Council of the European Union

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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB for the meeting of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council on 19 and 20 November 2026: European Capitals of Culture 2027: Évora (Portugal) and Liepāja (Latvia) *- Information from Portugal and Latvia*

1. Two capitals, one European year

In 2027, Évora (Portugal) and Liepāja (Latvia) will hold the title of European Capital of Culture. Two medium-sized cities at opposite ends of the Union, one in the Alentejo plains and one on the Baltic coast, will show how culture can drive change well beyond the major metropolitan centres.

Both programmes are rooted in their regions and look outward to Europe. With this joint presentation, Portugal and Latvia wish to inform the Council of the preparations for 2027 and to invite ministers and delegations to take part in the year.

2. Évora 2027: "Vagar"

Évora will be the fourth Portuguese European Capital of Culture, following Lisbon (1994), Porto (2001) and Guimarães (2012). Its programme is built around *Vagar*, a concept deeply rooted in the culture and identity of the Alentejo region, proposing a more attentive relationship with time, communities and the environment. Through this concept, Évora 2027 seeks to bring together contemporary artistic creation, cultural heritage and local traditions, while addressing shared European challenges such as sustainability, participation and social cohesion.

The preparations for 2027 already reflect a strong regional, national and international dimension. The programme includes 34 projects from 19 countries, selected through the international open call O Nosso Laboratório, alongside 33 projects developed by artists and cultural organisations from the Alentejo region through A Nossa Vez. A further 12 projects were selected through the national open call Linha do Vagar, supported by the Portuguese Government through the Cultural Development Fund. Together, these initiatives aim to foster artistic cooperation, cultural exchange and the active involvement of local communities.

The year will officially open on 6 February 2027, with a large-scale public performance directed by Marco Martins at Rossio de São Brás, bringing together around 400 professional and amateur artists and participants from the region.

Beyond the programme of events, Évora 2027 seeks to build a lasting cultural legacy through the rehabilitation and enhancement of cultural and heritage spaces, the strengthening of artistic networks and the development of new opportunities for cultural participation. The initiative reflects Portugal's commitment to culture as a driver of territorial cohesion, sustainable regional development and European cooperation.

3. Liepāja 2027: "(un)rest"

Liepāja's European Capital of Culture 2027 programme is built around the concept of "(un)rest" ("(ne)miers" in Latvian). The title plays on a single Latvian word that means both peace and unrest at once, and that double meaning runs through all five thematic lines: "The European Dream" invites a journey towards our shared European dream; "City Paradox" explores urban life and all its contradictions; "Rediscover the Local!" encourages people to look at themselves and their surroundings through fresh European eyes; "Mindful Moderation" focuses on climate and sustainability, asking how everyday choices affect the Baltic Sea and our shared environment; and "Creative Foresight" explores the role of innovation and technology in art and education.

The programme includes more than 500 events addressing regional and European themes, delivered jointly by three municipalities: the City of Liepāja, South Kurzeme Municipality and Kuldīga Municipality, with events taking place across all three territories. The initiative is supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia.

The year will officially open with a launch weekend on 22-24 January 2027, including the official opening ceremony in Liepāja on 23 January. Highlights of the opening weekend include the open-air performance "City Symphony" and a concert at the Great Amber Concert Hall, featuring the premiere of Ēriks Ešenvalds' "Wind Symphony". Throughout the year, the programme will bring together artists, cultural organisations and audiences from across Europe and beyond.

In 2027, Liepāja will be fully open to Europe, welcoming visitors to experience a diverse cultural programme that aims to expand audiences, strengthen the cultural sector and encourage people to value and actively participate in culture life.

4. Shared messages and invitation

Évora and Liepāja demonstrate how the European Capitals of Culture action continues to deliver for cities of every size by bringing culture closer to citizens, strengthening regional cooperation and building lasting European partnerships. Building on the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2023, both cities are committed to deepening cultural cooperation and exchanges between their cities and regions, further illustrating how this initiative can strengthen ties and bring European communities closer together.

Portugal and Latvia express their sincere gratitude to the European Commission and the selection and monitoring panel of independent experts for their continuous support throughout the preparation process.

Portugal and Latvia warmly invite all Europeans to experience the rich cultural programmes of Évora and Liepāja throughout 2027, beginning with their respective opening celebrations in Liepāja (22-24 January 2027) and Évora (6 February 2027).