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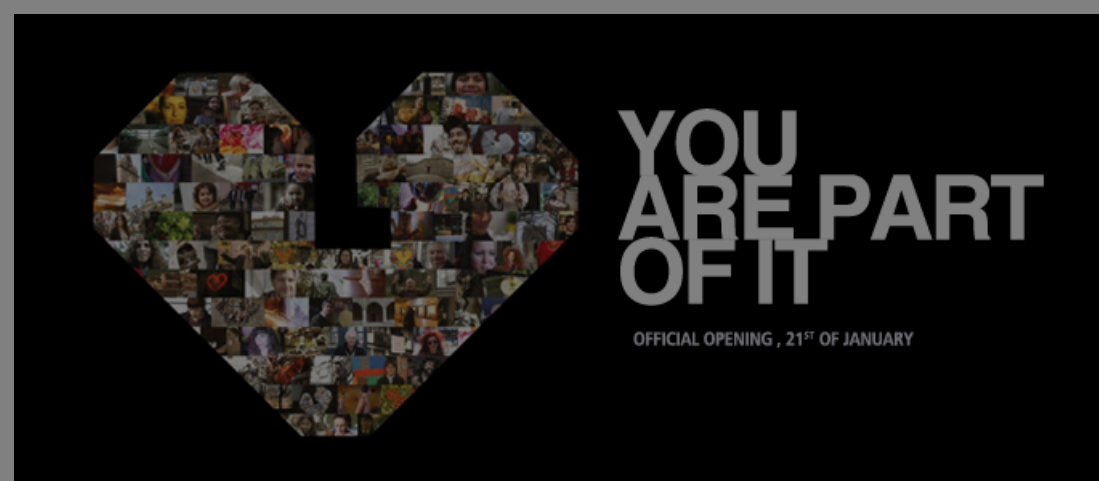
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Capitals of Culture in 2012



Guimarães (Portugal) and **Maribor** (Slovenia) took over the title of **European Capitals of Culture 2012** on 1 January. Both cities have a busy calendar of events planned for the year, with the aim of showcasing themselves to the world and building a lasting legacy for their citizens.

The official launch of **Maribor 2012** will take place over the weekend of 13-15 January, with music, theatre and dance performances. Numerous and varied cultural events, combining traditional and innovative approaches, from carnival to contemporary dance, are planned throughout the year. Young audiences will be a particular focus of the events.



Guimarães 2012 will open its festivities on Saturday 21 January with a theatre and multimedia open-air show. Its programme for the year focuses on four themes: City, Community, Thought and Arts.

Representatives from Tallinn (Estonia) and Turku (Finland), the 2011 European Capitals of Culture, will attend the launch events in both cities to pass over the baton to the 2012 Capitals.

Background

Organisation and funding of the European Capitals of Culture are principally the responsibility of the cities and Member States concerned.

The European Commission has contributed with a €1.5 million grant to each city. Known as the Melina Mercouri Prize after the Greek Culture Minister who inspired the initiative, the grant is awarded on the basis that the city's cultural programme meets three criteria: it highlights the European dimension, fosters the participation of the public, and is an integral part of the long-term cultural and social development of the city.

The European Capital of Culture title is an excellent opportunity for cities to improve or even transform their image, to put themselves on the world map, and rethink their development through culture. The title has a long-term impact, not only on culture but also in social and economic terms, both for the city and for the surrounding region.

Following Guimarães and Maribor in 2012, the future European Capitals of Culture will be Marseille (France) and Košice (Slovakia) in 2013, Umeå (Sweden) and Riga (Latvia) in 2014, and Mons (Belgium) and Plzeň (Czech Republic) in 2015.

For more information:

<http://www.guimaraes2012.pt/>

<http://www.maribor2012.info/>

http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/capitals/european-capitals-of-culture_en.htm

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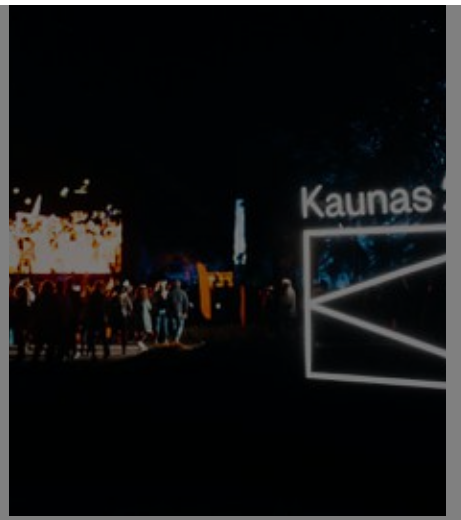
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