



## Further Information about the Veszprém-Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture Programme

### Opening Ceremony

Veszprém and the Bakony-Balaton region launched its year as the European Capital of Culture on 21-22 January 2023 with a spectacular **grand opening ceremony and celebration**. The festivities coincided with the observance of the Day of Hungarian Culture, as well as the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of [Ferenc Kölcsey's 'Hymn'](#) - the poem that would become the lyrics of the [Hungarian National Anthem](#).

Veszprém's cultural institutions hosted exhibition openings and special guided tours throughout the weekend. Guests were able to enjoy a range of [colourful programmes and concerts](#) at various gastronomic and community venues. The highlight of the grand opening ceremony was an amazing all-around artistic experience in the city's squares entitled '*Shine, Veszprém!*' with tens of thousands of people in attendance. The nearly one-hour production consisted of a series of successive, interlinked musical performances, dance productions, musical events, light paintings, large-scale building projections and other impressive spectacles. The show related the narrative of Veszprém's past and present through an 'urban fantasy'; a city which is sometimes surreal, sometimes humorous, or dreamlike, but always fabulous and magical. Following the ceremony and city-wide performance, a street ball continued well into the night.

The concept and the script of the programme were created by noted film director and scriptwriter [János Can Togay](#) who is also chief artistic-creative advisor to the VEB2023 ECoC. The music, dance, theatrical and other audio-visual elements of the show were composed by world-renowned contemporary artists and creators such as the [Glowing Bulbs](#) visual art company; Kossuth Award-winning ballet dancer and lifetime member of the Company of Immortals Yvett Bozsik; Oscar-nominated composer [Attila Pacsay](#); Palme d'Or-winning director [Marcell Iványi](#); and Prima Primissima Junior Award and Gyula Harangozó Award-winning dancer and choreographer Zoltán Zsuráfszky Jr. The concept of the official opening ceremony, held at the Hangvilla, was conceived by Oscar-nominated film director and producer [Géza M. Tóth](#).

The **Day of Hungarian Culture** also commemorated throughout 22 January with a wide range of programmes for people of all ages, including theatre premieres and youth performances:

- premiere of the Hungarian folk tale *The Stone Fallen Out of the Sky* performed by the Kabóca Puppet Theatre;
- reading performance premiere based on a play by János Házy performed by the Pannon Várszínház;
- premiere of *The Feast of Adam and Eve* by the Petőfi Theatre; and
- the premiere of *The Hammer of the Village* by the Forte Theatre Company.

Moreover, the **bicentenary of the poem 'Hymn'** was honoured by a programme that presented the exciting and interesting aspects of the text and music of the anthem, and its genesis and development in a unique, elegant and clear format. The literary and musical history of the National Anthem was explored at an event in the University of Pannonia's Great Hall. The backbone of the programme was a discussion moderated by writer and literary historian Krisztián Nyáry, who has also written a book on the subject; and music historian Ádám Bősze. Musical interludes will be provided by the Veszprém-based Mendelssohn Chamber Orchestra.



## Clusters of the VEB2023 programme

Due to their diversity, the programmes that invigorate the life of the city and the region, often setting them on a different path, have been classified into different clusters beyond simple genre classification. Essentially, events have been grouped according to which challenge they will help address, or which aspiration they will help reach. Of course, a programme may focus on more than one challenge. Therefore, clusters and their classification can overlap.

### • **THE BUSY WORLD OF VESZPRÉM**

No more boring Tuesdays! Veszprém has always been famous for its big festivals, when for days on end the town is filled music and activity. But let's face it, weekdays have been much less full of artistic encounters - *until now!* New places and spaces are opening that are not just about consumption – but rather about creating real community experiences, opportunities, conditions and patterns. Everyday life in Veszprém is being rewritten and enhanced, because *a city where it is good to be on a Tuesday night is good to be any day of the week.*



### • **MUSIC/CITY**

Veszprém was awarded the [UNESCO City of Music](#) title in 2019. Since then, it has been working every day to maintain its worthiness of this title. Veszprém should be a city where as many people as possible play music and sing.

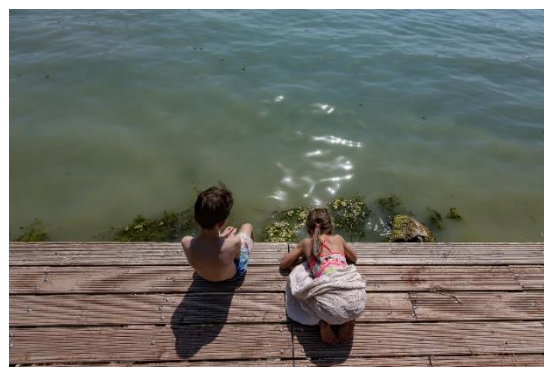
### • **REGION/ALIVE**

The Bakony-Balaton region: an unusual density of unexpected, good things. The landscape is in constant motion. Stories, destinies, hidden treasures

and cultural riches await visitors at every turn. Sites normally off the beaten path are joining the VEB 2023 programme, making their voices heard, and putting their heritage, traditions and desires into new and exciting perspectives.

### • **FRAGILE BALATON**

Lake Balaton and its surroundings form an extremely complex and fragile ecosystem that deserves a special place in the programme. *The health of the region's economy and society depend on the health of the ecosystem.* Opportunities and expertise are showcased that will help the public move from being users of the landscape to becoming responsible custodians of it.



### • **OUT-OF-THE-ORDINARY**

What is unusual for art can be the most ordinary space in our everyday lives. By stepping out of traditional performance forms, audiences become active participants. New connections are made between the landscape, spectator and artist - and in the process, audiences become communities.

### • **BRIDGES**

From the very beginning, VEB 2023 has sought to foster a culture of coexistence and connecting with each other: the programmes promote both a better understanding of each other and a sense of



wonder. We want to live in a community where we can find the words - or that which is beyond words - even when we encounter sensitive or difficult issues.



- **REFLECTION**

Tradition, the historical memory of a place, is not necessarily an object of nostalgia. Tradition is a living heritage, a force of identity that is still alive in the present. Local customs are an integral part of our everyday life and personality. With a contemporary eye, we look into the mirror, or rather, the multitude of reflections, in which we see the Bakony-Balaton region's role in the history of European art.

- **CELEBRATION**

The European Capital of Culture title and the ECoC Year is a celebration; a unique and unrepeatable opportunity to express the pride we feel, and to experience the many things the region has to offer. The year-long programme of events celebrates more than just the Veszprém and the Bakony-Balaton region. Everyone who participates, in whatever form, will take away something different from the experience. Some will remember for a lifetime the concerts; dancing until dawn; a meeting or a defining professional experience; while others will be sucked in by a spectacle that almost seems to come from the future.

- **BEYOND**

Although the European Capital of Culture title will only be officially held until 31 December 2023, the programme is built to assist the vibrant, innovative community of Veszprém and the region scale up and develop; creating a secure foundation for the future beyond 2023. Veszprém and the Bakony-Balaton region will become an even more attractive tourist destination for both the domestic and international public for years to come; one that enriches lives with new horizons, visionary strength and long-term, viable cultural achievements.



## VEB2023 ECoC - a brief history

Veszprém and the Bakony-Balaton region, in close competition with other European cities including the Hungarian cities of Debrecen and Győr, won the title of European Capital of Culture 2023 back in 2018. Since then, the municipality has been busily preparing for the amazing year of cultural programmes. The complexity of the European Capital of Culture's touristic and cultural programmes makes it essential to involve, and cooperate with municipal and regional institutions, cultural and civil society organisations, and professional partners at the regional, national and international levels. The multifaceted Veszprém-Balaton 2023 ECoC schedule will position Veszprém and the region as a novel cultural-creative zone with European visibility. By exploring, enhancing and exploiting the potential of the city and the area, VEB 2023 will attract creative and cultural players and provide them a home and development platform for a wide range of sectors. Furthermore, Veszprém will serve as a model for other cities with similar ambitions in the future.



As early as the bidding stage, VEB 2023 set out the challenges it will address and the ambitions it wants to achieve through culture and the arts. The programme has been built around these pillars. For example, the **historic centre of Veszprém is being revitalised**. To this end, a programme to support niche businesses in vacant retail premises was launched. In addition to their basic function, these thriving new businesses now serve as creative community spaces ([Papírkutya](#), [Kunaszt](#), [Füge](#), [Pekedli](#), [Wine&Vinyl](#), Old Town Market). Moreover, community programmes have already been organised on Jutasi Road, such as the Veszprém - [Jutas Picnic](#), Jutas Olympics, and Generation Bridges workshops at the Pannon Community Hub.

Another ambition is to **overcome seasonality**. To this end, VEB 2023 launched an [Off-Season Contemporary Literature Festival](#). The festival is primarily aimed at young people ages 16-25 and, in addition to traditional literary genres, also offers an unusual insight into the fringes of literature (e.g. crime fiction, science fiction and song lyrics). In addition, the first [Balaton Wine & Gourmet](#) festival was organised in October 2022 to showcase the region's gastronomy and wine culture, as well as act as a meeting point for the wine and gastronomy professionals. Since Veszprém was named a [UNESCO City of Music](#) in 2019; joining a select few other cities such as Liverpool, New York, Mannheim, Kharkiv and Seville, VEB2023 is paying special attention to music through its Soundplay (Hangjáték) schedule of events. The innovative music education project will help embed Veszprém in the musical consciousness of Europe and the world.



A number of **flagship events** have been launched that will continue throughout the year and long into the future. The *Hungarian Motion Picture Festival* is organised in cooperation with the National Film Institute in the Veszprém-Balatonalmádi-Balatonfüred geographic triangle. The *Balatorium Ecology Festival* draws attention to the environmental challenges faced by Lake Balaton, Hungary's 'sea,' and its surroundings. The *Out-of-the-Ordinary Spaces* performance series stages special plays in unorthodox venues. The *Ruin Concerts* series of literary and musical events, unlike large-scale festivals, create opportunities for more personal, intimate connections between performers, audiences and the environment. All these efforts to revitalise the city centre, overcome seasonality and promote flagship events will continue to play a prominent role in the life of the region beyond 2023.



Since its launch, more than 120 municipalities from the region have added events and activities to the vibrant VEB2023 ECoC programme. Civil organisations, businesses and towns and villages are working tirelessly and enthusiastically to continuously shape and add to the diversity of offerings that will be attractive and engaging to people with a broad range of interests. For instance, *CultNet* centres in the Bakony-Balaton region attract culture-minded visitors to the area; while the *Barn* programme sites strengthen local communities with diverse events ranging from jazz concerts to outdoor exhibitions that appeal to everyone from children to seniors.



2023 is a year when Veszprém-Balaton will highlight its cultural diversity, the openness of the people who live and work here, regional and local traditions, its unique heritage and the special qualities of the landscape to visitors from Europe and around the globe.

**The Bakony-Balaton region - where an unusual density of good things awaits!**

## History of the European Capital of Culture programme

The title of European Capital of Culture (ECoC) was created more than 30 years ago at the initiative of Greek actor and then Minister of Culture [Melina Mercouri](#). The ECoC and has been one of the most important events in EU cultural policy ever since.

The designation is awarded by the EU's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture to highlight the cultural richness of its Member States, increase the sense of belonging to a common cultural space, and enhance European citizens' understanding of each other.

Being awarded the European Capital of Culture is a recognition that the common space of European culture is created by the combined contribution of different countries and cities. It conveys that European culture is shared; comprised of different regional cultural contributions and communicated through the language of the arts. It is important to stress that the ECoC identity is not just about the many programmes that take place throughout the year. Rather, it is about launching and strengthening long-term sustainable processes that will extend well beyond 2023.

Therefore, the ECoC initiative is an integral part of the European Union's cultural policy; a policy which aims to bring the peoples of Europe closer together and promote greater knowledge of each other through culture. After Pécs in 2010, Veszprém and the Bakony-Balaton region are now the second awardees in Hungary. With this unique opportunity, the region will gain the position as a European cultural-creative region, with Veszprém at its centre. *Since Timișoara in Romania and Elefsina in Greece had their titles postponed by the COVID-19 pandemic, these cities will share the title with Veszprém-Balaton in 2023 (VEB 2023).*

## Did you know?

- The title of *European Capital of Culture* was created more than 30 years ago at the initiative of Greek actress and then Minister of Culture Melina Mercouri. The ECoC has been one of the most important events in EU cultural policy ever since.

- The title is awarded annually by the EU's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG-EAC) to highlight the cultural richness of its Member States. The aim is to increase the sense of belonging to a common cultural space, and thus enhance European citizens' understanding of each other.

- Veszprém was awarded the designation for the year of 2023 back in December 2018. The application process involved municipal and regional institutions, cultural actors and civil organisations.

- Veszprém-Balaton 2023 Zrt. is responsible for the preparation and coordination, as well as the planning, organisation and implementation of project development, international cooperation and cultural-artistic activities.

- It is a common misconception that the development and implementation of the ECoC programme is funded by the EU. In reality, the EU only provides the title and bidding opportunity. The



investments and the development of the programme are funded by the winning state and local governments.

- Becoming a European Capital of Culture is a recognition that the common space of European culture is created by the combined contribution of different countries and cities. It conveys that European culture is shared, and that cultural activity in a given region can be communicated through the language of the arts. The city and region that hold the title, along with the cultural products it delivers, will be at the centre of European attention. Therefore, the city, local creative artists, activities and businesses will be exposed to a huge international audience. This will also enhance the ECoC's attractiveness as a tourist destination.

- The Veszprém-Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture programme organises its events around three horizontal principles: sustainability, accessibility and child-friendly programme development.

- In addition to Veszprém, the Romanian city of Timișoara and Elefsina in Greece will also be hosting an ECoC programme this year.

- Together with Veszprém, almost 120 municipalities in the region have organised many successful events and initiatives since 2020 leading up to the official launch.

- 16<sup>th</sup> century humanist scholar and Bishop of Csanád Faustus Verancsics lived and worked a part of his life in Hungary - partly in Veszprém.

#### **For constantly updated information:**

- Apps: [Android](#) or [iOS](#)
- Web: [English](#) and [German](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)
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**Photos:** Photos may be used freely provided the source is credited. (Photo: VEB2023 ECoC).

Download general photos of Veszprém and the region from [here](#).

**Short videos** are available in [English](#) and [German](#).

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