

# We are the city

## Yes we are

**We chose this bold statement because as a city we want to emphasize that this is our moment, this is the right time for us to apply for the title of European Youth Capital in 2024.**

As a city with a strong track-record on youth participation, child & youth friendliness, a strong youth organisations we want to take our story to another level. So far the city's youth policy has delivered some clear results: the quality of the public space has strongly increased, there is a better focus on youth and child poverty, disadvantaged youth and the city offers a broad range of leisure activities to its young citizens through their own channels or through youth organizations. We aim to create a future-proof city that is genuinely co-created by its citizens and, in this case, young citizens. Co-creation, not as an intention but as a starting point for future generations.

We are the city also means that we see young people not only as the creators of the city of tomorrow, but also see them as the heartbeat of our city determining the city's DNA. Young people are the driving force in shaping the future of our city.

Our candidacy is not only endorsed by the city, its young people and its organisations it is also supported by strong regional and national partners throughout Belgium who see our candidacy as a tool to generally enhance Belgian youth policy and contribute to a broader and better European youth policy.

## Priorities

The three priorities for our candidacy: Engage, Empower & Care are based on young people's experiences, comments, insights, wishes and needs for a better, younger Ghent that we have been capturing the last couple of years on various opportunities and surrounding a wide range of topics.

Out of these priorities young people identified some important challenges for the future of our city: equal rights & diversity, sustainability, public space, mobility, co-creation, active citizenship & volunteering.

# Engage Empower Care

## Involvement

Despite the covid-19 pandemic and its restrictions, we managed to actively involve young people, youth organizations and civil society in the preparation of our candidacy. Our candidacy is underpinned by a number of strong participation projects in recent years. During the Covid crisis, we put a lot of effort into online participation in preparation for EYC. Since restrictions have been lifted gradually since the beginning of the summer holidays, we have fortunately been able to step back into off-line mode.

## Program & Legacy

**As we consider these priorities and challenges as the keystone for the further elaboration of the program in 2024 we set ourselves the following objectives:**

- *Strengthen youth participation in the city & local governance.*
- *Create a better quality public domain for young people.*
- *Integrate a designated youth programme into the city's own events*
- *Improve mental health and happiness of young people in the city*
- *Host and organise international conferences, meetings and exchanges under the flag of EYC 2024*
- *Use sports to elevate young people & marginalised groups in city life*
- *Create more space for youth*
- *Increase young people's mobility & accessibility to public transport*
- *Ghent EYC 2024 as a milestone towards Ghent European Capital of Culture in 2030*
- *Generate the conditions for an EYC 2024 programme co-created by young people and based on their talents*
- *Empower Disadvantaged Youth*
- *Strengthen volunteer & active citizenship based initiatives*
- *Young people as active communicators in 2024 and beyond*
- *Activate & empower girls and LGBTQIA+ youth*
- *Raise awareness and create the conditions for a sustainable future for young people.*
- *Co-create EYC-year specific events*
- *Stimulate exchange & knowledge on European level*
- *Put Ghent and Europe in the picture*
- *Get to know the EU.*

For this program we largely want to invest in actions, projects & ideas that will carry over far beyond the European Youth Capital year and that will enhance young peoples lives for the future. As we are still in the process of elaborating the program, we will let young people decide on specific results and outcomes.

More generally and on a governance level we wish for our European Youth Capital candidacy to enhance and optimize the city's policy towards young people and make it stronger, better and more inclusive, leave a sustainable mark on our city and thereby reinforce and extent the European dimension of our youth policy and the opportunities this brings for young people and youth organizations. As we see it, a European Youth Capital year can function as a doorstep to take our city another leap further and go for a broader and more direct involvement of young people in policy making and a general increase of representation of youngsters in all the different aspects of city life.

## Trajectory

The preparations for our application started in 2019, with support of our local Youth Councils and actively participating in the preparations for our application. Since autumn 2020, the project has 2 project officers from the city's youth service working on the application, partnerships and program. The city tagged part of its budget for the European Youth Capital Year and made a commitment to release more funds if the title was achieved. Financial resources on all governance levels has been secured in case we win the title.

As the political current for our European Youth Capital Candidacy is favorable on all levels of governance we can conclude that 2024 is our year, our momentum. Postponing the candidacy to the future would therefore mean that the political basis could disappear and would have to be rebuilt with the newly elected Ghent council members and the new Flemish government.

**The time is now. Ghent for EYC 2024!**