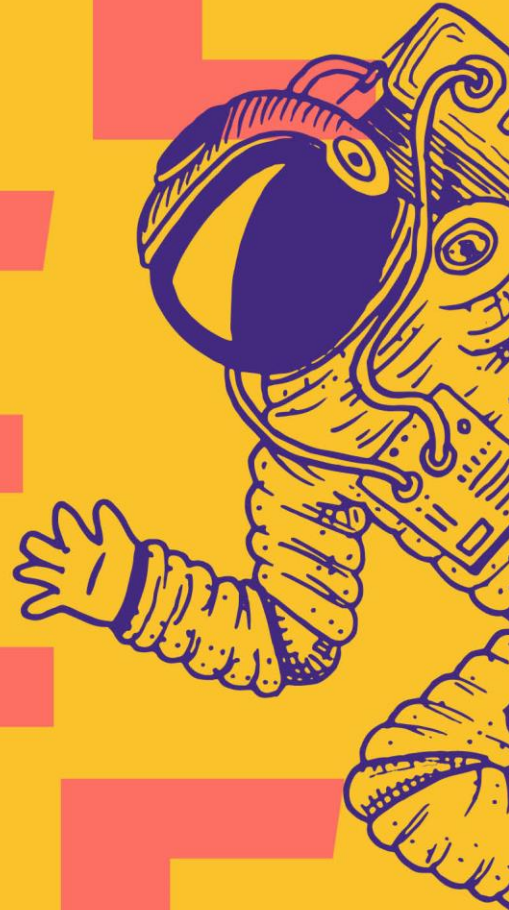


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EUROPEAN
YOUTH
CAPITAL
2024

GHENT EUROPEAN YOUTH CAPITAL (EYC)
CONCEPT NOTE – May 2021

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1. APPLICANT

MUNICIPALITY	Ghent
REGION	Flanders
STATE	Belgium
TOTAL POPULATION	263.406
POPULATION UNDER 35 y	123.038

2. MUNICIPAL LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

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CONTACT PERSON

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4. HOSTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Capacity of hotel / hostel rooms & city camp sites in Ghent in 2021

	Number of hotels/hostels/camp sites	Number of Beds / spots	Price Range
Youth Hostel	7	409	28-45 euro
Hostel	4	103	45-90 euro
City Camp Site	1	1178	8-45 euro
Total	12	1690	
	Number of B&Bs	Number of rooms	
B&B	50	300	80-200
	Number of Hotels	Number of Rooms	Price Range
Hotel **	5	344	80-160 euro
Hotel ***	8	996	105-165 euro
Hotel ****	9	1069	165-300 euro
Total	21	2439	

Capacity of Youth Work Specific overnighter group accommodation

	Number of Beds / Spots
Chiro Oude Bareel	35
Chiro Lourdes	40
Chiro Ghecko	35
Chiro OLV	35
Chiro St-Jan Berghmans	35
FOS De Wilde Eend	40
Fos De Zebra's	40
Scouts & Gidsen De Kleine Prins	35
Scouts & Gidsen De Zonnekerels	35
Scouts & Gidsen Ten Berg	45
Scouts & Gidsen St-Bernadette	45
Total	420

By 2022, another 300 new hotel rooms will increase the total hotel capacity to almost 2,750.

Reaching The City

By air: Brussels Airport – Zaventem: ± 140 international and regional carriers serve Belgium's International Airport, from more than 70 international cities. Ghent can easily be reached from the airport (By train: direct connection, every half hour, journey time: less than 1h/By taxi: 45 minutes driving/Private shuttles (taxi): ± € 60 one way). Brussels South – Charleroi Airport (By train: 1h30min, one change /By bus: direct transfer from airport to Ghent railway station: 1h25min /By taxi: 1h10 minutes driving). Other Belgian airports

By Train: Thalys: Ghent has a direct connection with Paris (± 2h) via Brussels South Station. Eurostar: via Brussels South Station, London is only 3.5 hours away from Ghent

By Car: Ghent is ideally located at the intersection of the E17 and E40 motorways, which guarantees an easy access.

Getting around in Ghent

Walking : Ghent's mobility policy is clearly based on prioritising walking and cycling. In 1997, a large pedestrian area was created in the very heart of the city. Now pedestrians can enjoy walking and shopping in a car-free historic city centre, the largest of Belgium (70 ha).

Cycling: In Ghent, there are currently two suppliers, Trapido and Blue-bike. However, it is likely that due to an ongoing tender process, they will soon be joined by up to three other suppliers. As a result, the shared bike market within the city walls will increase in the coming years.

Public transport: plays a crucial role in contemporary mobility policy, and the city is actively promoting public transport use among its citizens. To do so, public transport services are constantly being improved: tram lines are extended, bus lines are converted into tram lines, park and ride sites are constructed on the edge of town, segregated public transport lanes are built, and so

Accessibility: Ghent has always made sure that it is easily accessible for everyone. People with a temporary or permanent disability or those with special requirements in terms of comfort or care can travel in and out of Ghent without difficulty. There are a number of transport options in Ghent for people with reduced mobility. The Flexity trams in Ghent have spaces for wheelchair users, a low floor and a ramp which can be used safely at an accessible (raised) stop. Older generation busses also include places reserved for people with reduced mobility, while new buses are equipped with a low floor, ramp and hydraulic kneeling device.

Cars & Low Emission Zone: The Ghent city centre may be the largest pedestrianised area in Flanders, but you can easily park your car nearby. The parking route leads you to the various car parks that give access to the city centre. To improve the air quality, the inner city of Ghent (the area within the ring road) became a low emission zone (LEZ), meaning that air polluting vehicles are banned from this wide zone.

Working facilities

In Annex VIII we listed a brief overview of the infrastructure we are likely to use for EYC. By no means is this an exhaustive list of the available infrastructure in the city as we have not included the infrastructure of the city's core partners, such as Ghent University and the University Colleges and as the list is based on partners that have already been confirmed. Based on the specific needs or partners for an event or action, venues or outdoor spaces can be selected.

We have divided the annexed locations into a few categories to indicate the diversity and specificity of these locations. Some terms will be briefly explained, other terms speak for themselves:

- Youth Clubs: small organisations with their own specific activities, with a bar and 1 or 2 small rooms for events
- Shared Youth Spaces: infrastructure which is often home to several youth organisations and we also have specific infrastructure for hosting events

- Youth Culture: organisations working specifically in the field of youth and culture and which have their own specific infrastructure
- Youth Community Centres: organisations working with disadvantaged youth and having diverse infrastructures at various locations in the city
- Culture / Arts Centre: organisations that develop a wide range of artistic and cultural activities and that often have more than one large hall available for events
- Theatre: specialized in performing arts and having specific halls and accommodation for this purpose

Most of this (indoor and outdoor) infrastructure can be used for a wide variety of needs, usually depending only on the capacity required or specific practical needs. Almost all of the city's main infrastructure is accessible to people with disabilities and has adapted toilet infrastructure as well. All newly built and renovated infrastructure projects are advised by the city council for people with disabilities (comparable to the youth council) and are monitored by a special service of the City of Ghent. The city's Youth Service also offers infrastructure subsidies for youth organisations that want to adapt their own infrastructure to today's standards with regard to accessibility.

Ghent is a city that has a lot of experience with temporary use of vacant buildings and vacant lots. The City has a tradition of subsidizing and supporting these places. We therefore plan to make full use of these places in EYC. The majority of these initiatives are creative hubs that provide a constant flow of new projects and new synergies in city life. They often serve as a stepping stone towards more permanent initiatives. Since these places and the organizations that manage them are often temporarily available, we have not included them in our application.

Annex IV provides an overview of the distribution of the available infrastructure throughout the city's 25 boroughs.

Planned projects

Ghent features a very extensive youth-specific infrastructure. Therefore, we do not need to build any additional infrastructure for 2024. Instead, we look forward to highlighting the diversity and quality of our existing infrastructure during the EYC year.

Nevertheless, we will invest in establishing a visible and attractive Youth Space that will function as the hub and heart of the EYC festivities. The experience gained from co-creating this hub will be used for building a "House of Youth", as scheduled in the city's multi-annual budget plan after 2024. The city will provide the necessary budget and location for setting up the hub in 2024.

In 2024 we will also use our mobile youth unit which is currently in the design phase. This new and unique concept is meant to temporarily fill the gap if youth organisations face an infrastructure problem. This will be an important showcase project for EYC. If Ghent becomes EYC, three new shared Youth Spaces will be realized in 2024.

5. INFORMATION ON THE APPLICANT CITY

Brief History

With almost 80,000 students, 43,500 young people (11-25y) and 35,000 children (0-10y), Ghent is a young and dynamic city. It has a vibrant cultural scene and a wide range of youth organisations, with as many as 70 youth movements and approximately 10,000 youth movement members. In our official city mission statement, a great deal of attention is paid to and commitments are made to children and young people as they are considered to be fully-fledged citizens, and Ghent's future.

During the last 5 years, the city has geared up when it comes to youth policy. All policymakers, all departments and all services have worked together on a broad youth policy, implemented throughout the entire city. But notwithstanding these efforts and accomplishments, we still see many challenges in this respect.

Recent participation (research) projects show important remaining challenges¹ for many young people in Ghent, such as:

- **Equal Rights & Diversity:** the right to be yourself and to express yourself the way you want to. Young people point out that, although Ghent is known as a very tolerant city, there are still issues with homophobia & racism.
- **Sustainability:** the fight for a better future, climate awareness and sustainable ways of living. In 2019, climate marches were held week after week in Belgium. Young people get the feeling that they are on their own in the climate battle, that they have to pay for the mistakes of the previous generations. They ask for a firm climate policy and immediate actions.
- **Public Space:** the right to claim your space in the city, room to experiment, to meet, be creative,... Young people ask for more places to hang out, where they can meet their friends and chill.
- **Mobility:** being able to move around safely in the city. There are several places in Ghent which young people point out to be dangerous, due to busy traffic, lack of safe biking lanes etc., but there is also the feeling of unsafety passing through certain neighbourhoods.
- **Co-creation:** be an actor in the city, co-create, participate, have the opportunity to experiment. Young people want to design their own neighbourhood, local square, youth hub, etc. They do not feel they get the opportunity to do so.
- **Active Citizenship and participation:** be involved, be an active member of society by doing volunteer work or by policy involvement. Young people want to be heard, be able to decide or give input on matters that influence their life.
- **Poverty:** the right to grow up without being deprived of opportunities and experiences by financial issues. Young people who grow up in poverty do not get the same opportunities in life than those who don't.
- **Mental Health:** the right to proper aid and support when experiencing mental health issues. This topic is now higher on the agenda than ever, due to the Covid pandemic. Young people are struggling and the threshold to guidance and assistance is often still too high.

Ghent has a young population, with a large influx of people in their early twenties (mostly students who stay after their studies). Teens and young adults (16-25y) are a vulnerable group. 10% of 18- and 19-year-olds receive a minimum income, for the group of 20- to 24-year-olds that still is 7%. Young people with a foreign nationality are much more likely to leave secondary education without a diploma: this is the case for 38% of students with a non-EU nationality. More than 40% of the unqualified school leavers in Ghent are still looking for a job a year after leaving school. Research shows that young people are the highest risk group when it comes to suicide attempts. These numbers indicate that we have to keep an ongoing focus on the most vulnerable children, teens and young people in our society. At the same time, we are seeing a demographic increase in this group, a trend that started in 2018 and will continue strongly in the coming years.

¹ Challenges are based on recent studies and input received from network and youth (welfare) and social workers.

Youth Track Record

Youth policy

Since 1993, the city of Ghent has had a long history in writing youth policy notes:

- Every 6 years, the deputy mayor of Youth draws up policy notes with input from the administration, youth organisations, children, young people & parents.
- In 1997 the city's youth service elaborated a broader approach to youth policy and initiated a policy on public space for youth.
- In 2013, a programme director for a "youth- and child-friendly city" was appointed.
- In 2014, the annual action plan was integrated into the city policy plan.
- In 2015, an **action plan on child and youth friendliness** (containing 181 new or highly renewed actions) was approved. Our definition of a child- and youth-friendly city: "A city, committed to fulfilling children's rights, is a city where the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children are an integral part of public policies, programmes and decisions"².
- Actions for children and young people are now screened for and embedded in all policy plans.

All the initiatives that have been taken over the past 30 years with a view to a stronger, broader youth policy have delivered a number of very clear results:

- The quality of public space has strongly increased: there are more playgrounds, there is more & better community sports infrastructure, there is more green space with attention to children and youth.
- There is a stronger poverty policy with a focus on child poverty.
- The amount of leisure activities for young people has increased.
- Attention to vulnerable target groups continues to increase.
- **Child-friendliness has become part of the DNA** of the city administration.
- More attention is directed to children and young people participating in policy either directly or through advocacy. The Youth Service often acts as a facilitator in this regard.

In recognition of its efforts, Ghent received the label of 'Child-friendly City' in 2014 and again in 2020. This label is granted by a steering committee of several youth policy related organisations in Flanders.

Youth Participation

Youth participation in Ghent started as early as 1993, when the Youth Council was founded with the support of the city, which provides a part-time counsellor to support the Youth Council. Ghent has a tradition of involving (the voice of) young people in the drafting of its policy plans. **The Youth Council**, as an official advisory body, provides standard advice on all policy documents related to youth. The signals related to youth are included in the upcoming policy plans. In preparation of the current term of office, a major participation project "**Expedition 2025**" was organised by the city: it organised focus groups with parents of young children, developed a participation game for schools (age 14-18), held a big survey among students and did a test case on voting from the age of 16 on, 16- and 17-year-olds were asked to give their opinion on different themes. All output was submitted to the elected Deputy Majors and used as the basis for a new action plan, together with the new actions from the policy notes. This output formed the basis for the elaboration of the key goals for EYC2024.

In Ghent, young people are seen as active '**actors**': children and young people shape their living environment, they become supervisors in **neighbourhoods** they grew up in, they are trained as sports coaches, and in cases of public nuisance, young people are seen as a partner and are involved in creating solutions. They become ambassadors of their neighbourhood to interact with police, the judiciary and policy makers. Children and teenagers are consulted in the **design of public space** ranging from specific neighbourhood related projects (playgrounds, green spaces,...) to district and city-wide projects (city parks, sport infrastructure,...). **Mobility plans** on

² Based on UNICEF's definition of a child-friendly city <https://childfriendlycities.org/>

district level are drawn up based on the input of the local residents (including young people). Through the **Community District Budget** project (with a budget of € 6.25 million for the 25 districts), anyone can hand in an idea to improve their neighbourhood, and young people can submit ideas (with the help of their parents or organisations and supported by the city's youth service). Schools are encouraged to approach their **student councils** as true participation platforms. Student councils work together with the Youth Council on certain policy notes. Our youth movements and organisations themselves are the perfect example of participatory organisations. They are created by and for young people at the core. They follow the train-the-trainer principle, where current leaders train the eldest members to become the next generation of leaders. Local movements are not coordinated by a professional, but are run by young people themselves: from weekly activities to camp organisation, fund raising, finances, ...

More than 20 years ago, the city was the first in Belgium to create a designated department on citizen participation and since 2019, we have had a **Deputy Mayor of Participation**. Although significant progress has been made since then, we are fully aware that we still do not reach all children and young people in Ghent. One of our strategies to address this challenge is to work in safe environments and organisations, close to these young people, where they feel at ease. For instance, Young Ghent in Action, a youth organisation for young people living in poverty, is supported financially to work on participation with their young people.

Youth Support Services

Ghent has a wide range of youth support services, ranging from city services that support young people and youth organisations to very specific help for, for example, teenage mothers or children of parents with addictions. We try to capture the multitude of initiatives in the following summary, in which we try to interpret the types of support. All mentioned organisations are financially supported by the city.

- Youth Welfare organisations: youth work with a focus on marginalized and disadvantaged groups. In addition to meeting opportunities, their activities (games, sports, music, carpentry and welding, etc.) stimulate personal and social skills and encourage social participation of young people.
- Organisations for childcare and family support: Childcare and family support centres (CKGs) provide temporary support for families with children aged 0 to 12 to get through a difficult period.
- "Self-organisations": Self-organisations are immigrant associations formed to maintain contacts with the country of origin and are often located in the youth, socio-cultural domain or in the political domain.
- Sports organisations with a specific youth & community engagement.
- Specialized Youth Care: Facilities within Special Youth Care provide youth assistance to children and young people aged 0 to 18 and their families. They are concerned with those children, youth and families who find themselves in a difficult or distressing situation.
- Youth Aid Services: organisations providing aid in many different areas of wellbeing. Many of these aid actors are brought together in a network called Samen1Plan Gent, who work together to offer children, young people and families in Ghent timely and meaningful help when there is a need for it. A few of these actors are:
 - Lejo: encourages youth to become stronger in society and encourages social institutions, governments and policy makers to become stronger in giving opportunities to young people in a socially vulnerable position
 - Tejo: offers low-threshold, short-term, immediate, anonymous and free therapeutic counselling to young people between the ages of 10 and 20.
 - JAC (Youth Advisory Centre): helps young people between the ages of 12 and 25 with all their questions and problems (drugs, rights, money problems, bullying,...)
 - Overkop (Overboard): In an OverKop house, young people up to the age of 25 can just walk in and out and do all kinds of fun activities. It is a safe place where they can also find someone to share their problems with and call on professional therapeutic help, without being labelled.

- CLB (Centre for Student Counselling): Counsels children and adolescents in educational training as well as their parents with regard to questions about physical or mental problems, learning disabilities, educational career,....
- Wel Jong, Niet Hetero: organisation for the LGBTQ+ community, with a focus on young people.
- Amaro Kher & De Fontein are self-organisations supporting people from their own network (specifically Roma and homeless people)
- Professional youth movement support consultants: They are the contact person for youth movements in case of questions or problems and are the intermediary between the city government and the different youth movements.
- City services: youth, sports, culture, social services, ... all provide certain support for young people.

Existing youth structures

The Youth Council is the officially appointed institution consisting of young people aged 16 to 30 that gives advice on new policy concerning young people. The Youth Council advises policymakers on almost every policy note (often in collaboration with the local student councils) and collects input by conducting online surveys on different topics. It also organises activities on (city) policy for young people in Ghent. In 2018 - on the occasion of the local elections - the Youth Council organised 'Our Century', a big event with workshops and debates for 1000 18-year-olds who voted for the first time.

Apart from the Youth Council, there is also a strong involvement of young people through different bodies, spread over different themes that have an impact on youth:

- Network For Young People in Poverty “Young Ghent in Action”: a youth organisation for young people living in poverty. Young people share their experiences of poverty and exclusion and convey them to policymakers together.
- Children’s Climate Council: The Children's Climate Council gives children the opportunity to engage in direct dialogue with a policymaker in the City Council chamber.
- Cavaria: representative of the LGBTQ+ community, based in Ghent, with a representation of young people on their board
- StuGent (Students of Ghent): the consultative body intermediating between the city government, the student representatives, the student facilities of the university and colleges and student associations from StuGent organises numerous initiatives. Student-related campaigns and themes are discussed, student representatives find a sounding board for their complaints, and together with the City of Ghent, they look for solutions.
- Forum for Youth Welfare Organisations: the forum facilitates a structural consultation between the City, Youth Welfare and other actors with the aim of joining forces even more and working towards a child-friendly city for all children and young people and is financially supported by the city to empower disadvantaged youth in local governance.
- Local Youth Movement Support Platforms: On the one hand, there is a consultation platform in which the professional supporters of the youth movements meet on a regular basis and, on the other hand, there are consultation structures for each type of youth movement at a district level.
- Local Art Support Platform: They have a working group on children and young people. They are policy advisor both for urban cultural policy and for adjacent domains such as mobility, spatial planning, education, poverty, civic integration, etc. With this working group, they are specifically preparing a cultural programme for European Youth Capital.
- District Youth Working Groups: these are working groups at the district level where representatives of professional youth work organisations and volunteer initiatives connect. One passes on signals to policymakers and organises actions at a district level. These working groups are supported by consultants from the city’s youth service.
- Student councils (secondary schools): once a year a meeting is organised, together with the Flemish Student Association, to gather signals from these councils, that are taken to the responsible deputy mayor.
- Apart from the youth structures mentioned above, there is an ongoing effort to have young representatives in different official structures, on different levels. For example, young people

are represented in the Nightlife Council and representatives of the Youth Council are members of the municipal planning commission GECORO³ and of the core group on child- and youth-friendly Ghent.

Main partners

Local

Ghent has a large number of organisations that work on behalf of young people in various sectors and themes. Some of these organisations already have a structural partnership with the city, based on covenants or other forms of cooperation and support. In preparation of the EYC concept note, we reached out to all organisations in our network with the question to participate in and support our candidacy. Over the past year, many of them actively participated in one or more working groups organised by the City. In annex VII we added a list of all partners engaged so far. We remain committed to involving new partners in our EYC journey.

Regional and national

A Flemish steering committee was set up (see project structure) with relevant players from the youth field. They provided us with input and feedback on the concept note and with information from their field of expertise.

- Flanders Youth Council: the official advisory board for the Flemish government on everything related to children, youth and youth work
- Ambrassade: an expertise centre for everything related to youth work, youth information and youth policy; a support and network organisation for the entire youth work in Flanders and Brussels; the coordinator for youth information in Flanders; the linking organisation between youth work, other policy domains which have an impact on children and young people (education, welfare, work, education, ...) and policymakers;
- Flanders Department of Youth: is responsible for implementing the youth and children's rights policy of the Flemish government. They support youth associations through operating and project subsidies. They coordinate the drafting of the Flemish youth policy plan and closely monitor the international youth and children's rights policy.
- JINT: is the National Agency for Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps and coordinates the Bel'J programme in Flanders.
- KeKi: the Children's Rights Knowledge Centre aims to gather, make available, disseminate and promote knowledge about children's rights.

Network of child-friendly cities: The Flemish Network of Child- and Youth-friendly Cities and Municipalities brings together youth officials, involved organisations and interested actors to share questions, experiences and knowledge with each other. They aim to strengthen child and youth-friendliness in Flanders, at a local and supra-local level. Other regional partners are:

Europe Direct: information point in Europe with a big educational offer

Event Flanders: a specialised team that raises Flemish events to a higher level and tries to attract international events to take place in Flanders

Bataljong: a member organisation of cities and municipalities. They try to inspire youth leaders, youth officials and aldermen of youth and encourage them to interact. Bataljong also promotes the advantages of a child- and youth-friendly policy at the Flemish, federal and European levels, and promotes the interests of cities and municipalities in doing so.

European

- Ghent is a board member of the European Network for Child Friendly Cities and was an active partner in the Cities for Children 2007-2010 network. It also has close ties with the Dutch Child Friendly Cities network. There is a bilateral collaboration with cities such as Stuttgart and Amsterdam. We participate in events of Europe Goes Local and provide input on best practices.

³ GECORO: The municipal committee on spatial planning advises the local government on major spatial developments in the municipality.

- In 2016 we co-organised the “Child in the City” Conference, and the first European Youth Work Convention took place in Ghent in 2010.
- Ghent is currently active in three European projects on youth and youth policy. It is lead partner in the European Erasmus+ project Inclupas, a social innovation project aimed at working with a digital application to create social inclusion through sport and physical activity for adolescents aged 14 to 18. It is a partner in 2 Interreg 2 Seas projects: SPEED-You-UP, that helps excluded young people find employment by improving their entrepreneurial skills and PACE, that is aimed at facilitating access to childcare and supporting job-seeking and vulnerable parents in their journey to work.
- Ghent also participated in a European project on ‘Capacity building in the area of rights of the child’ and is a member of the EUROCITIES working group on children and young people (with a focus on poverty and healthcare) and of EUnivercities, focusing on the relation between cities and universities.
- Ghent has a strong tradition of international collaboration, networking and European policy advocacy. In 2016-2018 we were the proud president of EUROCITIES, we are active in many other networks like ICLEI and Global Parliament of Mayors. In the recently approved policy note on international collaboration we underline the importance of Europe and its institutions, and becoming EYC in 2024 is one of the clear priorities.

6. MOTIVATION

Our candidacy has its origin in 2018, when two separate events occurred that inspired us and made us decide to go for it. During a feedback session on the progress of our action plan “Ghent, Youth- and Child-friendly City” with our local Youth Council, the members stated that, in their perception, the focus of the city’s youth policy was too often on (little) children and insufficiently on young people. In that same year, a young inhabitant suggested Ghent would apply for the title of EYC. Seeing an opportunity to address both requests at the same time, we consider EYC as a lever for a strong policy tailored to the needs of young people and also as an opportunity to organise an amazing year for and by young people in 2024. In the meantime, the city has increased the budget for youth and youth (welfare) work by € 1.1 million on an annual basis, to meet the needs of their young inhabitants.

2024 also has a symbolic value. It will be 10 years after we first received our ‘Child Friendly City’ label. Furthermore, 2024 is an election year, with local (October), regional and EU (May) elections. This provides us with many possibilities to work with young people on active citizenship, politics and participation on all levels of youth policy. In 2018, we already did a try-out on voting rights from the age of 16 onwards during the local elections. In 2024, all young people aged 16 and over will have the opportunity to vote at the European level. We see this as a major opportunity to implement the lessons learned in 2018 and try to reach a more representative group of the Ghentian young people, by involving more diverse youth work partners and experts on participation. The focus is not on the political aspect, but on giving young people the chance to be heard. Voicing their opinion, being heard, being seen is crucial for young people’s self-esteem, which can contribute to their mental well-being. We would like to use the elections as a lever to work on active participation of young people in all our youth organisations. In 2018, our local Youth Council organised a major event for all young people who had to vote for the first time, called “Our Century”. In 2024 we would like to repeat this and organise an even more ambitious project on elections and active citizenship. In addition, Belgium is president of the EU in the first half of the year, which creates opportunities to join forces and work together on EU youth topics.

In 2024 we want to enhance our policy towards young people and make it stronger, better and more inclusive. We want to create a framework to empower young people to experiment, co-create, engage themselves and become involved in their neighbourhood, their district and their city.

We are convinced that the title can leave a long-lasting mark on our city: the programme is designed to implement structural changes and initiate projects with a sustainable effect, with a fully operational ‘for-and-by’ temporary youth space as the highlight of the year.

We want to reactivate and reinforce the European dimension of our youth policy, an area with still quite some room for improvement. The EYC programme in 2024 will give our youth (organisations) plenty of opportunities to exchange ideas, travel, learn and share with other European youth (organisations) and invite others to experience our youth-friendly city.

2024 will also create momentum to share Ghent's best practices with colleagues from abroad, learn from other cities, especially those that were EYC before, and improve our lobby efforts to influence European policy when it comes to children and young people. But most importantly, we are committed to doing all the above together with our youth, allowing them to truly participate and co-create.

What we want to achieve

Today, young people 'are the city' of Ghent in the sense that they are an important force in shaping the future of our city. To reinforce that position, we have formulated 3 key goals for our candidacy: Engage, Care and Empower.

WE ENGAGE *Ghent aims to engage young people in active citizenship and volunteer work.*

Ghent is a city where young people play an active role in society. There is a great deal of awareness amongst young people about climate change and the will to act on it. For months in a row in 2019, students participated in climate marches, asking for immediate political action to reach the EU climate goals. We also focus on volunteer work, since Ghent is a leading example of a very strong and unique youth work field, based on 1000s of young volunteers and more than 150 youth organisations, committed to creating a safe environment for children and young people to experience and grow.

With EYC2024 we aim to engage more people from diverse backgrounds and life situations, e.g. young people who experience poverty and substandard living conditions, from different ethnic backgrounds. Ghent wants to be a city where every young person can be an active co-creator.

WE EMPOWER *Ghent aims to create space and opportunities for young people, allow room for experiment and make young people co-creators of city life.*

There is a permanent need for high-quality public space. The COVID-19 pandemic has made this even more apparent. Although the amount of parks and green spaces rises every year in Ghent, there is an ongoing need for more green spaces, designated play areas and spots for young people to hang out in the public space. This need for 'chill spaces' is something that keeps coming back in all participation dialogues with young people..

Young people also want to be able to move freely in the city, get from A to B in a safe and smooth way. In earlier participation projects, it was clear that mobility and transport are a hot topic amongst our young people. They have concerns about safety when it comes to cycling in the city (especially at a few hotspots) and about public transport in the city. The city has already invested considerably in a bike- and pedestrian-friendly environment over the last couple of years, implementing a new mobility plan which restricts traffic in the city centre. For the next couple of years, the city will focus on involving young people in solutions for mobility issues that concern them.

WE CARE *Ghent wants to be a safe haven where young people's mental and physical wellbeing is taken care of.*

Mental health is a major topic: the importance of mental health(care) has become even more prominent during the last few months. The Ghent student of the Year in 2020 did research on the mental wellbeing of students (pre-coronavirus) and raised awareness about the high amount of mental problems amongst students. In the survey we conducted in October 2020, it was clear that COVID-19 had a major impact on the wellbeing of our local youth. Young people are in need of accessible, free support and information on this issue.

Equal Rights and diversity is another important topic. Although young people consider Ghent a tolerant city, homophobia and racism are still very topical themes. Young people feel unsafe in certain neighbourhoods, are banned from certain night clubs because of their appearance or company and sometimes deliberately hide their orientation out of fear of being ridiculed or mobbing. For years, the City of Ghent has been investing in a strong anti-discrimination and anti-racism policy, as one of the pioneers within the European Coalition of Cities Against Racism (ECCAR). We ultimately would like to give every young person the opportunity to reach their full potential, without issues such as poverty, mental problems or discrimination holding them back.

Poverty is the main challenge for the creation of a safe environment for all young people to grow up in. In 2017, 22.8% of Ghent's children were born in families living in poverty. Therefore, Ghent is strongly committed to tackling poverty - especially child poverty - and to including all children and youngsters without any distinction and regardless of any characteristic or opinion in our local society. Furthermore, we want to rise to the challenge of enhancing accessibility for all: the barriers to get access to adequate education, childcare, health care and welfare are too high for many. Families with children and young people experience under-protection and do not make use of all their rights (minimum wage, social benefits, subsidies, ...). The city's resources for the fight against poverty have never been so high.

Selection of key goals

We chose the key goals, **Engage, Empower** and **Care**, based on the challenges we derived from input we collected through various participatory channels in the last few years. The input came from different sources: participation projects with young people (Expedition 2025, mentioned above), signals from youth welfare organisations and social field workers, input received from network organisations (e.g. on poverty), recent studies (e.g. on mental health among students), etc.

The fact that two of our three key goals are similar to the 3-word-based Youth strategy is no coincidence, as we used the European Youth Goals, defined under the EU Youth Strategy, as a touchstone. We saw that almost all the youth goals could be found in our three key goals (with the exception of rural youth). The fact that we focus on 'care' shows that our young people in Ghent are concerned about each other's welfare and want to look after each other and themselves. The current pandemic and its consequences for children and young people made this focus on social inclusion a very conscious choice.

In addition, we also measured the key goals against the SDGs (Strategic Development Goals). At the end of 2020, the City of Ghent drafted and sent in its first Voluntary Local Review Report, based on the "NY City declaration voluntary local report (VLR)". This makes Ghent part of the growing international community that monitors the SDGs in their city with the aim of improving on all 17 goals. The first local sustainability report from 2020 is a baseline measurement that links Ghent's multi-annual policy plan with the SDGs. The priorities that arose from this report match perfectly with our 3 key goals (engage, care, empower).

Participation during preparation

Due to COVID-19, many of our 'traditional' methods could not be used to reach out to youngsters and communicate and interact on our plans and ambitions to young Ghentians. So we took the opportunity to experiment with social media campaigns and surveys. With our candidacy for EYC 2024 in mind, we verified our priorities through an Instagram poll in October 2020 that reached almost 50,000 young people and generated more than 10,000 interactions. We also conducted an online survey to get a more profound input on our candidacy from 236 people who responded. This survey was targeted towards all young people who live, study or work in Ghent (aged 13-26). Innovative participation methodologies like these demonstrate the city's attempts to involve young people well beyond classic participation.

It soon became clear that we would still need to resort to alternative forms of participation to involve partners and young people in the EYC story. We organised online information sessions for our partners, where they were updated on the state of play and provided feedback and project ideas together. For the young people, we opted for an online "kick-off" event. In a plenary session,

the mayor and alderman for Youth talked about why we want to become EYC, the former coordinator of EYC Antwerp explained what legacy 2011 has left in his city and the Youth Council talked about what the title can mean for young people and what role they themselves can play. Afterwards, young people got the chance to sign up to take an active role in the further preparation based on an EYC topic they chose. They will form a youth panel together and will advise the project team.

Dedication

The preparations for the EYC2024 application started in 2019, a benchmark of other cities took place and a commitment by the city administration was asked, after which a budget was set for EYC. At the end of 2019, a project coordinator was appointed to prepare the application in January 2021. The project structure was drawn up, while the local Youth Council supported and actively participated in the preparations for EYC. Since autumn 2020, the project has had a programme director. The city earmarked part of its regular budget for the European Youth Capital Year and made a commitment to release more funds if the title was achieved.

The search for financial support is in full swing. If the title is won, the first team members will already be recruited in 2022, so that preparations can begin in good time and the relevant partners and young people can be kept on board. The project coordinator will remain in office until mid-2025, so that a thorough evaluation can take place. Continuity is considered, at least one permanent staff member will be seconded from the city to the project team.

7. EUROPEAN YOUTH CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Co-creation is the main starting point concerning the programme. Together with youth organisations and individual young people, the City of Ghent will elaborate a comprehensive programme that will thrive on the input and the ideas of Ghent's young people.

In October 2020, we put out an Instagram survey to double check the priorities we distilled from the previous participation process and we asked young people for project ideas for EYC. Between December 2020 and May 2021, various input sessions were organised with representatives from youth organisations and key players in civil society on online platforms because of the restrictions related to the ongoing pandemic. Through pro-active communication with youth organisations, we were able to involve young people from different backgrounds in these sessions.

Because we also wanted to involve as many individual young people as possible, we organised an animated kick-off online-moment in May 2021 to inform, activate and collect input from young people. The collected information is processed into a first concretisation of the programme below. The programme will be gradually elaborated and as we are aiming to further increase involvement of young people in the process.

Preliminary programme

We categorised the programme into different objectives linked to our priorities Engage, Empower & Care and linked these to the challenges identified by young people in the preceding processes. For each objective we identified actions for 2024 and already designated an expected or desired legacy. Where possible, we also tried to draw up part of the trajectory leading up to these actions. Activities or legacy considered as innovative and bringing added value to the EYC title are highlighted in bold.

OBJECTIVE: Strengthen youth participation in the city & local governance

EYC PRIORITIES: Engage / Empower / Care - CHALLENGES: Social Inclusion / Active Citizenship

TRAJECTORY / YOUTH PARTICIPATION:

- Recruit a partner to develop a youth participation tool with young people.

2024 ACTIONS:

- A **Youth participation tool** in 2022, a new structural participation tool/method with a focus on disadvantaged young people.

- Offer **workshops for youth organisations to educate young people on how to participate in public debates.**
- A **series of debates at youth organisations on hot topics such as migration** in the run-up to 2024. Young people are strengthened in expressing their opinions to policymakers. After the debates, a concrete action can be worked out in consultation with the policymakers.
- **Stimulate the participation of young people in the District Budget:** Ghent has a citizen projects budget of € 6.25 million to be divided over the 25 districts.
- Together with partners from the cultural sector, we are organizing a large-scale participatory process in view of the local elections in 2024.

LEGACY:

- The city has imbedded a **new participation platform** that focusses on giving a voice to disadvantaged young people.
- More young people are joining public debates in the city of Ghent.
- Share the debate workshop experience on a national & European level

OBJECTIVE: Create a better quality public domain for young people.

EYC PRIORITIES: Empower - **CHALLENGES:** Public Space

TRAJECTORY / YOUTH PARTICIPATION:

- Together with young people, the city will initiate a participation process to designate important public spaces for young people.
- Together with young people and all relevant actors of the city's public space and managed by the youth **service, a "teen-web" for the inner city** will be designed in collaboration with the city's urban planning services.

2024 ACTIONS:

- **Temporary Interventions in the city centre designed by, created by and targeted at young people.**
- Co-creation with young people of 5 "living squares" in the suburban areas of the city.
- A 'outside play day' with a 12+ programme (organised every year in Flanders, but aimed at children)
- Experiment with the **shared use of schoolyards** as a means to increase public space for young people.

LEGACY:

- Temporary interventions will pave the way for permanent additions to existing public space and for a redesign of public spaces.
- **Co-creation of public spaces** by young people as a more common practice in public space design.
- Further roll out the "living square" concept.
- If evaluated positively, integration of the 12+ programme in the "outside play day".
- An increase in the number of schoolyards with a shared and public use.
- Experiences on the topic of public space and youth will be shared through international forums.

OBJECTIVE: Integrate a designated youth programme into the city's own events

EYC PRIORITIES: Empower / Engage - **CHALLENGES:** Co-Creation

TRAJECTORY / YOUTH PARTICIPATION:

Depending on the events, different participation and co-creation processes will take place

2024 ACTIONS:

The EYC 2024 theme will be introduced into Ghent's main public events:

- the New Year's event
- the Student Kick-Off (a major event organised by and for students in Ghent)
- the Light Festival (850,000 visitors)
- the Ghent Summer festival (1 million visitors)
- the Ghent Winter festival

EYC 2024 will be equally visible in a number of smaller events such as:

- the Ghent @ Sea climate festival
- the centennial of Ghent's nature museum for children and young people
- the celebration of 125 years of soccer in Ghent.

LEGACY:

- **All city events will have an incorporated youth-specific programme.**
- Young people are not only considered as an audience but also as active contributors to and co-creators of the city's future events.

OBJECTIVE: Improve mental health and happiness of young people in the city

EYC PRIORITIES: Engage / Care - CHALLENGES: Mental Health / Active Citizenship

TRAJECTORY / YOUTH PARTICIPATION:

- Each action will have its own participation process.
- A general survey on this topic with young people will be held.

2024 ACTIONS:

- Set up projects on the mental health of students together with the universities of Ghent, and focus on communication on and easy access to existing projects and organisations.
- A report/plan on how to improve (access to) mental wellbeing with a focus on marginalized and disadvantaged young people.
- A campaign to inform young people about the role of the local Mediation Service and the national Children's Rights Directorate.
- Aim to make every young person in Ghent aware of their talent in cooperation with our secondary schools.
- A trajectory with 6th graders in transition to higher education, aimed at **developing resilience and self-image**.
- Promote and highlight youth work and youth (culture) as a valuable tool to connect with other young people and to create shared well-being.
- A campaign to improve **self-care & peer support** among young people.
- Train young people on peer support with local mental health organisations.
- Raise awareness in secondary schools and educate teachers as important actors in the well-being of young people.
- **Develop an outreach toolkit / manual on mental health** for organisations with young people.

LEGACY:

- Young people will have easier access to professional mental health support in the city.
- A peer-support initiative will be implemented.
- Schools and organisations are pro-active partners in an overall mental health approach in the city of Ghent.
- The overall mental health and happiness of young people has improved in city.
- Recommendations regarding strategies to increase mental well-being in youth are shared with (international) advocacy organizations such as Children's Rights Coalition; Flanders Youth Council, etc.

OBJECTIVE: Host and organise international conferences, meetings and exchanges under the flag of EYC 2024

EYC PRIORITIES: Empower / Engage - CHALLENGES: Active citizenship / Co-Creation

TRAJECTORY / YOUTH PARTICIPATION:

Each action will have its own participation trajectory for local young people.

Each action will be considered as a chance to showcase local good practices and to involve individual young people and youth organisations.

2024 ACTIONS:

- Host a Child In The City conference where youth professionals from all over the world exchange on youth policy .
- Host an international symposium on youth- and family-friendly tourism in Ghent.
- Host the general assembly of the European Youth Forum.

- Organise a European conference on the topic '**Vote on 16**', with a focus on local elections and showcase best practices from across Europe.
- Organise an **international fair**, where students looking to go abroad can interact with students who already went abroad and international students staying in Ghent.
- Organise an international exchange for foreign youth workers / policymakers to let them experience youth work in Ghent.
- **Organise the world's largest language café**: it will bring together students and inhabitants of Ghent with roots from around the globe. They will exchange ideas on several topics and will be introduced to possibilities to engage/participate in their city. This can evolve into a structural event.
- **Organise a "jamboree" with all branches of youth organisations active in Ghent**. Every branch sets up an interchange with European counterparts and we all bring them together in Ghent for a 2-day programme.
- **Set up a youth residency for foreign international entrepreneurs** together with Gentrepreneur (an organisation where the city inspires and informs young entrepreneurs).
- Support local youth organisations and schools to set up **international exchanges** linked to the EYC programme. Special attention will be paid to vulnerable young people with insufficient means to travel.
- Develop activities tailored to the needs of Ghent's expat youth (so-called "3rd world culture children"). The International School is an important partner in this respect.

LEGACY:

- Evaluate this part of the programme and elaborate recurring conferences, meetings & exchanges for the future on the topic of young people.
- The city will provide structural staffing specifically aimed at supporting and invigorating national, international and European youth exchanges.

OBJECTIVE: Use sports to elevate young people in city life

EYC PRIORITIES: Engage / Empower / Care - CHALLENGES: Social Inclusion / Diversity / Mental Health

TRAJECTORY / YOUTH PARTICIPATION:

- Start a trajectory to recruit young people and organisations of the skateboarding community to take over the management of the skate park .
- Organise an international Urban Sports Event in 2024 (which we will host for the first time in 2022 and, if successful, we will submit our candidacy for 2024). We could use this event as an opportunity to promote young people's talents.

2024 ACTIONS:

- **Transfer the management of Ghent's brand-new and world-class Blaarmeersen skate park to the skateboarders themselves.**
- Organise an international Urban Sports Event in 2024 based on the experiences of 2022.
- 125 years of soccer in the city of Ghent: highlight Football as a method to develop competences in young people and work on their wellbeing.
- A city-wide event will be organised in light of the Olympics with a focus on the social aspect of sports.
- **All sport sites and accommodations are turned into 'no-smoking areas'.**
- **Sport clubs and organisations receive extra funding and benefits if they develop high-quality activities for young people and people with disabilities**
- As the start location for Omloop Het Nieuwsblad, the traditional opening race of the road cycling season, Ghent will organise extra activities for schools.
- With one of the biggest skate parks in Europe and together with the very active urban sport scene, the city will keep on investing in smaller urban sport areas (skateboarding, free running, calisthenics, street soccer).

LEGACY:

- The city has created a non-profit structure to transfer the skate park to the Ghent skateboarding community.
- The non-competitive side of sports participation is equally valued as the competitive side and will be treated equally by the city's services and legislation.

OBJECTIVE: Create more space for youth

EYC PRIORITIES: Engage / Empower / Care - CHALLENGES: Co-Creation / Public Space

TRAJECTORY / YOUTH PARTICIPATION:

- Start up a process with young people and youth organisations to co-create the temporary EYC Youth Space.
- Design & experiment with mobile youth infrastructure units.

2024 ACTIONS:

- **An active EYC Youth Space where young people can create, experiment, organise and hang out.** Opening this site will be one of the highlights of our year. This will be 'by and for' young people and should become a central spot in the city, where everyone feels at home. We already have acquired a vacant building and will start up the preparations in 2022.
- **Mobile youth infrastructure units** (mobile container units that can be modulated depending on the type of use, deployed in places where there is an infrastructure deficit) will be used for EYC.
- In 2024, the new wing of the Design Museum, called DING, will open its doors. DING will facilitate co-creation and participation by young people. An entire floor will be dedicated to workshop spaces, education and co-creation.
- Creating safe indoor & outdoor spaces for alienated young people (groups or individuals) throughout the city.

LEGACY:

- In 2026, the city will build a 'house of youth' where there will be a permanent place to create, experiment and chill out based on the experiences of the temporary use.
- Experiences gained in the EYC Youth space will be shared on a national and European level and will be published.
- Mobile youth infrastructure units are an operational practice.

OBJECTIVE: Increase young people's mobility & accessibility to public transport

EYC PRIORITIES: Empower - CHALLENGES: Mobility / Sustainability

TRAJECTORY / YOUTH PARTICIPATION:

- Expand the city's mobility department's focus from school surroundings to a broader radius of actions towards children and young people.
- Experiment with methods to activate young people in light of the new neighbourhood circulation plans.
- Together with young people, constraints on the school (primary + secondary) cycling routes will be assessed.

2024 ACTIONS:

- Networks of **safe school cycling routes** will be developed and created
- Young people elaborate with other citizens on neighbourhood circulation and mobility plans.
- Together with Flanders public transport organisation "de Lijn", a new night net will be made operational, increasing youth mobility in the city and towards the city's suburbs at night.
- Students will get the opportunity to **acquire free tickets for public transport to get to their internships.**

LEGACY:

- Young people are active contributors to the city's neighbourhood circulation and mobility plans.
- A new step will be taken in creating safe and accessible mobility for young people in the city.

OBJECTIVE: Ghent EYC 2024 as a milestone towards Ghent European Capital of Culture in 2030

EYC PRIORITIES: Engage / Empower - **CHALLENGES:** Co-Creation / Active Citizenship

TRAJECTORY / YOUTH PARTICIPATION:

- The trajectory of ECOC2030 has already started. The city of Ghent and its stakeholders are exploring how we can put young people in the driver's seat for ECOC.
- Create 'Safe Spaces' for young people to explore 'WHY': How do you want to transform the city?'
- Use the European project ENLIGHT of the University of Ghent (9 European cities network) as an incentive to connect creative young people with students from a wide range of faculties to explore the European Dimension. A collaboration with The Art Platform Ghent & EUFilm by LUCA School of Arts (European project) to engage film students to make a documentary about this journey and their research

2024 ACTIONS:

- We are looking for a way to connect Young Artists, Young Creatives and Young Entrepreneurs and Students (80,000 students in Ghent) to co-write the Bid Book for ECOC2030.
- The Art Platform of Ghent and their working group 'Young People in the Arts' with key players in museums, cultural venues, nightlife, youth theatre, film, ... (more than 200 organisations) will organise **a cultural festival** in 2024 to highlight the importance of empowering the youth in our city towards 2030 and beyond.
- Film Fest Ghent (international film festival) premieres the documentary 'Ghent & the European Dimension' made by students of Ghent University & Luca School of Arts

LEGACY:

- **EYC2024 is a stepping stone in the process towards ECOC2030** and far beyond (Climate-neutral 2050). It's a key moment to raise awareness. Policymakers and stakeholders will use this moment to empower young people and say: 'Yes, we can transform the city and the future!'

OBJECTIVE: Generate the conditions for an EYC 2024 programme co-created by young people and based on their talents

EYC PRIORITIES: Engage / Empower - **CHALLENGES:** Co-Creation / Active Citizenship / Social Inclusion

TRAJECTORY / YOUTH PARTICIPATION:

- **Organise a youth talent festival** in 2023 to scout and recruit young people for EYC.
- Reform of "Everything's Possible" grant towards EYC 2024 with active participation of young people. In this project, young people (under 30) get the opportunity to realise their cultural, sporting, artistic, social or educational idea for other young people.

2024 ACTIONS:

- An EYC edition of our 'Everything's possible' project-line, with more budget and priorities linked to EYC
- An **'open call'** for youth organisations to organise projects or activities linked to our 3 key priorities, with the additional criterion of working out and implementing the idea together with their target group.

LEGACY:

- A **yearly youth-talent showcase** to connect young people with each other and with organisers and become active co-creators of city life.
- **Active participation of young people in the District Budget**

OBJECTIVE: Empower Disadvantaged Youth

EYC PRIORITIES: Engage / Empower / Care - CHALLENGES: Social Inclusion / Poverty/ Equal Rights / Diversity

TRAJECTORY / YOUTH PARTICIPATION:

- Develop **an outreach toolkit on how to deal with poverty** for organisations and secondary schools (how to detect, how to support, how to address prejudice, etc.) with young people as peer counsellors.
- Develop and start up the trajectory for the youth participation tool in 2022.

2024 ACTIONS:

- Youth welfare organisations will work on empowering their young people to make their needs known to the city government.
- **Experiment with a poverty detection toolkit** in organisations and secondary schools.
- **Organise a specific workshop aimed at empowering disadvantaged youth to participate in public debate.**
- **A campaign on volunteer work, aimed specifically at disadvantaged youth.** We look into setting up a project with unaccompanied asylum seeking young people.
- **A Youth participation tool in 2022, a new structural participation tool/method with a focus on disadvantaged young people**
- Art projects to attract hard-to-reach youth in cooperation with youth welfare organisations and schools set up by the local museums (Modern Arts, Fine Arts, Industry, Design,...). They aim for international youth exchange projects in 2024
- A report/plan on how to improve (access to) mental wellbeing with a focus on disadvantaged young people.
- the **City of Ghent joined Plan International's 'Safer Cities Project'**. This will result in an awareness-raising campaign against sexual harassment.
- The Museum of Modern Arts (SMAK) organises the 'S.M.A.K. moves' programme: an activation programme that actively engages disadvantaged groups in the museum, involving educational and free-time partner organisations. In 2024 they aim to develop an exposition with young people from the programme.

LEGACY:

- Evaluation & wider implementation of the poverty detection toolkit.
- Implement the poverty detection toolkit on a national and European level.

OBJECTIVE: Strengthen volunteer & active citizenship based initiatives

EYC PRIORITIES: Engage / Care - CHALLENGES: Active Citizenship / Volunteering

TRAJECTORY / YOUTH PARTICIPATION:

- An application for the European Solidarity Corps to attract international volunteers to participate in several projects of the EYC programme.

2024 ACTIONS:

- A focus on and expansion of **buddy projects** in Ghent by the Ghent Colleges and University
- A special edition of our Young & Old Award (an award for an intergenerational project)
- A project on street art and music in the districts to promote active citizenship
- The City of Ghent and the Universities will create a platform for cooperation together to conduct research into **societal challenges** for young people.
- Engage the European Solidarity Corps for the EYC programme activities and support youth organisations to participate in Erasmus+ participation projects on democracy and European citizenship
- Pilot project in which a group of young people receives a budget of €5,000 to **improve the quality of life in their neighbourhood**. They are guided by a coach towards independence. Social workers are partners in this project.

LEGACY:

- Students become integrated in the social network of the city.

OBJECTIVE: Young people as active communicators in 2024 and beyond
EYC PRIORITIES: Engage / Empower / Care - CHALLENGES: Active Citizenship /Co-Creation
TRAJECTORY / YOUTH PARTICIPATION: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create the conditions for & recruit an EYC Youth communication team
2024 ACTIONS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A youth media and communication team that creates content, decides on campaigns and images, - Integrate young people as city raconteurs, who tell the story of their neighbourhood. - Bring local and foreign youth vloggers / bloggers / influencers to Ghent to promote the events and realizations of EYC2024
LEGACY: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Young people will be active creators in the city’s general communication strategy. - The Youth Service has a youth communication board to review important campaigns.

OBJECTIVE: Activate & empower girls and LGBTQIA+ youth
EYC PRIORITIES: Engage / Empower / Care - CHALLENGES: Equal Rights / Diversity
TRAJECTORY / YOUTH PARTICIPATION: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruit girls to create the “menstruation plan” and create an awareness campaign
2024 ACTIONS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roll out a “menstruation plan” to distribute free hygienic material to Youth Spaces & Youth Clubs. - Experiment with initiatives to increase the participation of girls in Youth Welfare initiatives. - Organise a specific workshops aimed at training girls to participate in public debate. - Schools and youth organisations join forces for a ‘PURPLE’ campaign, as a part of the largest LGBT+ awareness campaign in the world - Organise a LGBTQIA+ event
LEGACY: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further roll out of the “menstruation plan” in the Ghent Nightlife scene.

OBJECTIVE: Raise awareness and create the conditions for a sustainable future for young people
EYC PRIORITIES: Engage / Empower - CHALLENGES: Climate Change/ Sustainability
TRAJECTORY / YOUTH PARTICIPATION: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruit partners and volunteers to create a concept for the zero-waste festival. - Consult youth organisations on the needs for organizing zero waste activities during the EYC year.
2024 ACTIONS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organise Ghent’s first zero waste festival. - Zero waste as a premise for all activities in the EYC 2024 programme is actively facilitated by the city’s services. - Young people elaborate a world record on sustainability or environmental care. - Young people programme included in the Ghent @ Sea climate festival.
LEGACY: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a toolkit on how to organise sustainable & zero-waste festivals and share it on a European scale. - Integrate the experiences of the zero-waste festival into the city’s policy & turn it into a recurring event.

OBJECTIVE: Co-create EYC-year specific events
EYC PRIORITIES: Engage / Empower - CHALLENGES: Co-Creation / Active Citizenship
TRAJECTORY / YOUTH PARTICIPATION: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruit youth organisations and young people to elaborate the opening Event

2024 ACTIONS:

- Co-create and organise an ambitious opening event for EYC 2024 with young people.
- Elaborate an attractive side-programme with young people for the European Youth Forum Statutory meeting & the EYC award ceremony showcasing young talent and practices from Ghent.
- Organise a thriving temporary EYC Youth Space in the city centre
- Co-create and organise a closing event for EYC

LEGACY: Yet to be determined

OBJECTIVE: stimulate knowledge exchange on European youth work, youth policy and European politics in general

EYC PRIORITIES: Engage - **CHALLENGES:** Active Citizenship

TRAJECTORY / YOUTH PARTICIPATION:

- Yet to be determined

2024 ACTIONS:

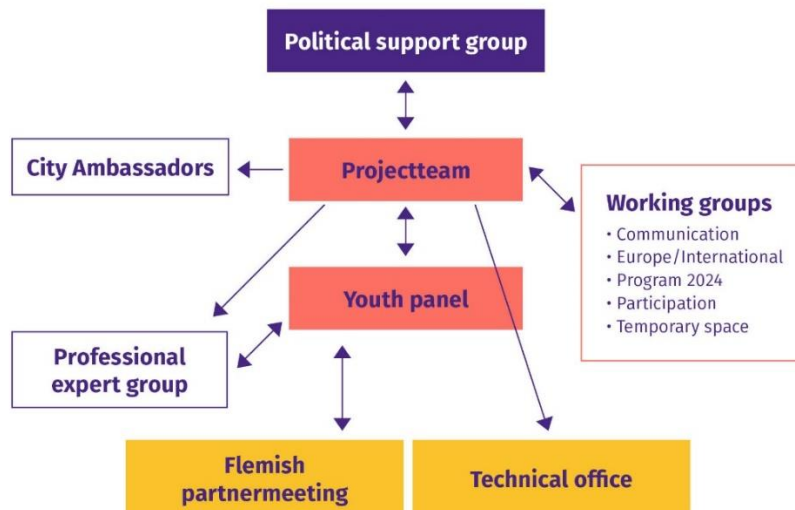
- Organize an immersion trip to Ghent for young people from Ghent's Japanese sister city Kanazawa. Opportunity to get them acquainted with Ghent and Europe (incl. EU institutions)
- Organize visits to European institutions with young people from Ghent
- Involve European youth in the activities and campaigns of the Eurocities network of cities, in which Ghent participates in its ExCom
- Organize visits / study tours to Ghent for foreign politicians / civil servants to introduce Ghent's youth policy work
- We will stimulate knowledge exchange on youth with colleagues from other cities (via study visits, projects, ...), showcase Ghent's way of working internationally (in European fora) and lobby for European child- and city-friendly policies.
- We will connect young people to the European institutions by means of various projects. For this, we will collaborate with EuropDirect (Province) and schools (EPAS) and organise our own trip with young people to the European institutions in Brussels
- We will apply for an Erasmus+ accreditation in 2022, allowing all partners to set up or **participate in exchange** in (preparation of) the European Youth Capital Year (with a specific focus on disadvantaged groups, who will be supported by a member of the Youth Services/EYC project team)

LEGACY:

- The city will develop a tradition in European exchanges

8. MANAGEMENT

The project structure for the preparation of the concept notes, as described in the first concept note, will be the basis for the project structure setup if we should become European Youth Capital. The project team is and will remain the engine of the European Youth Capital journey.



Political support group

The political support group is made up of the Deputy Mayors of those policy areas that have a close link to the European Youth Capital Programme, which means 8 of the 11 responsible policymakers.

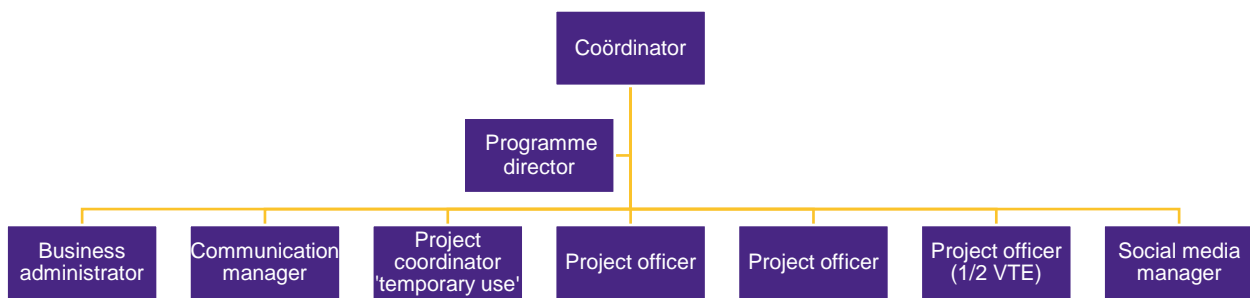
Project team

The engine of the European Youth Capital project, this team monitors the progress in achieving the key goals, sets the content outlines and keeps an overview. The project team is a select group of civil servants from different relevant departments (Communication, Youth, Sports, Education, Culture and International Affairs), the Mayor Deputy's Youth Advisor and a representative of the Youth Council. The team is led by the EYC project coordinator, assisted by the Program Director.

Instead of placing delegates from youth organisations in the project team (which would mean an additional task and time investment for them), representatives of the EYC project team will join various consultation bodies where youth organisations already meet (e.g. youth welfare forum, local arts consultations, neighbourhood youth work consultations, etc.), capture the voice of the target group there and bring it to the project team. Of course, there are still seats available for youth organisations and young people willing to take up this role.

Technical office

As soon as we know that we have the honour of being EYC in 2024, we will start assembling our technical supporting staff. We will establish a well-organised office from mid-2022 onwards. We are currently investigating whether it is opportune to create a new non-profit association for EYC. We are recruiting an experienced full-time project coordinator, who will be assisted by a strategic staff member. In addition, the technical office would consist of a business administrator, two full-time communication assistants and four project officers.



Working groups

Thematic working groups currently exist in connection with the topics of Communication, Participation, Programme 2024 and Europe/International. The members of the working groups were originally civil servants, but the goal is to have young people from the Youth Panel and Youth Council reshape the working groups in line with their interests and priorities.

Ambassadors

Ambassadors have been appointed in all municipal services and partner organisations in order to gather information for the project team or working groups. They inform and mobilize their network on the European Youth Capital Programme.

Youth Panel

The Youth Panel is a yet to be established organ where young people can participate in the development of the European Youth Capital Programme. We will start up the Youth Panel with those young people who want to stay on board after participating in the online kick-off.

Platform of Flemish youth organisations

The last element in the organisation scheme is a Flemish platform, where Flemish/national youth organisations and the Flemish government are gathered (Flanders being one of the three regions in Belgium). This platform is briefed every 6 months on the concept note and provides feedback and suggestions about opportunities on a regional, national and European level.

Professional expert group

It consists of several professionals and volunteers (including our own Youth Services colleagues with specific expertise that are not in the EYC project team), who gave feedback on the concept note on the basis of their specific professional expertise and can be called upon by the youth panel.

Structural involvement of young people and youth organisations

We organised substantive sessions with the already committed partners and organised online information sessions for new partners, where they were updated on the state of play of EYC and provided feedback and project ideas together. Also, representatives of the project team were invited at several organisation platforms to elaborate on EYC.

The voice of marginalised and disadvantaged groups

The City of Ghent has a platform to which all youth welfare organisations are connected. These organisations reach less privileged and marginalized young people. A staff member of the Youth Services coordinates this platform, he is their representative in the project team. All these organisations are kept informed about the European Youth Capital project and have been asked to participate in its preparation.

Cooperation with supporting Youth Structures

On a local level, we have a close cooperation with the following structures⁴:

- The Youth Council
- Network For Young People in Poverty “Young Ghent in Action”
- StuGent

⁴ See the part on youth structures for a description of these organisations.

- Forum for Youth Welfare Organisations
- Ghent Art Support Platform
- District Youth Working Groups

Our national network is represented in the platform of Flemish partners (as mentioned above); apart from that there are frequent interactions with JINT and the Flanders Youth Council on particular themes.

On a European Level, the Flanders Youth Council is a member of the EYF, but there is also a link with WAGGGS and WOSM (the local representative of GSB is a member of the project team and is active on the European scene), which can be a perfect opening to organise our international jamboree (see programme). WelJongNietHetero (We are Young, but not Straight), the youth LGTBQIA+ organisation based in Ghent, is member of IGLYO. We hope to work on the LGTBQIA+ event in cooperation with the national organisations and IGLYO.

The Flemish youth organization Chiro is a co-founder of FIMCAP, which is a member of the EYF.

In the preparation of our application, we already reached out to several EYCs. We planned a working visit to Amiens last year, that was cancelled due to Covid. If we are awarded with the title, we will arrange a working visit to Klaipeda with a delegation of our youth panel. By applying for an Erasmus+ accreditation in 2022, we hope to make exchanges between Ghent and Tirana and Lublin possible for several of our youth organisations. Furthermore we hope to do working visits with our project team to learn from our predecessors. During the EYC year, we will be happy to invite upcoming EYCs to let them experience and exchange information. We will make sure that our expertise stays captured in the organisation, so that upcoming EYCs can still reach out to us for information, even after the project team has been dissolved.

The contact person for the European Youth Forum is the current project coordinator Tina Van Acker (tina.vanacker@stad.gent).

9. COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

Communication strategy plan

In order to succeed, this project is in need of well-organised and clear internal and external communication. In the outward direction, tailored communication is necessary on a local, national and European level. As the main goal of the project is to enhance and optimize the city's policy towards young people and make it stronger, better and more inclusive, local youngsters, youth organizations and other stakeholder groups need to be informed and motivated to participate.

Communication objectives

- Enhance participation and involvement of youngsters
- Motivate youth (and other) organisations to participate in the project
- Promote the EYC 2024 programme
- Inform all stakeholders in a tailored way

Key messages

The communication campaign will have 3 types of key messages:

- Ghent is a candidate to become EYC in 2024
- Ghent in2024 will be a festive and vibrant city, made by its youthful population
- Ghent aims to strengthen its youth policy and become a leading example

A full range of information channels -newly created, existing and partner ones- will be used to successfully communicate the key messages to the selected target groups.

Target audiences

In order to achieve the objectives, a series of target audiences have been identified to address a personalized communication, adapting the tone, style and content to each one of them so that the key messages arrive with the maximum efficiency.

Local target groups

- Young (and older) Citizens of Ghent
- Youth organizations and communities
- Cultural organizations and venues

National and European level target groups

- Young (and older) citizens of Belgium and Europe
- Students
- Other communal youth departments
- Organisations and institutions involved in youth policy

Main milestones

The project communication will mostly be oriented around the projects milestones as described above. The communication outputs and the different tools and channels will be synchronised with the project evolution, the steps that are taken in the participation process and the programme. As these project activities evolves, we will set up dedicated plannings and *microtimelines*. Due to corona, some meetings and programme activities will be organised online instead of in 'real life'. There are still some uncertainties in that regard. It is obvious that we will adapt the communication, if necessary.

Website

As effective communication is tailored to the target group, we will use a youth-oriented website to communicate project milestones, programme activities and event invitations, facilitate participation and community building. Additionally, a timeline will be included, containing information on events and project milestones. The website should content wise be understandable for a 14-year-old as a reference age so everyone can comprehend the message. Efforts will be put into making this channel attractive, interactive, inclusive and accessible to reach maximal participation of all Ghentians. The website will provide participative activities to motivate visitors to engage in the project.

Social media & digital storytelling

The communication plan for EYC 2024 will have a strong focus on social media and community management. Both the Communication Department as the Youth Department have build a number of successful social media accounts over the years that we can now incorporate in our social media strategy for EYC. Each account has a distinct profile and target audience, and we believe that the combination of these different social media channels will guaranty a maximum effect of our communication efforts.

These social media accounts will be primarily used:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| – @stadsbestuurgent | Facebook | 44K followers |
| – @stadgent | Instagram | 34K followers |
| – @stadgent | Twitter | 59.4K Followers |
| – @ghentinternational | Twitter | 1763 followers |
| – @jeugddienstgent | Facebook | 2.865 followers |
| – @jeugddienstgent | Instagram | 1.078 followers |
| – @studentingent.be | Instagram | 954 followers |

Moreover, digital storytelling techniques will be used (articles, video, audio, image) to let the young people of Ghent themselves be heard. In the spirit of our claim We Are The City. Because they are the city, they make Ghent young and vibrant. Storytelling is one of the oldest human skills, it bonded the early human communities. It is important that you can tell the stories behind the people that define, shape, and make the city. Therefore, storytelling will be an important communication strategy for us. We think of making videos, podcasts, animations, etcetera. We will proactively and reactively engage in the online dialog about the project's 3 main themes: Engage, Empower and Care.

Role of the communication workgroup

The communication workgroup will guide the communication activities, both internally and externally (local, national, European). However, everyone involved in the project plays an active role in the communication, providing input (participation) on the one hand and ensuring dissemination and promotion on the other hand (advocacy). The communication workgroup will take the lead on this in close collaboration with the EYC Project team, City ambassadors and a strong participation of local young talent.

10. PREPARATION FOR THE EUROPEAN YOUTH CAPITAL

Phase 1: Candidacy (01/2020-11/2021)

- Benchmark other EYC cities + read the available documents on EYC
- Develop a project team and include representatives of the Youth Council
- The candidacy is prepared by the city's Youth Service in close collaboration with other city departments, youth organisations and young people
- Young people are consulted (online) on the main priorities and the content of the European Youth Capital application.
- Communicate & start up partnerships with youth organisations & other local organisations, young people to create the preliminary program
- Launch of a trajectory to recruit young ambassadors to support the candidacy
- Preparatory work with regard to evaluation and long-term planning
- Start up a candidacy communication campaign

Phase 2: implementation (10/2021-12/2023)

- Secure & tag budgets on a city level.
- Secure budgets on a regional & county level
- Develop & implement a strategy to acquire funds from private partners.
- Gradually recruit and hire EYC technical office
- Start-up of the preparation and the infrastructural work for Temporary EYC Space as the hub of EYC 2024
- Regular meetings with the youth panel + involved partners
- Further benchmarking with previous European Youth Capitals (visits, meetings)

Phase 3: co-creation (01/2022-12/2024)

- Co-creation of the general programme with partners and individual young people
- Elaborate and develop a communication strategy together with young people + recruit a communication team
- Find a partnership to manage & further develop the Temporary EYC Space with young people.
- Release an open call for the 2024 programme
- Apply for Erasmus+ accreditation and give our youth organisations the opportunity to focus on European exchange
- Work closely together with JINT and regularly organise information sessions for our local youth working groups on the possibilities offered by European projects

Phase 4: EYC 2024 (1/2024-12/2024)

- Communicate & roll out the programme
- Local Opening Event
- Host the General Assembly
- Local Closing Event

Phase 5: evaluation (01/2024-06/2025)

- Continuous evaluation & adjustment of the programme during the EYC Year.
- General Assessment by the EYC project team
- General survey among Young Ghentians on the EYC year

Phase 6: legacy (01/2025 - ...)

- Evaluation will be handed over to our new City Council (elections will be held in October 2024)
- Implement good EYC practices on different levels of city governance

In order to ensure that partner organisations can participate in the EYC programme and implement their projects as planned, they identified the need for two things: financial and staff support from the city. We are already providing project funds for the financial part, with the intention of expanding it once we have obtained the title (with the support of the city council, the Minister of Youth, Event Flanders and private funds). In terms of staff, we will recruit 4 project officers to support partners in carrying out their projects, one of which will focus specifically on international exchange.

11. EVALUATION

The project team will remain the engine for EYC and will coordinate the evaluation. All young people and partners involved during the year will be asked to take part in the evaluation. Young people can help prepare the evaluation and help determine which goals should be achieved and how to measure these.

We will start preparing the evaluation as early as in 2022 as, in order to be able to carry out a good evaluation, it is important to define exactly what results you want to achieve before the start of the project and to work out touchstones against which you can measure your objectives. This means that during 2024, we will be able to ascertain the course of the project much more effectively and efficiently.

The roll-out of the evaluation will start at the end of 2024 (inform all stakeholders) and will be completely finished by the 30th of June 2025. We plan a bimonthly update for the EYF.

With regard to the scope and format of the evaluation and what information we will monitor, we will call on the assistance of some expert colleagues in the beginning of 2022. The results of the evaluation will be shared at a meeting with all relevant stakeholders, published on the website and distributed to our partner organisations and network through our newsletters. The evaluation will also be handed over to our new city council with accompanying recommendations.

12. IMPACT AND LONG-TERM LEGACY

In chapter 7 we introduced the preliminary programme through presenting our key objectives and actions for 2024. In this chapter we already elaborated some desirable and expected outcomes leading to a profound EYC legacy for the city of Ghent.

As co-creation with young people is valued as an essential component of the realization of our programme and young people will ultimately create and elaborate the EYC programme, we would like to let young people decide on what legacy they expect from Ghent EYC 2024, which in fact could be considered as a legacy in itself. For all actions we are planning to realize in 2024, we will let young people decide on the expected results and on the short-term and long-term legacy of these actions. In that sense, it does not seem appropriate to us at this stage to already lay down the legacy at a time when we are still at the start of this process that we want to shape and create together with young people.

In general, it is fair to say that the city is expecting EYC to function as a doorway to broader and more direct involvement of young people in policy making, active citizenship and a general

increase of representation of young people in all the different aspects of city life.

As the city is also competing for the 2030 European Culture Capital title, the city considers the EYC title as a path connecting young people to the European Culture Capital candidacy. As young people of today are 2030's artist, creators, designers, architects, musicians and actors, one part of the broader legacy of EYC would be that it would function as a stepping stone to connect and involve young people in the Culture Capital award.

As we mentioned earlier, the evaluation of EYC and a plan of action will be handed over to the new elected city council in early 2025. In doing so, actions and policy that form a legacy of EYC2024 will be integrated into the multi-annual plan of the city, that has its own monitoring tool. Apart from this, the youth service will use the action plan drawn up on the basis of the evaluation as a monitoring tool. We will also provide this evaluation to umbrella organizations such as Ambrassade / Flanders Youth Council, which in turn, in preparation of policy programmes for the new legislature, write to other city councils with proposals to make their city/municipality more child/youth friendly.

To monitor the outcome, results and legacy of the EYC year, the city will set up a monitoring structure involving key players in the youth field (youth organisations and individual young people). As we start from a programme that we develop together with young people, youth organisations and local civil society, we are convinced that many of the initiatives will continue beyond 2024, as these initiatives are not only linked to financial resources but rather rely on the collective strength of the partners involved and the young people themselves.

On a European level, the City of Ghent will develop several toolkits to introduce and disseminate the experiences (good practices, tips & tricks, and dos & don'ts) gained in 2024 to a broad public. We aim to function as a source of inspiration and an example for European cities who want to strengthen their broader youth policies and see young people as full actors in city life. We also want to gear up our (bilateral and multilateral) contacts with other European cities and continue the support for youth organisations and youth colleagues to organize and participate in international exchanges. In doing so we can disseminate our experiences and findings of the EYC year throughout Europe.

13a. BUDGET INDICATIONS

The total budget for EYC is approximately € 4 million. 580,000 of that amount is new budget that has already been set aside. € 2 million is recurring municipal budget (50%) allocated specifically to EYC. This is possible because all relevant city services have been involved in the preparation of the EYC and are willing to direct regular resources/activities towards EYC. There is a political commitment of the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor of Youth to ask the city council for a budget increase should we be awarded with the title. A sponsorship strategy still needs to be worked out, and we will have a professional guide us on this matter. We want to approach sponsors with specific actions or projects that match their profile (e.g. Volvo with a project on youth employment). We aim to raise 50,000 euro from private funding.

No official commitments from the public sector have been made so far, yet there were several exploratory meetings with the minister of Youth, who indicated that if we win the title, there are certainly possibilities for support (Antwerp received a support of 250,000 euro when they became EYC). Event Flanders, a team that was specifically put together by the Flemish government to bring international events to Belgium and to raise Flemish events to a higher level, has already placed EYC on the shortlist for 2024 and is talking about an amount of € 1 million if we win the title.

The estimated overall operating budget is 1,930,000 euro. Specifically for the operating budget, there is a political consensus to ask the city council for a budget increase.

Total income to cover operating expenditure (EUR)	From the public sector (EUR)	From the public sector (%)	From the private sector (EUR)	From the private sector (%)
1,930,000	1,880,000	97.41%	50,000	2.59%

Income from the public sector to cover operating expenditure		
	EUR	%
EU (Erasmus+)	50,000	2.59%
National Government	0	
Regional Government	1,250,000	64.77%
Municipality	580,000	30.05%
Other		
Total:	1,880,000	97.41%

Operating expenditure

Programme expenditure (EUR and %) ⁵	Communications and outreach (EUR and %)	Salaries, office, administration (EUR and %)	Other (EUR and %)	Total of the operating expenditure
785,000	403,500	741,500		1,930,000
40.67%	20.91%	38.42%		100%

Capital expenditure

Income from the public sector to cover capital expenditure		
	EUR	%
EU		
National Government		
Regional Government		
Municipality	400,000	
Other		
Total:	400,000	

13b. EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM'S STATUTORY MEETING

Ghent is a City with a long-standing tradition of frequently hosting international conferences and fairs and boasts multiple venues that have the capacity to host 250-plus guests and the supporting infrastructure demanded in the RFP provided by the European Youth Forum.

14. CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Political support

One of the strongest points of the Ghent EYC candidacy is that it is politically supported by the current coalition. Local elections are not scheduled until 23 October 2024 so no obstacles are to be expected regarding the local political situation and policy planning. Ghent's candidacy as EYC 2024 was already endorsed in the city's governance agreement in 2020.

As youth is not a federal but a Flemish policy domain and also here the elections will only take place and therefore coincide with 23 October 2024, the risks are minimal. Consultation with the current Flemish minister for youth has already taken place and a promise has been made that the Flemish government will financially support Ghent's candidacy as European Youth Capital if the title is awarded to Ghent.

Assuming that the main political preconditions do not entail much risk and that the provincial elections (although the financial contribution here is rather small due to the competences of this level of government) coincide with the Flemish and local elections, we can conclude that the political situation is very favourable and that the candidacy has a good basis. Postponing the candidacy would therefore mean that the political basis would disappear and will have to be rebuilt with the newly elected Ghent council members and the new Flemish government.

In the spring of 2024, Belgium will also assume the presidency of the Council for the European Union. This will also bring additional resources, possibilities and opportunities to bring a stronger EYC story that is even more intertwined with the European story.

Financial basis

If we translate the political situation into the financial situation, this means that we can currently count on informal commitments from the Ghent city council, the Flemish government and other

levels of government with regard to the necessary budget for the realization of the Ghent candidacy in 2024. A concrete elaboration and commitment as to the total budget of Ghent as European Youth Capital will only be initiated after the presentation of the title in November 2020.

Social Support

As mentioned earlier in this dossier, Ghent has a strong youth work sector and a broad civil society that supports the candidacy. Given that we as a city already appear to be in a relatively strong position in this respect, it may seem that at first glance there are not many new goals to be achieved in a city such as Ghent and that there is little to be gained from an EYC year. What we would like to emphasize once again is that with EYC we want to lay the foundations for a future-proof city that is co-created by citizens and, in this case, young citizens. Co-creation, not as an intention but as a starting point for the future.

Looking beyond the pandemic

That the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the lives of our European youth in just over a year should be clear by now. What the future holds and the impact on the public lives of young people is yet unclear. Even if we as European Youth Capital do take into account the "new reality" for young people, there is still a certain risk in the financial impact of the Covid-19 crisis on all policy levels involved. We will closely monitor this situation in order to minimize this impact, if any. We assume that the political support will be significant enough not to jeopardize a project like EYC, as there is a general social acceptance that young people are one of the social groups most affected by this pandemic and that extra attention will have to be paid to the young generations involved.

15. ANNEXES

ANNEX I: Written proof of the town or city's interest in running for EYC 2024.
ANNEX II: Signed and stamped statement of support by local youth council.
ANNEX III: A general presentation of the Ghent EYC 2024 Short-Listed City proposal, in English and including a brief summary (2 pages long designed PDF document).
ANNEX IV: Detailed city map indicating the main programme venues and sites involved in the European Youth Capital project.
ANNEX V: A proof of the bank transfer of the application fee of €700, to the Youth Forum.
ANNEX VI: A statement declaring any external support (e.g. consultant services) requested to prepare the application, if applicable.
ANNEX VII: Preliminary Partners Ghent EYC 2024
ANNEX VIII: Working Facilities
ANNEX IX: Programme expenditure
ANNEX X: Images of the EYC online KICK-OFF

WE ARE THE CITY
GHENT ARE EUROPEAN
YOUTH CAPITAL
2024