a Filipino housekeeper feels at home in *'the church's choir and at Molos park with [her] friends'*.

We composed a bid book to which its stakeholders have contributed, and eventually placed themselves as active players in its implementation. We exercised democracy as a way to reclaim time for ourselves, for what is important, for what is inspiring and meaningful.

We acknowledged each time that the ECoC title is not one to save the world, and meeting after meeting, a set of priorities unfolded and became apparent. The prospect of the ECoC title became the way to address, in medical terms, the emergencies first and the recovery after. We practised formats of work that we were not used to and witnessed our capacities flourish, because the process we participated in allowed us to do so. We produced results that are useful whether we win or not, but let's be clear: **we need the win and we are ready to make it worthwhile.**



All the quotes popping up all over our bid book, from the very first question, as well as our priorities, came from these main actions:

#1: **Consultations**
Meetings and consultations with people from environmental and climate change work, youth work, social work, minorities, immigrants and other underprivileged groups, urban planning professionals, businesspeople, educators, parents, grandparents and so on.

#2: **Open Office**
A weekly action where our doors remained open to anyone. Visitors spent two full hours with us and each time imagining art *'to be as embedded as it is to go out for a beer'* and for Lemesos to *'sound different; fewer cars, more birds, fewer fireworks, more laughter'*.

#3: **Mobile Office**
A structure on wheels took us outside our base to meet people who are not necessarily our stakeholders, who were unaware of the ECoC action, but had a lot to share of how they experience Lemesos. They appreciated our short interactions and we collected answers for our Vibesensor (#4).

#4: **Vibesensor**
A short, anonymous and bilingual online questionnaire that gathers personal views and maps the pulse of our city. Lemesos is *'sky blue', 'sweet and sour' and 'rough like tarmac', 'denying or embracing its Europeanness simultaneously.'*

#5: **Cultural Mapping**
Extensive questionnaires targeted at cultural organisations and artists. This action provided quantitative and qualitative information for the composition of the Cultural Strategy. One of the strongest needs expressed from multiple cultural organisations, was to increase audiences in numbers or diversity alike.

#6: **Trajectories Working Group**
A diverse group of people of different capacities and backgrounds. Through a series of moderated focus groups using results from various outreach actions as the starting point, 14 core and 22 visiting members co-constructed the possible priorities for our bid and programme, along with ideas for solutions to our challenges.

#7: **10 10 100 _ first edition**
In November 2023, we gathered through an open call 100 citizens and residents of Lemesos in a large-scale consultation exercise, the first of its kind in Lemesos, along with a Poster and Contemporary Souvenir Exhibition responding to the central questions of our process. We discussed the Lemessolian identity, the rapid development of the city and its impact, cultural heritage, public spaces, participation in decision-making, as well as ideation time for cultural activities. The participants even suggested slogans like this one: *'To be loved the way Lemessolians love Lemesos.'*

#8: **10 10 100 _ second edition**
In September 2024, we hosted a second large-scale consultation with 100 stakeholders, this time linked to our Cultural Strategy, focusing on spaces of culture and infrastructure. Cultural stakeholders contributed to infrastructure plans of the city and with ideas on how to make them sustainable.

#9: **Focus Groups with children**
We exchanged with children and teenagers of different ages through schools or other educational formats through discussions, interviews, drawing exhibitions and more. Children as young as six years old shared impressions of *'a dirty city'*, a city with *'a lot of noise and very narrow pavements'*, they imagined being able to *'ride to school by bicycle'* and *'green parks with repaired playgrounds and happy kittens inside'*.

#10: **Public presentations & Interactive Discussions**
Organised by us or as guests of cultural events and associations' gatherings. We presented our process, the ECoC initiative, we did Q&As, addressed and exchanged with the general public, journalists, artists, businesspeople and potential sponsors of the bidding process.

#11: **Lemesos 2030 Network**
A web of those who embrace the values and vision of the bidding process and those who actively support it. The network is to be fortified and enriched if the title is achieved. At the same time, composing this network is also a way to be ready for action if we succeed in becoming a designated ECoC.

Actions 1, 2, 7, 8 and 9 produced written material, minutes, documentation in diagrams, sketches, post-it notes, maps. This material was processed and fed both Q1 and, crucially, the cultural programme lines, the articulation of the concept and even part of the city's Cultural Strategy. We sat in circles or around tables, we reconnected, we unpacked how we operate, what inspires us or disenchants us in Lemesos. Each encounter was personal, almost intimate, an attempt to see each other and recognise what is truly missing, what is truly at stake and what is truly needed. An accumulative exercise of cultural democracy, thus positioning the candidacy of Lemesos 2030 in the city and close to its residents.

What was almost unanimously claimed was that our city lacks master plans and holistic approaches to its development and sustainability, and that what we end up creating are *'different bubbles of capacity and experience'*.

Involvement during implementation

Setting the ground for implementation, we have used the bidding time to exercise participation in creating and designing actions together. In the Spring of 2024, we took some of the results from **10 10 100** and the **Trajectories Working Group**, and further tested potentials of cultural expression with artists and civil society in the event **Out There Together** that reclaimed public space (see Q13).

Crucial actions like **Out There Together**, intend to bring forward authentic voices expressing themselves and to invite people of different ages and backgrounds to co-create. At the same time, they shift the focus of cultural production towards areas outside the centre and neighbourhoods we do not usually work with.

Projects like the **Neighbourhoods that Float**, **Citizen of All Citizens** and **Catalogue of Walks** bring the different voices and bodies in an expanded outreach, research and artistic process that will end in large-scale artistic events and productions. Projects like **Deep Community Healing**, **Art Fanatics** and **Gentrification Project** will bring together different voices to revisit topics of identity. The ambition is to enable participation and connection to culture, and to develop overall audience numbers for high-quality cultural events.

During our bid preparation, we constantly saw civil society members and non-artists engage with passion and energy, offering time, experience and knowledge. The Lemessolian bidding process is already leaving a mark; a toolbox of how to make it count. Having identified and confirmed the fragmented operations in the city, the little islands in the island, we envision a web of capacities and voices that would reveal and bring together the different strengths and perspectives of the city under a common mission. The ECoC was a good excuse for many, but the real connector and bonding circumstance was a common need for Lemesos to be better, to heal, to develop inclusively.

IMAGINE THE CITY is set to feed our legacy where we embrace and nurture our culture bug, but also our desire to be active citizens and living stories of Lemesos for the future. We move from a position of spectatorship of a changing city to a co-ownership of our shared space.



Q18 OPPORTUNITIES FOR MARGINALISED AND DISADVANTAGED GROUPS



Outreach brought up some key priorities when it comes to marginalised or disadvantaged groups.

The first group that quickly became a priority were **people with disabilities**. There are no confirmed numbers of persons with disabilities. Based on the last Eurostat survey, between 8,200 and 17,000 live in Lemesos. These individuals are among the most excluded, with little chance at independent mobility within Lemesos, dealing with blocked pavements, blocked designated parking spaces, blocked entrances to stores and inappropriate infrastructure. There is a very limited number of spaces, public or private, that are fully accessible for people with disabilities including cultural venues.

We plan to invest in connections with associations and organisations that work with disabled people within arts, culture or sports. It is a growing matter in cultural and sports activities of the city and one that can be strongly boosted through a successful ECoC and in close collaboration with the city's Cultural Strategy.

Projects like **Koullou Makka** and **Beyond DisDance Festival** but also existing annual events like the **Access4all Festival** are to be empowered and expanded methodically and sustainably. We aspire to a combination of public space operations that will increase awareness and interactivity, participatory processes in co-designing cultural activities, and to be able to declare that cultural events in Lemesos are made, attended and also communicated inclusively whether in physical or digital material.

A major social issue in Lemesos, especially in recent years is the increased discrimination and racism incidents related to **underprivileged immigrants or ethnic minorities** inhabiting the city. As it happens in many places of Europe, the economic and social inequalities produce insecurities, fear and anger. Refugees and asylum seekers are very frequently used as a scapegoat, the personification of all injustice, removal of authenticity and economic instability. In the Autumn of 2023, a serious pogrom incident took place in Lemesos where social precariousness was expressed with violence and the destruction of small businesses and public infrastructure. One of our Trajectories' core members, a university student from Uganda, was assaulted while at work. Incidents like this one happen more and more often. We are working towards establishing connections with migrant communities and associations, as well as historically important minorities of the city, like Turkish Cypriot, Armenian and Maronite communities. Most of these connections need time to build trust. Existing cultural programmes like **Musical Footprints** are small-scale anti-racism players of the city who require empowerment, who also brought us close to a network of different multicultural groups for further conversations. **Bus no.30**, a two-hour multilingual and musical bus ride was a small first step. Participating underprivileged immigrants or Lemessolians within ethnic minorities shared their own travel stories while inviting audiences to get to know each other. Soft, yet impactful, gestures like these are necessary and mark a small fraction of what we can do further through projects like **Living Peace**, **Neighbourhoods that Float** and **Catalogue of Walks**, as well as build on consistency and long-term collaborations.



Last but not least, the **LGBTQ+ and queer community** of Lemesos and beyond will find safe spaces for expression, experimentation, artistic production, and even provocation. Our **CURIOUS FANCY FAILURES** line and projects like **Sessions**, **The Performance Shop**, **Sardam** are dedicated to the boundary pushers, the adventurers, the brave, the marginalised, the vulnerable, the opposers, the wild who are initiators of artistic innovation, practitioners of acceptance and hosts of new forms of thinking, unspeakable thought and the usually excluded voices.

More minority groups and marginalised communities like the elderly, unaccompanied migrant children and homeless people are on our radar and it is our vision to create a momentum of processes that will unfold beyond 2030. Yes, we dream of changing the world eventually and 2030 is our first step!

Q19 AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT - EDUCATION AND SCHOOLS

In urban Lemesos, there are 26 public primary schools, 36 public secondary schools and 24 private schools with a total of 27,546 students. During our Outreach, we conducted focus groups with a small number of schools of different levels, as well as presentations and Q&As, to spread the news of our bidding process, the ECoC initiative and its potential.

Kids friendly yet?

Challenges and difficulties that have been expressed directly from teenagers include the need for a safer, more inspiring and pride-provoking experience of their city. Young girls (14-17) years old, expressed feeling unsafe when going out, in public spaces, squares, the Limassol Marina, in the afternoon or evening hours. Young teenagers (12-14) were much more motivated and ready to try new experiences compared to older ones (15-17), yet lacked inviting, affordable, age-appropriate spaces and activities beyond those that focus on education.

Comparing Lemesos to European cities they visited, children and teenagers expressed that their home city has unique and beautiful places but *'you have to look for them because the ugly and messy things are more'*.

Quite a few early teens said that museum visits or other cultural excursions are mostly about *'watching old things, feeling bored and leaving'*. *'What child enjoys that?'* A number of schools engage in cultural activities and extracurricular programmes through EU funding usually fuelled by the ambition and initiative of individual educators.

Lemesos' future cultural players are not only super vocal when asked but also super eager to work with artists and imagine together. **SFAAACT!** which stands for Schools for Future Artists, Audiences, Adults, Citizens, Thinkers and **Teenagers Disco** will be one of our main umbrella projects to connect with schools of the city. Students of different ages will decide, plan and produce their own ambitions. **Neighbourhoods that Float**, **Art Fanatics** and **Enter Youth** projects are spaces of school and student participation, capacity building, audience development and, most importantly, safety nests for our youth.

We also tried things out; the music video project **Peace is...** was made with and by children from Agios Antonios multicultural primary school together with three artists. This project was a way to search for creative opportunities of cultural interactivity, frames of creative learning and nurturing the culture bug in our youth.

Growing in the city

Through our focus groups, we learned even more about their experience of the city and the limitations of activities. A six-year-old boy, when asked about his future in Lemesos said *'When I grow up I will probably enjoy working in an office'*. When asked why he thinks that, he said, *'In Lemesos they close Luna Parks and Bowling Clubs to build offices'*. A couple of 15-year-old girls said that they usually *'walk around town without actually landing in a specific place because everything is expensive and filled with grown-ups that stare'*. A 13-year-old said that they *'gather in parking lots and listen to music'*. The **Teenagers Disco** was an idea that grew from a group of 16-year-old students from Kolossi, asking for *'a fun place of our own'*.

Art Training or Art Attending

A peculiarity of the city is that, considering the large number of art education offered and consumed where both children and adults enjoy the 'doing' and the 'practising' of arts, they are not as eager to attend events -especially beyond music- as audience members. We made a hypothesis that both education curricula and art schools focus primarily on the craft and not so much on cultural engagement. We have discussed this hypothesis with both educators and artists, both young children and teenagers. We have made it one of our main focus areas for audience development but also for a more immersive cultural life for future artists or art enthusiasts. *'It is the difference between education and training. The difference between cultivating an arts culture and cultivating athletes in the arts'*, a music teacher said. There is a gap to be bridged and filled with experiences, collaborations and creativity.

Where is the art next weekend?

'We need a place to find out what is going on in the city in terms of events, the venues, to access the different happenings in one place'. A statement that was expressed numerous times and is quite justified. It's not the most innovative action in audience development but it is crucial and necessary, and the first thing we will do. **Lemesos Art-full Directory (LEAD)** will lead the way to the spirit of Lemesos; a map of cultural venues and events all in one place. Cultural spaces, heritage sites, municipal spaces of culture, open theatres in parks and museums along with all information on opening hours, contact methods, accessibility restrictions, ways to use, locations and so on. The full calendar of cultural events in the city with links to book or buy tickets. To make sure we do not miss anything, we will integrate a submission form for event organisers

to submit their own projects which we will proofread and upload in multiple languages strongly present in Lemesos. We will also embed an Open Calls section where both artists and amateur groups may find more access to cultural events and opportunities of participation, work or volunteering. An all-inclusive digital space where the critical mass of culture and its stakeholders will be visible. Some attempts to bridge different crowds in the past were made. Especially by key cultural organisations like the Dance House Lemesos, through projects that connect professionals with students or professionals of different backgrounds with artists. Most of these attempts were either ad hoc projects or limited in capacity. Some good examples were given proper frames of growth in recent years, like the efforts of the Limassol Philharmonic Orchestra and the Rialto Theatre. These projects and practices can be stepping stones towards audience accumulation under the ECoC umbrella.

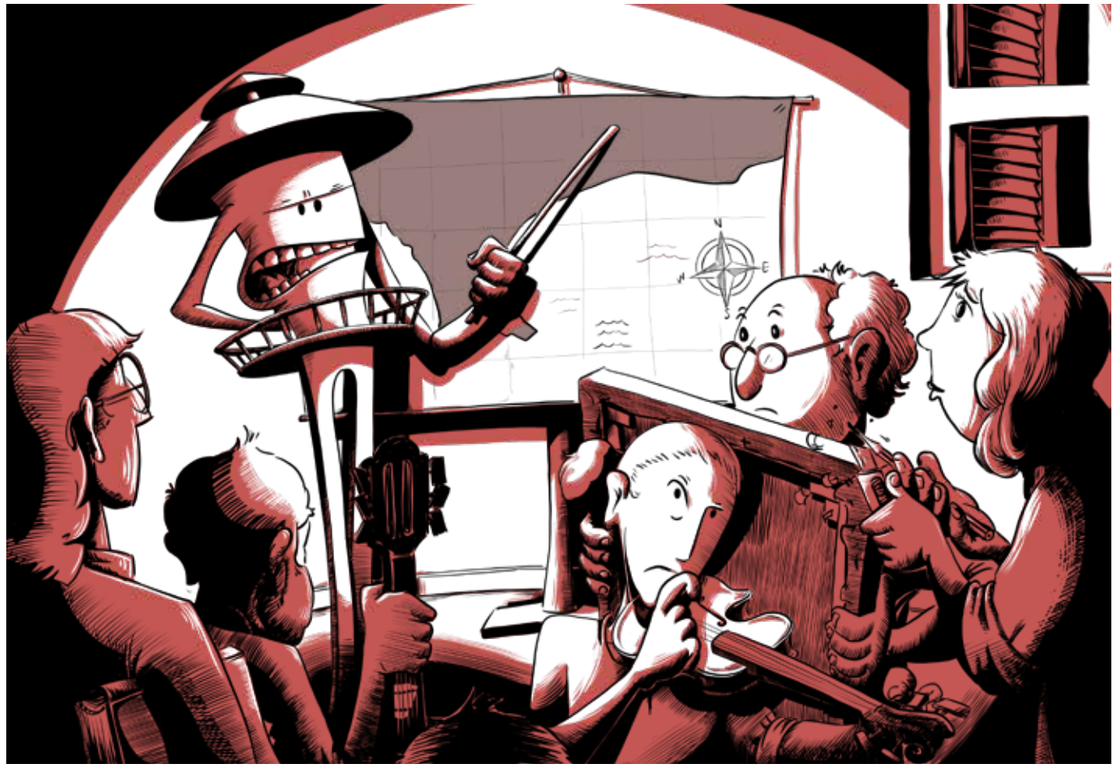
Here is an overview of our plans for audience development in different target groups which are informed by our Cultural Strategy:

WHO	WHAT ABOUT THEM	HOW	MAIN PROJECTS
Pre-school children (aged 0-5) Elementary school children (aged 6-11) Children to Youth (aged 11-15)	- Future Adults - Audiences - Decision Makers - Lemesos through the eyes of children - Eager for playfulness, sharing their opinions, exploring - Envision the future fearlessly	- Collaborations with public and private schools - Collaborations with art schools - Calls for workshops, participatory programmes - EU programmes through schools, creative industries & education organisations	- SFAAACT! - Neighbourhoods that Float - Water Stories - Making Democracy - Childrenmake Fund - School collaborations
Youth and young adults (aged 16-25)	- Young Audiences - Potential Volunteers - Serious stakeholders of culture and city development - No patience, very critical - Attracted to visionary ideas of inclusivity, environmental and social justice and practised values of democracy - Lack of motivation, mental health challenges, worry about future - A lot of 'how to' of art/design yet not attending it	- Collaborations with schools and universities - Enabling of projects and spaces of free expression, experimentation, imperfectness, self care - Safe spaces for dialogue, participation in decision-making, activism, future planning - Use of technology, new trends, AI tools, Social Media tools - Collaborations with professional artists/makers	- Neighbourhoods that Float - Spirited Lemesos - Teenagers Disco - SFAAACT! - Outside the Map - Citizen of all Citizens - Enter Youth - Lemesos Design Days - Water Stories - Art Fanatics
General Public (young professionals aged 25-35) Parents and established adults (aged 35-50) Young Oldies (aged 50-65)	- Most are carnival goers - Attend a lot of music events/ public space festivals - Not so eager with dance, visual arts, theatre (unless ancient drama at Kourion theatre or popular theatre from Greece) - Partly interested in literature and cultural heritage - Busy with life plus driving their children around town - Frustrated with traffic - not in the mood to go out - Tired at the end of the day - Attracted to leisure activities, food related outings, easy time by the sea - Exercise, gym, sports, body treatments are weekly self care choices - Families mostly choose the Mall, Molos public park or the Old Port for family recreation	- Public space events - Interdisciplinary festival type or fun events that bring together children and adults in the same activity - Appeal to curiosity, inspiration, hope - Imagine a new Lemesos together through their children's eyes and their child within - Events that combine art and food, art with food, food art or anything that will feed their bellies and eyes at once! - Parks, seaside, open spaces, in the streets	- Neighbourhoods that Float - Spirited Lemesos - Catalogue of Walks - SFAAACT! - Water Stories - Art Fanatics - 1000 Voices - Lemesos Design Days - The Performance Shop - Deep Community Healing - LEAD - Human(c)ity

WHO	WHAT ABOUT THEM	HOW	MAIN PROJECTS
Seniors (aged 66+)	- Partly 'starters' of culture in Lemesos (founders of cultural organisations/ spaces/ clubs/ writers and so on) - Partly swimmers, walkers, users of the coastline early morning or afternoons - Partly non-participants in city life, isolated in homes/neighbourhoods/ church communities - Plenty of free time - Eager to be heard, to have interaction, to tell their story	- Photograph, record, invite them to tell their stories - Free and easy access to events - Short commitments; an hour/ 90 minutes max - Food/Drink/Hosting aids - Invitations to share their knowledge/ skills to younger generations - Intergenerational activities - Music / Literature events	- Neighbourhoods that Float - Water Stories - Deep Community Healing - CoDE - Limassol Photography Festival - Lemesos Design Days - Human(c)ity
Marginalised Communities	- Underprivileged immigrants from third countries - Students from third countries - Refugees / Asylum Seekers - Roma/ Turkish Cypriots - Armenian - Maronite - PwD (People with Disabilities) - LGBTQI+	- Invite to participate, to co-create - Use food/ sports/ language as tools of interaction - Shared dinners - Shared songs - Collaborations with cultural and social organisations - Collaborations with key people/ leaders of communities/ facilitators/ activists/ social workers - Collaborations with schools and teachers of first-generation immigrants - Matchmakings of artists from third countries currently in Lemesos and local artists to enable co-creation and regularity of activity	- Catalogue of Walks - Neighbourhoods that Float - Living peace - Deep Community Healing - Water Stories - Citizen of All Citizens - Sessions - Delivering Culture - The Performance Shop - 1000 Voices - Gentrification Project - Beyond DisDance - Koullou Makka
Non-Audiences close to Culture	- Choir members - Band members - Art professionals that do not attend the work of other professions (i.e. dancers who only see dance, actors who only see theatre) - Graphic Designers and Communication Managers - Students of arts (dance, visual arts, music)	- More participation in cross-sectoral and cross-disciplinary events - Matchmaking through open calls and interdisciplinary projects to bring different skills and different voices together - Tactics of keeping connections alive through forms of documentation, invitations to write creative texts about other events and so on.	- Catalogue of Walks - Spirited Lemesos - Neighbourhoods that Float - 1000 Voices - SFAAACT! - Water Stories - Gentrification Project - LEAD - Art Fanatics



MANAGEMENT 5



A. FINANCE

Q20 CITY BUDGETS FOR CULTURE (EXCLUDING THE ECoC BID)

YEAR	ANNUAL BUDGET for CULTURE in €	% of the TOTAL ANNUAL CITY BUDGET
2019	1,232,600	3.3
2020	875,000	2.4
2021	783,400	1.9
2022	1,121,200	2.5
2023	1,810,000	4

Q21 NO FUNDS FROM THE CITY'S ANNUAL BUDGET FOR THE ECoC

No, we do not plan to use funds from the city's annual budget for culture. What we do plan is work within some large-scale municipal cultural events to redefine how part of those funds are spent in order to facilitate more synergies with ECoC programming in addition to more environmentally friendly practices.

Q22 POST ECoC ANNUAL BUDGET FOR CULTURE AND LEGACY PROJECTS

The annual budget for culture has not been a steady one. COVID-19 has naturally affected the years 2020 and 2021 especially. The 2019 and 2023 numbers show a more concrete intention of development and a desire to invest more in culture. Last year's 4% is decent, yet not great. The city is rolling up its sleeves and getting to work to change that. Having written its first ever Cultural Strategy and engaging in a very busy and rich bidding process for the ECoC, which is undoubtedly the most ambitious cultural initiative most cities undertake, Lemesos is aiming to arrive at a 7% budget portion, which is a total of €3m in 2031. It will be higher in 2030, but we must also be realistic about what the city can sustain after that.

This raise will involve:

a. Legacy projects of the ECoC programme like the **Lemesos Design Days**, **Water Stories**, **See CY**, **Backstage Academy** the **Catalogue of Walks**, the strategic collaboration with core spaces and large scale organisations of the city as well as school activating projects like **SFAAACT!**
b. Putting life and legacy into new cultural infrastructure, equipped with staff and operation budget, such as the new cultural infrastructure that will be developed in the **Epaminondas parcel**.
c. Redefining current municipal spaces and, through open calls, creating synergies with cultural stakeholders that have the capacity to energise them and create more dynamic relationships with communities of the city.
d. Defining the future of **Lemesos 2030** as a strategic collaborator after the title year in a way that it remains active in outreach, fundraising, synergies, new ideas and future prospects, as well as connecting the different cultural players and creative industries alike.

Points (c) and (d) do not only increase the municipal budget spending on culture but provide conditions for creating more income *from* culture thus making the 7% increase a realistic target.



Q23 OVERALL OPERATING EXPENDITURE

TOTAL INCOME for OPERATING EXPENDITURE	From the PUBLIC SECTOR in €	From the PUBLIC SECTOR in %	From the PRIVATE SECTOR in €	From the PRIVATE SECTOR in %
26,000,000	23,500,000	90	2,500,000	10

Q24 PUBLIC SECTOR INCOME BROKEN DOWN

INCOME from the PUBLIC SECTOR for OPERATING EXPENDITURE	€	%
National Government	15,000,000	64
City	7,000,000	30
EU (excluding the Melina Mercouri Prize)	1,500,000	6
TOTAL	23,500,000	100

Q25 FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS FROM PUBLIC FINANCE AUTHORITIES FOR OPERATING EXPENDITURE

On 28/11/2024, the city of Lemesos discussed and committed to a total amount of €7 million between 2026 and 2031.

On 29 January 2024, at the introductory info session for the ECoC in Cyprus, the Deputy Minister of Culture announced, by a decision of the Council of Ministers, that the state will give the designated ECoC city the amount of €6.5 million as a contribution to the operating expenditure required for the realisation of its programme. A few months later, **Lemesos 2030** invited all ECoC candidates of Cyprus to coordinate and collectively open an exchange with the Deputy Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Finance in order to discuss the ECoC needs in Cyprus and to renegotiate the state's contribution to the designated city. This coordinated effort resulted in a meeting between all candidates, including all Mayors, and government officials on 4 November 2024. We expect that the results of this process will be announced in early 2025.

In our budgets, we have made a speculation based on how the process has developed so far, also taking into account the public income distribution in the case of Pafos 2017 (meaning the original budget, before the austerity measures reduced it). The state's contribution will, according to previous announcements, not exceed 60% of the overall operating budget.

Q26 FUNDRAISING AND INCOME FROM PRIVATE SECTOR

In early 2024, after already engaging with the business sector during our Outreach, we began envisioning an operation of engagement for the bidding process, but also for the city as a designated capital. We held a public presentation and called for support from the business community of the city to join forces and become members of the **LEMESOS 2030 NETWORK**. We also planted some seeds for the future with the prospect of winning the title.

Due to the lack of tax incentives in Cyprus for private companies or individuals donating to culture, the sector faces great challenges in ensuring financial sustainability. Many intentions were expressed to change this; we prefer not to hold on to them for now. At the same time, seeing our one-year fundraising and overall support results in 2024, we feel confident that the prospect of the ECoC is a source of excitement and desire to get involved; visibility, yes of course, but also being part of the force we are gradually accumulating.

The Network is a web of empowerment articulated in 10 core targets linked to our vision and mission, and rooted in three practical chapters: **sponsors, visibility facilitators, volunteers**. In 2024, our Network was composed of eight private companies, two research labs and two schools of the University of Technology, a hotel, a radio station and a media company, 20 cultural venues and festivals, which facilitated the visibility of the bidding process, physically and digitally, and 23 volunteers who helped in our events and outreach actions. The financial and in kind support of the Network amounted to 21% of our 2024 budget; the rest came from the city of course. As we move forward, the Network will expand and grow. Lots of people want to help using their different capacities and boosting our organisation into action. For 2026 - 2030 we estimate that around **€1m** of the overall income from private sponsors will come from the **LEMESOS 2030 NETWORK**.

Lemesos is a business city with a strong entrepreneurial spirit. The Limassol Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Limassol Tourism Board representative organisations are strong supporters. They will facilitate our connections to various enterprises and companies, as well as provide support as part of our **LEMESOS 2030 NETWORK**.

We have some more fundraising plans that will be activated if we are designated:

- Next to the **LEMESOS 2030 NETWORK**, we will offer the possibility for direct sponsorships towards our eight flagship projects starting from **€60k** per project, each of which comes from one company acting as a **FLAGSHIP PARTNER**, totalling **€600k** in income.
- We will create a **LEMESOS 2030 Merchandise** and **LEMESouvenirs** line. Through an open call process, we will create and activate frames of collaboration between design students from the city's universities, product designers and other applied arts professionals

along with two marketing companies based in the city. The task will be to merchandise contemporary souvenirs sustainably, ecologically, responsibly, and connected to the Lemessolian spirit. We estimate a revenue of close to **€500k**.

- Small-scale crowdfunding for children-led projects with an estimate of a total of **€50k**. For our **IMAGINE A CITY** line, we will dedicate a section of direct and participatory funding: from today's adults to the future adults of the city. Lemessolians will be able to contribute to the **ChildrenMAKE** fund whose use will be defined by children and teenagers through our **SFAAACT!** and **Teenagers Disco** projects.
- In-kind support is no little deal. 17% of our current support was funds and 4% was in-kind support offered from the local cultural sector and small businesses that gave us space to use, hotel rooms, materials to create souvenirs, and so on. We are confident in more opportunities of such support and nurturing relationships.
- Income from tickets and projects like **Catalogue of Walks** is estimated at **€350k**.

Overall, these sponsoring and income opportunities can realistically amount to **€2.5m**.

Q27 OPERATING EXPENDITURE DISTRIBUTION

PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE		PROMOTION & MARKETING		WAGES, OVERHEADS, ADMINISTRATION		TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURE
€	%	€	%	€	%	€
19,000,000	73	3,000,000	12	4,000,000	15	26,000,000

Q28 INCOME FROM THE PUBLIC SECTOR FOR CAPITAL EXPENDITURE



INCOME from the PUBLIC SECTOR for CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	€	%
National Government	15,000,000	25
City	42,000,000	69
EU (excluding the Melina Mercouri Prize)	3,500,000	6
TOTAL	60,500,000	100

Q29 FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS FOR CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

All planned infrastructure has been voted on. Three museums have started or are in the process of starting: the Limassol Carnival Museum, which opened in 2024, the City Museum and the GSO Sports History Museum, which are scheduled to open between 2026 and 2027. Plans have also been drawn up for the conversion of the GEVO Warehouses, behind the Municipal University Library, into a place for the storage of all collections and archives bequeathed to the city, and work is scheduled to begin soon.

The Municipal Art Gallery will undergo a much needed renovation and expansion, which will accommodate a big selection of art works, as well as develop more dynamic interactions with its visitors.

The development of new cultural venues, as well as renovation projects for public squares and other social-related infrastructure continues at pace. Q38 sets out a fuller picture of those development plans.

Q30 FUNDRAISING FOR CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

Infrastructure mentioned in Q29 will be covered largely by municipal funds and European Structural funds, like the Cohesion Fund 2021-2027, among others. The Municipality of Lemesos has used EU funds on some occasions but forms a crucial goal for the immediate next few years, one that is mapped out in the **Cultural Strategy 2024-2034** as well.

Q31 NEW INFRASTRUCTURE FOR 2030

A new cultural infrastructure cluster is planned with a budget of €10m for a block of land that is locally known as the **Epaminonda parcel**. The Municipal Council has not yet voted on a concrete purpose of the space, other than being dedicated to culture, however the results from our mapping and consultations are now forming the basis for the architectural plan which will then inform an open architectural contest. We will be able to say more if we are given the chance to submit another bid book.

B. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Q32 GOVERNANCE AND DELIVERY STRUCTURE

Lemesos 2030 was established as an independent non-profit company and provides a platform to exercise and test ways of work and collaboration. Its only founder is the Municipality of Lemesos, which can be expanded to include other entities or cities later in the process.

Governance

The final decision making of the **Lemesos 2030** Organisation will lie with the **Board of Directors (BoD)** made up of nine, independent from the municipality, individuals from different sectors (culture, education, journalism, health, entrepreneurship, finance etc). The **BoD** is, and will be, in charge of the overall management of the Organisation's activities, approving all decisions, hiring of staff and bearing the financial responsibility. In order to ensure optimum results and continued anchorage of the project, the **BoD** works closely with the Municipality and its administration. The **Mayor** and the **Executive Director** of the Municipality attend all board meetings of the Organisation, which take place —and will continue to do so— once a month. The frequency will increase, if necessary, as the title year approaches.

Delivery Structure

The higher-level management roles include the **Artistic Director** and **Administrative Director** as well as a **Communications and Marketing Director**. The team of directors works collaboratively and interactively within frames, budgets and processes approved by the **BoD**.

The **Artistic Director** leads the development and implementation of the proposed artistic programme, capacity building, local and international networking, and audience development. They are conceptually and artistically independent, and work within the financial, administrative and logistical frameworks set up in collaboration with the **Administrative Director** and approved by the **BoD**.

ORGANISATION STRUCTURE



The **Administrative Director** leads all administrative, legal and financial demands and also oversees monitoring functions. Together with the **Artistic Director** and **Communications and Marketing Director**, they set up an effective work flow between the three.

The **Communications and Marketing Director** organises and manages all communication, marketing and advertising plans and campaigns, local and international. They support the artistic vision and spirit of the cultural and artistic programme, as well as develop the **Lemesos 2030** brand.

Second level managers include International Relations & Networking, Outreach, Programme Line Managers, Production, Fundraising, Accounting, Monitoring & Evaluation, Content Creation, Marketing, PR and Volunteers management.

Advisory Board

Next to the **BoD** we will establish an **intergenerational and intersectoral advisory board** consisting of 21 members with the minimum age being set at 16. They will have no voting power but will act as sounding boards and advisors to the **BoD** and the **direction team**. Their role is to support, consult, foster civic representation, ensure social inclusion, include a youth perspective, political engagements, and so on.



C. CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Q33 STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND MITIGATION PLANS

We are perfectly aware that this list can multiply fast. We have identified some core strengths and weaknesses along with ways to work with and through them.

The good stuff	What might go wrong	Our way out of the mud
Residents are supportive, viewing culture as a vital element that brings balance, empathy, and inspiration to daily life. There is an opportunity for cultural activities to form meaningful, long-lasting connections rather than act like abrupt, foreign events.	A segment of society is disengaged from culture and might not be moved by cultural interventions. Additionally, there is a risk of extreme behaviours and far-right opposition.	The key is to be good listeners, engaging stakeholders from diverse groups and areas before asking for their attention. Fear often hides behind aggression, so approaching these situations with understanding is crucial. It is also important to accept that not everyone will want to participate, and that's okay.
Strong and promising vision behind inspired, diverse, and high-quality content, aimed at forming bridges between contemporary arts, community arts, the city's cultural heritage and big celebrations.	Potential resistance from stakeholders and organisations who prefer to do it 'like we have always done it'.	By investing in both the Youth and Adults from Culture, Creative Industries and Civil Society, we can demonstrate the value of these new collaborative approaches, activate curiosity and build trust.
Bottom-up and grassroot initiatives are multiplying in the last few years, bringing together artists and activists with brave propositions (and demands) for a more democratic and forward-thinking future. Lemesos is home to incredible artists, cultural operators and organisations, diverse communities, cultural associations, and citizens, potentially motivated to work together towards ECoC 2030.	Many have learned to work with little resources, building strong communities but having limitations for high artistic quality, European and international links and technically elevated events.	IMAGINE A CITY and CURIOUS FANCY FAILURES lines work on our needs and empower our human and cultural capital. Our legacy aims at new formats of collaboration and sustaining a vibrant scene.
Lemesos is home to incredible artists, cultural operators and organisations, diverse communities, cultural associations, and citizens, potentially motivated to work together towards ECoC 2030.	The cultural sector has not received proper care for years. This can lead to unmotivated stakeholders.	We capitalise on small practical, implementable wins to make the situation better. We work along the Cultural Strategy to apply a concrete action plan. We use the build-up years to build trust and motivation.
The concept is strong and bold, with a suggestive title that sparks curiosity. It acknowledges the city's diverse and under the surface narratives and suggests that every story matters.	A part of our society may interpret **The Understory** negatively, associating it with the underdogs or something less important.	We can use playful animation and illustrations to convey the message creatively. We can show how the concept reflects the voices of the community, of people vs. buildings, making it more relatable and engaging.
'Lemesos is a symbiotic city'. Communities from different parts of Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia have always co-existed here, creating business collaborations and living next to each other.	Extreme and violent behaviours are also present in the city and exacerbate fear and anxiety. The gap between financial capacity and class creates a city of two speeds and brings insecurity, isolation and dehumanising reactions.	A peacebuilding philosophy and art-as-therapy already permeate the cultural programme. We continue to listen to what is articulated through a continued exercise of cultural democracy and healing.
Our participatory approaches and intentions for decentralisation in decisions and plans have already produced a number of interactive cultural events in the city and this bid book.	The city is so expensive that some of our main stakeholders, artists, creatives, even cultural organisations, are forced to move out of Lemesos, out of their venues and become inaccessible.	Attach participatory processes to commitments from holders of power towards their sustainability, guarantee implementation and budget allocation. This needs to be transparent and consistent.
There is solid support from local politicians elected until June 2029, offering a strong foundation for cultural growth and initiatives before the next elections.	A shift in political leadership could affect support for cultural initiatives and legacy projects, especially if more far-right or extremist voices gain traction.	We cannot control everything, but we can use the space we have today to talk openly and honestly, make our impact visible and clear, invest in our youth and foster spaces of exchange and empathetic listening.
The intention for funding shows promise, indicating a potential for sustained financial support for cultural initiatives.	The economy can shift rapidly. Culture very often becomes a lower priority during financial downturns. Additionally, large private events in the cultural sector may diminish the urgency for public investment.	We establish funding agreements with structured payment plans promptly. In case of regional conflicts or another pandemic, contingency plans will ensure activities and projects continue through alternative means and stronger private sponsorships from companies or networks that are allies. Looking back at Pafos 2017 facing the impact of the financial crisis, we can adapt but still preserve the core of our intentions and artistic vision.
Lemesos 2030 already has 36 registered volunteers from diverse ages and backgrounds, bringing a wealth of perspectives and enthusiasm.	Many people in Lemesos lead busy lives trying to make ends meet, making it challenging to find time for volunteering, and good intentions alone may not suffice.	Create a versatile volunteering programme offering short-term tasks and longer commitments. Additionally, collaborating with universities to offer credits or bonuses, can encourage sustained engagement from younger generations.

D. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION

Q34 MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION

Over the years, the European Capital of Culture has developed into a strong brand that has left its mark on the way, and the channels through which, cultural events around Europe are marketed.

We are, therefore, not starting from scratch, but building on an existing and fairly well-known recurring brand narrative – the European Capital of Culture presenting interesting and often unknown destinations for city travel, explorations in the arts through digital media, and an unusual offer of innovative cultural formats and heritage.

The following outline of our intended marketing and communication strategy is a taster of what we will develop into a solid strategy for the preparation and implementation – with the help of professionals on our team, as well as a marketing and communication agency at our side. For now, we build our ideas around five strategic pillars:

- The attention-seeking periphery
- Less visitors is more visitors
- Rarely a conference site
- Spirited Lemesos in merch and souvenirs
- Going 'interdigital'

The attention-seeking periphery

Every ECoC has potentially 11 enemies: The TOP 10 cultural events in Europe and a very limited marketing budget. The strategy to combat this kind of competition is a compelling and attention-rousing story. **The Understory** is the edgy story our marketing and communication strategy revolves around. As we explore Europe's frontier regions, including our own, we bring forward unique insights and questions about identity, resilience, and cultural autonomy. We shift conversations of cultural production, heritage, subcultures and artistic propositions born from distinctive and often challenging regions. Sending our message from

the shadows of the skyscrapers has the potential to raise curiosity and tempt audiences looking for the unusual cultural activity next to, good food, wine and a nice swim in the sea between the shivers in the shadows.

Less visitors is more visitors
We would love to invite everyone to our city and island. But we are not within the easiest reach of most people around Europe. Perhaps those wealthier ones who can, more easily, afford the trip to Lemesos might be most aware of the environmental impacts and think twice before coming here for just a weekend.

A key part of our strategy is to send our invitations to people who are already on the island – be it permanent or temporary residents, Greek or Turkish Cypriots, expats and migrants, refugees and tourists. And to encourage visitors who come to stay for a longer holiday. The average tourist stay is over 9 days already – and we think we might create an even bigger success by attracting those audiences who do not usually travel for culture. While they are in Cyprus in 2030 they will become **cultural travellers**.

Rarely a conference site
Cyprus is rarely selected as a destination for conferences on cultural or research matters. For obvious reasons. As we said before: When was the last time you saw an exhibition or performance by Cypriot artists?

The strategy here is to take our artists, performances (and yes, why not also conferences?), abroad. Let the European Capital of Culture come to you. We share the ECoC title with a Belgian city in 2030 if we are designated – a prime central European location to perform, market, communicate and display Lemesos 2030 and some wider Cypriot culture and heritage. **SeeCy** and **TalkCY** in and outside of the European map.

Spirited Lemesos in merch and souvenirs
As we mentioned in Q26, we will create a **LEMESOS 2030 Merchandise** and our **LEMESouvenirs** line. These will not only play an income generating role, but yet another creative platform to bring diverse professionals from creative industries together to tell stories through objects and products. The merchandise line will be all about the ECoC and **Lemesos 2030**, and the **LEMESouvenirs** line will be all about contemporary souvenirs connected to the Lemessolian spirit created with a perspective far beyond 2030. The souvenirs line will be promoted to different shops around Lemesos, in museums, hotels and the shopping centre of the city. Selected products will be available online as well. A culture of contemporary souvenirs for Lemesos is an opportunity for rethinking our 'brand' and redefining the stories we tell.

From Pafos 2017 we learned how to make an ECoC visible in the city dressing, at bus stops and in shop fronts, entrances to public buildings and along the seaside promenades. All such lessons are embraced and enhanced through QR codes and –already being a standard at airports– possibly by AI assistants on screens that provide tips and itineraries on how best to combine some sightseeing, ECoC exhibitions, where to get the best ice cream while pointing the visitor to a performance.

Going 'interdigital'...
Between the digits of our hands are keyboards and keypads, and a digital scape of posts, re-posts, reels and podcasts. In this day and age, convincing the crowd that is present is perhaps only secondary to convincing the larger online crowd about what you do. We are certainly going to provide the very best experience to those who physically attend and participate in our activities in Lemesos. But the strategy to bring our messages, events, debates and images out into the world is an important one – and a digital one for that matter.

...through our brand
The first step is to create a cool and appealing **brand identity**. We are learning by doing and are already being assisted by some enthusiastic professionals. With their support, and our own typeface, colour palette and illustrations, and will continue communicating through our dedicated social media, website and newsletter. Our plan is to keep bringing in fresh, inventive people like the graphic designers and university interns we met on the way. Lemesos is not short of communication, marketing, graphics and multimedia professionals of all kinds, and we plan to create an in-house core team and collaborations as needed. A quirky brand identity befitting our **Understory** will lend itself to a massive online campaign that addresses general or special interest groups, and brings them in with a simple click to explore specific pages on our web-presence.

...through Accessible Inclusive ARTS
Through the **LMS Arts Platform**, people worldwide can enjoy **Lemesos 2030** from their couch through live-streams or solely digital -and AI- projects. The latest Virtual Reality and Artificial Intelligence developments show that you can experience people and places without actually being there. We seek to connect to those niche techno-culture players and create a stronger bridge between the technology and cultural sectors of the city. Imagine being an active participant from a virtual space in our **Catalogue of Walks**, **Human(c)ity** or **Outside the Map** interacting and interfacing with those present on the spot.

...through games
Our aim is to guerilla-market within some popular casual games that people play on their phones and inject our **Understory** themes there. A bigger Outreach is possible if we get to cooperate with game designers (the island boasts plenty of them) that turn our **Understory** into an urban brand of games about gentrification and multiple community narratives. A low-threshold entry for those who are still hesitant about our cultural offer.

...through social media and one-stop-channels
To expand our international reach, we plan to complement our social media presence by adding TikTok to our existing Facebook and Instagram pages, allowing us to engage a broader, younger audience. **Lemesos Art-full Directory (LEAD)** will launch as a website and an application in multiple languages, creating accessible, seamless experiences for both local and global users. As we said, Lemessolians are doers rather than watchers. But in order to participate at all, you need to know what is going on. So, social media and our **LEAD** will gather all there is to know as a one-stop info channel.

...through AI-assisted bubbling
While travelling around Europe and talking to our European partners, designated ECoC and candidate cities, we realised once more: People gather in bubbles everywhere. And the composition of people within those bubbles are very similar everywhere. They might speak different languages and have different customs and habits, but it seems quite easy to speak **from similar bubble to similar bubble across borders and long distances**. So, rather than looking into target markets, we would like to identify target groups across Europe that might best vibe with our **Understory**. Not countries, but bubbles, so to speak. One strategy is to work with marketing experts combined with AI support to create a kind of exemplary but individual personas whom we can try out tailor-made solutions for. Pretty much like you would converse with an AI programme like ChatGPT to find out what could work for whom. Scary and exciting at the same time.

...through moving images and the media
Not always purely digital, but certainly living in the hybrid realm between the physical and the virtual, are all media including online and TV broadcasters. Through major European and international networks such as Euronews, Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and ASEF Creative Networks, ECoC News, and potentially the European Culture Channel ARTE, we seek strong connections and collaborations for broader visibility and networking.

If we cannot bring more visitors, we might bring more journalists – either physically or through technologies offering remote exploration of our ECoC. We cannot plan going viral, but we can plan for extensive media coverage by hosting media representatives at home, as well as press conferences and presentations abroad in collaboration with key partners, embassies, and twin cities, strengthening our connections and spreading our vibe wide.

Q35

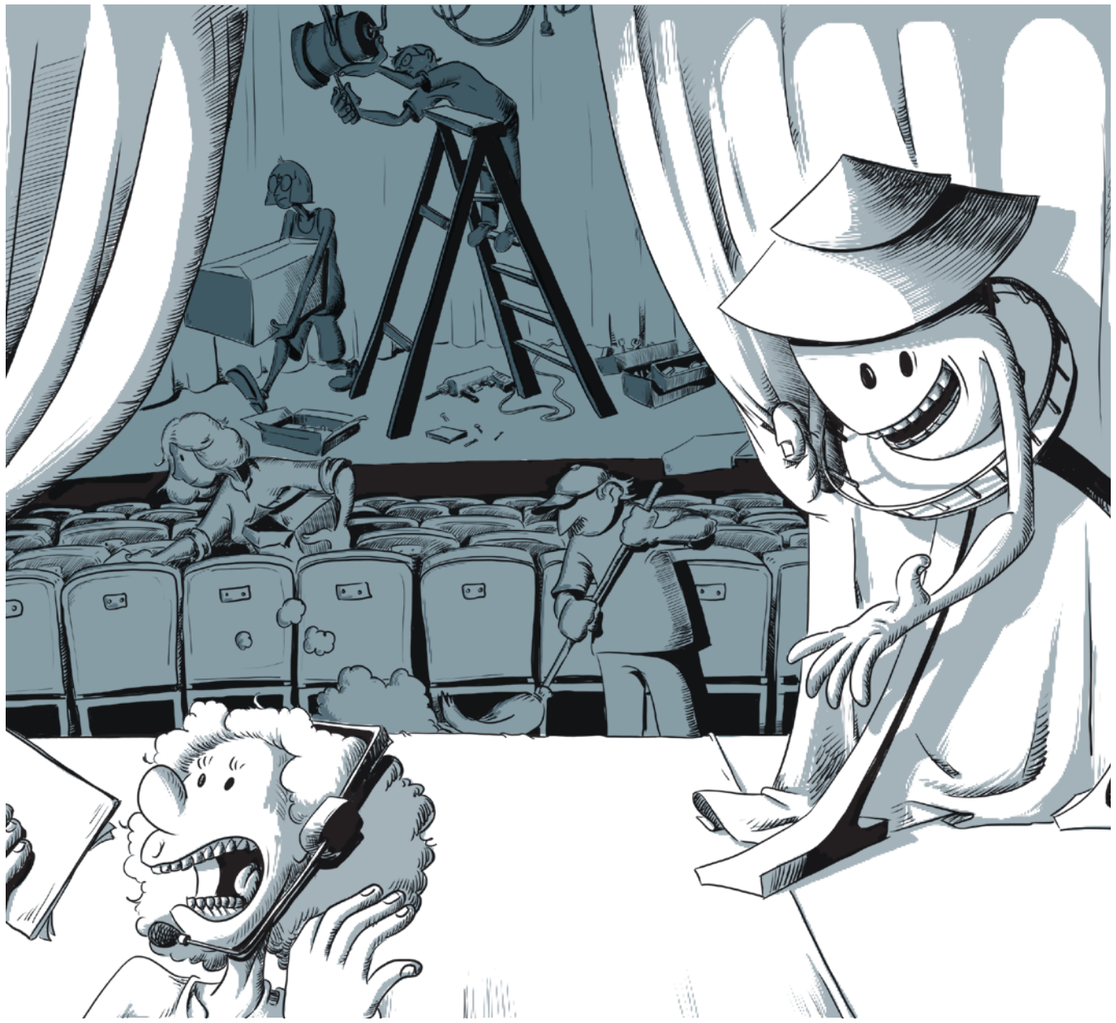
HIGHLIGHTING THAT ECoC IS AN EU INITIATIVE

To promote the European Capital of Culture as an initiative led by the European Union, we will integrate the European Union logo on all materials, both digital and printed. Our website currently features an introduction to the ECoC, presenting it clearly as an initiative introduced and promoted by the European Union. An introduction which we include in every outreach meeting and press conference.

The opening and closing ceremony will be accompanied by receiving and handing over the staff from the leaving to the following ECoC - thus confirming the connecting idea of this EU-led selection and designation process. The opening will also be marked by inviting key officials of the European Union to open the European Capital of Culture as an event closely connected to the values and goals the European Commission has set out for the initiative. Being set within the European Commission's framework of cooperation between member states on the level of culture, development of shared policies for Creative and Cultural Industries and the larger funding schemes like Creative Europe and its sub-programmes, the European Capital of Culture is clearly part of the cultural strategy of the EU. Just as we will embrace the ECoC as *ours* if designated, we will also highlight that it is a temporary title granted with specific criteria and objectives.

The 26th of September, the European Day of Languages, will be a special moment of multilingual storytelling in parks, schools, and public spaces to celebrate diverse, authentic voices and a vibrant multicultural spirit. Lemesos' **Understory** embodies the richness of Europe's story. And it will nurture from the ground up a thriving narrative of plurality to share within the broader ECoC initiative and the many versions and faces of the European Union.

CAPACITY TO DELIVER 6



Q36 COMMITMENTS AND POLITICAL SUPPORT

On 17/11/2022, the Municipal Council voted the establishment of the independent organisation **Lemesos 2030 European Capital of Culture Candidate City** to take on the implementation of a bidding process for the ECoC title. This decision helped set the pace during the bidding process and kept the Organisation flexible from bureaucratic procedures of the public sector.

On 28/11/2024, the Municipal Council also voted and committed to fund the ECoC in Lemesos with €7 million between 2026 and 2031 and a target of €3 million for culture in the city's budget for 2031 to ensure legacy.

We are yet to receive the renewed state contribution for the designated ECoC which we expect early 2025.

Q37A CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE TO HOST THE TITLE

There are a lot of spaces in Lemesos that we can use and update through our projects. The challenge, which is also tackled in the Cultural Strategy (chapter 1, Spaces of Culture), is how the spaces operate, how they are managed, and how they become accessible for cultural stakeholders to use and to serve the arts and creative economies ecosystem better. As we mentioned in Q17, our cultural mapping and consultations accumulated various needs and ideas on how existing and imagined new spaces of culture and infrastructure operate and become sustainable.

We seek to develop the use and accessibility of existing infrastructure: municipal spaces linked to cultural heritage, like museums, archives, and learning spaces, have the potential to host alternative cultural events and activities like public discussions, screenings, and think tanks as well as performative research activities and creation processes of various projects.

Neighbourhoods That Float will incorporate and activate spaces like the **Municipal University Library**, open spaces of the **Cyprus University of Technology**, the **Pattichion Municipal Community Centre**, **Panos Solomonides Cultural Centre**, **Agia Fyla Cultural Association** space and more, in ways that they become embedded in the everyday and nurture this art habit that we look forward to. The **Municipal Garden Theatre** which operates in the Summer season is underused in a city that is dry. Lemesos is the last place to experience rain in Cyprus on most days of the year.

There are plenty of small spaces in the city. Theatre venues like **Theatro Ena**, **Ethal**, **Synergeio** can host work that is created through **Outside the Map**, **Deep Community Healing** and **Human(c)ity**. Museums, galleries, shops or workshops that have been converted to cultural spaces, like **Vinegar House**, **OASIS**, **Pylon**, **Eins**, **Memeraki** offer versatile situations where anything can happen within; from an exhibition of the **Gentrification Project** to a public talk of **CoDE- Cost of Democracy** to a converted dark room for **AI.Arts**. Municipal spaces like the **Panos Solomonides Cultural Centre**, the **Municipal Arts Centre 'Apothikes Papadaki'** and the **Municipal Dance Centre** can host residencies, durational installations or durational performance works where small numbers of audiences can visit for a longer time like **Teenagers Disco**, **Deep Community Healing**, **Living Peace**, as well as workshops and capacity-building projects like the **Making Democracy**, **SFAAACT!** and **Elevators**. For the **Performance Shop**, we will rent an actual shop in the city centre.

Major events are meant to take place in public spaces and open plots of land. **Water Stories** will run across the coast, the wave breakers and in the water, **Pamporos** will be in the water on boats and ships. **Neighbourhoods That Float** will mostly use public spaces, **Art Fanatics** will activate sports venues and gyms like **GSO** and the Lemessolian teams' stadium, **PICNIC** will be in those in-between spaces where it is almost nature or neglected urban spaces. **Lemesos Design Days** will be all around the city centre and will use both empty plots, squares and private large-scale venues as necessary. **Spirited Lemesos** events will take away cars from parts of the city's main streets.

Our bigger theatrical venus, **Pattihio** and **Rialto**, will host big performative productions. The plans to create new cultural infrastructure at the **Epaminonda parcel** (a parcel of land donated to the municipality for the purpose of cultural infrastructure development) offers excitement for how projects from our programme can energise these new spaces. One of the six abandoned cinemas of the city, the **Giordamli Cinema** (which operated between 1930s and 1980s), has recently started to be renovated by its owners and will become a new cultural multi-space in the next couple of years.

The prospect of ECoC has created more willingness to try things differently, to be more flexible and adaptable in how spaces are used. Our goal is to continue fostering this openness and eagerness to explore more modes of collaboration and to move towards a direction where the city and its cultural stakeholders have found new ways of working together and democratising spaces for culture until Lemesos reaches its full potential.



Q37B ACCESSIBILITY ASSETS OF THE CITY

The easiest way to get to Lemesos is to first get to Cyprus by plane. Ferry lines are very limited, and at the moment only from/to Greece, and only during the summer season. More than 30 cities offer direct flights to Larnaca and more than 10 to Paphos airports, which make our little island quite accessible for most months of the year including winter. Located right in-between the two airports, with less than an hour travel time either by car or bus, Lemesos is made an accessible hub for international visitors and locals alike.

Bus shuttles from airports to Lemesos and vice versa are regular, easy to use, affordable, and offer free wi-fi. There are also hourly minibus choices. A car-sharing app where you can rent a car by the minute, hour or day is also an option for those who like to drive. Private cars, taxis and other car services are also available.

There is currently a very successful bus line that runs across the city on the seafront every 15 minutes, and provides access to many points of cultural interest along the coast and near the centre and old town. The rest of the bus lines are decent. And the future is hopeful! The **Limassol 2030 Net Zero Mission** is a great booster which helps to prioritise a more eco-friendly and inclusive transportation and micro-mobility system. We feel confident that, by 2030, we will have a much more accessible Lemesos with electric buses, pedestrian areas, cycling and other micro-mobility paths, more trees for more shade and so on (see Q38). City bikes with many stations around the city are very popular for both visitors and locals who wish to move car-free.

Q37C ABSORPTION CAPACITY AND ACCOMMODATION

In Cyprus, Lemesos is not the number one tourist destination of Cyprus and its visitors are only partly holiday seekers. The city's visitors come for business trips, conferences, weddings, sports events or activities and hundreds of artists who attend various cultural events and international festivals of the city. It is very often overwhelming, yet absolutely fascinating!

There are 3,500 rooms in Lemesos which offer around 10,000 beds. Most hotels in the urban area are of 4 and 5 stars. However, there are options available for every budget, including 3-star hotels, tourist apartments, Airbnb's, and agro-tourism accommodations 20 minutes away from the city.

In 2023, Lemesos received 461,500 visitors who arrived by plane and 250,000 visitors who arrived directly at the Lemesos Port by ships and cruise lines. High season is between May and October, but the city is a popular destination all year round. The average occupancy of hotels in the Lemessolian region in 2023 was close to 50%. This is good for us. We have space for visitors, as well as for participating artists and collaborators of projects. The average length of stay is 9.4 days, which is also good for us. Longer stays mean an opportunity to create cultural hooks, potential new audiences and encounters with our artistic programme and overall cultural life of the city.



Q38 CULTURAL, URBAN AND TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

The **Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP)** of Lemesos includes a series of measures aimed at improving mobility and the quality of life for citizens and visitors of Lemesos, ensuring that the future development of the area is economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable.

The key provisions of **SUMP** are as follows:

- Creation of exclusive bus lanes with infrastructure or smart systems that allow buses to have priority at intersections. Modern bus stations and new bus stops and shelters will be ensured, optimising their placement.
- Development of a cohesive, integrated, dense and safe cycling network, with infrastructure for parking, improved area connectivity, and enhanced bicycle rental systems.
- Improvement of the pedestrian network in the historical and commercial centre of the city, including pedestrianisation of commercial streets, reduction of road capacities, provision of adequate sidewalks on all urban roads, and expansion of pedestrian areas.
- Creation of, initially, two Park & Ride stations, allowing drivers to switch to public transportation to enter the centre of Lemesos.
- Creation of a low-speed traffic zone in the city centre.
- Improvement of road network capacity through Intelligent Transport Systems to optimise traffic flow, introduce traveller information applications, and driver information systems.

Some of these measures are already in process with the full plan estimated to be implemented in the next 4 years.

Lemesos Infrastructure Plans				
	VALUE	SCHEDULE	WHAT IS WHAT	DECISION
Cultural	**€**			
Heroes Square	3,500,000	2024-2026	Renovation and pedestrianisation of square	16/09/2021
Carnival Museum	1,600,000	2023- 2024	New museum	22/03/2019
City Museum	2,000,000	2025-2027	New museum in donated town house of deceased actor	18/04/2024
Paul Gauguin Park	1,600,000	2022-2024	New public square and park	18/04/2021
GSO Sports Museum	1,500,000	2023-2025	New museum	30/9/2021
GEVO Warehouses – Municipal University Library	3,500,000	2025-2026	New archive	12/9/2019
Epaminoda parcel	10,000,000	2026-2028	New cultural spaces	28/11/2024
Municipal Art Gallery	10,000,000	2026-2028	Renovation and extension	28/11/2024
Urban and other				
Social Housing in St. Nicolas and St. Antonios areas	22,000,000	2025-2026	Affordable housing projects responding to the current housing crisis	16/12/2021
New Student Halls	5,000,000	2027-2029	New student halls that can host visitors or participating artists during Summer holidays	26/9/2024
SUMP active projects	20,000,000	2025-2027	Various urban mobility infrastructure	22/12/2022



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