

Valletta and Leeuwarden as European Capital Cities in 2018.

The **European Capital of Culture** is a city designated by the European Union for a period of one calendar year during which it organises a series of cultural events with a strong European dimension.

Preparing a European Capital of Culture can be an opportunity for the city to generate considerable cultural, social and economic benefits and it can help foster urban regeneration, change the city's image and raise its visibility and profile on an international scale.¹

Valletta's nomination as European Capital of Culture 2018 includes all localities within Malta and Gozo. In preparing Valletta's bid for ECoC 2018, it was decided that Malta should present a single bid incorporating every town in Malta, in order to ensure that the positive effects of the award would be spread as widely as possible.

The Valletta 2018 Foundation is responsible for the European Capital of Culture programme in Malta. The programme consists of events and projects developed with various local and international communities. It is being developed organically in preparation for the year 2018.²

The Foundation is driving cultural, social and economic regeneration in Valletta and the Maltese Islands through collaboration, exchange and innovative practice.

Other European Capitals of Culture

Valletta 2018 has a clear message for its counterpart ECoC 2018- Leeuwarden – and other designated European Capitals of Culture. On account of our geography, Malta has, for centuries, been an important place for dialogue and a playground for diverse ideas and experiences. Valletta itself is a city that is a symbol of Europe meeting its Mediterranean dimension. Malta's marked history of close ties with Europe is an inspiration not only for our heritage but also within Malta's contemporary artistic works. We are encouraged to open up our horizons and develop current and new partnerships.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Capital_of_Culture

² <http://valletta2018.org/>

Leeuwarden 2018

Valletta will be sharing the 2018 ECoC title with the Dutch city of Leeuwarden, the capital of Friesland. An essential part of our ECoC experience is to forge links with our European counterparts in a bid to achieve the best possible level of exchange and achievement.

As there are few apparent common aspects between Malta and The Netherlands, the collaborations between Valletta 2018 and Leeuwarden 2018 wish to highlight the shared aspects of our cultural and social lives and to show how two distinct cities and countries can work together harmoniously, breaking new ground by exchanging cultural practices and experiences.

One example of this sharing of cultural practices and experiences can be found in our Poetry in Potato Bags project. Building upon the long-standing agricultural and commercial links between Malta and the Netherlands, this project is exploring ideas of artistic exchange between the two communities through the exchange and sharing of poetry from local poets working within each community.

Evaluation and Monitoring research will take place on the basis of a research plan around 5 thematic areas. Research areas and their respective objectives are found below:

1. Cultural and Territorial Vibrancy – To evaluate the success of the Valletta 2018 cultural programme and Euro-Med collaborations
2. Governance and Finance – To understand the investment and management in Valletta 2018 and the related impact on Malta's creative sector
3. Community Inclusion and Space – To assess the impact of Valletta 2018 cultural and infrastructural regeneration on various community groups
4. The Tourist Experience – To evaluate the changes in visitor profile, tourist expenditure and visitor perception as a result of Valletta 2018
5. The Valletta Brand – To understand the success of the Valletta 2018 communication strategy within local and international communities

The process will run for the period 2015 to 2019, with baseline studies being carried out in 2015³

Infrastructure Projects

The Valletta 2018 Foundation is working on a series of Infrastructure Projects which include the regeneration and conservation of a number of Valletta's forgotten architectural treasures. The projects include:

- MUŻA: Making art accessible to all
- The regeneration and conservation of the covered market (is-Suq tal-Belt)
 - Strait Street: A brand name of art, culture and entertainment
- The *Bičċerija* where the Valletta Design Cluster will be established.



Projects are in line with the vision that a visit to Valletta should be a unique experience. The city will indeed become a centre of excellence. This is bringing us closer to reaching the European standards enjoyed in other cities.



³ <http://valletta2018.org/>



During my research about v18 I asked several people if they knew about v18 and its purpose by carrying out a survey. From this, results show that many of the Maltese people knew about V18; some figured it out from their school, from the news and also from the media. Many didn't know about Leeuwarden as the other ECOC - only 10% were aware.

Several residents are unhappy; they have concerns such as more congestion, traffic, lack of parking spaces, road signage and most of all having a noisy/busy city. But, overall, the Maltese citizens seem to be happy that they are part of the ECOC as our country particularly Valletta will benefit from many different cultural projects.

Mr Neville Borg, research officer at the Valletta 2018 Office, said that usually when a city is made ECOC, residents are in fact unhappy, because nobody like hearing noisy sounds from bars nearby but he emphasised that they are trying to work hand in hand with the residents to ensure social sustainability. Mr Borg believes that jobs are being created thanks to the V18 project including jobs in advertising, visual arts and so much more. The Research Officer also emphasised that we have strong benefits from this project, because of international visibility both politically and with respect to tourism. This project is also creating bridges between different cultures like Egyptian culture and Lebanese culture.



~~This was taken during o~~ur interview with Mr Borg.

Being an ECOC is an opportunity where we can strengthen our culture by making people more aware about their own culture and appreciate it more.

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