

# Sofia - Creative Capital Strategy

## SUMMARY

The *Sofia - Creative Capital Strategy* outlines the direction for the development of culture in the city by the year 2023. The document describes the shared vision of cultural life in Sofia and raises fundamental challenges that we will face, in partnership, to realize our vision. It focuses the ways in which the activities in the field of culture, closely related to education, environment and economic and social development, can change our city. The Strategy provides a framework within which local authorities, universities, cultural operators, the private and voluntary sectors in the arts, tourism, cultural and natural heritage, the media and citizens can work together to achieve common goals.

The preparation of the *Strategy for Development of Culture in Sofia 2013-2023* started in November 2011 by an expert team, brought together by Sofia Development Association. In the beginning, the structure and scope were outlined and were put to public discussion. Subsequently, by July 2012, the Strategy was developed, thus complying with all procedures and standards, consultation processes and stages according to the prescriptions of the Council for Administrative Reform at the Council of Ministers on the establishment of strategic documents, including 33 public discussions.

The **vision** for our capital city in 2023 is: Sofia is developing in a sustainable way as an **innovative and creative city** of opportunity, a platform for **active participation of citizens** in contemporary cultural life and their full interaction with the cultural heritage. Sofia is the **springboard for a professional career** in the field of culture and arts, a center of attraction for the work of young artists. Sofia is **an active participant in the international cultural exchange**; it is an important center of cultures and a place of shared experience.

The Strategy has several **major goals**:

- to win recognition for Sofia as an ancient, modern and cosmopolitan city;
- to ensure increased participation of citizens in cultural activities and consumption of cultural goods and services;
- to position Sofia in the European and global cultural calendar as an attractive cultural destination;
- to help improve the quality of life for residents and visitors of Sofia.

A large part of the Strategy comprises the context of current and recent cultural development of the capital city as ancient and young city with historical heritage and cultural industries, as a center of tolerance, openness and creativity. The proposed five main thematic priorities that summarize the multilayered operating guidelines of the Strategy stem from here:

**ACCESS TO CULTURE** with the main objective of Sofia becoming a creative city, where all citizens - regardless of gender, age, ethnicity or social status - have access to a variety of cultural products and services and have the opportunity to develop their potential through active participation in creative activities, including in the virtual space.

**CULTURE AND HUMAN CAPITAL** with the main objective of Sofia becoming an open city - a living laboratory in which people experiment and develop their knowledge, skills and creativity on the basis of mutual respect.

**THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE CHANGING CITY** with the main objective of heritage becoming a factor for sustainable urban and regional development and cultural capital, which also has economic and social value, while simultaneously enriching the possibilities for interaction with contemporary arts.

**SOFIA A CITY OF CREATIVE ECONOMY** with the main objective of identifying and using the potential of the arts, cultural and creative industries for the integrated development of the city, guaranteed by targeted municipal policy and generating wealth (economic growth, employment) through the development of the creative economy in the city.

**EQUAL PARTICIPATION IN THE GLOBAL CULTURAL PROCESSES** with the main objective of turning Sofia into a welcoming environment for attracting audiences and participants outside Bulgaria to Sofia's cultural and artistic life of co-creation of cultural products on the territory of the city and to host international cultural events.

In each priority, the action is designed in detail in three main horizontal policies:

- infrastructure development in all its aspects: material base, information activities, financial instruments and human resources;
- application of innovations and proactive opening in the cultural processes;
- focus on education and the ability for active development and participation.

Emphasis has been put on the interaction between state and local authorities on the territory of Sofia; on the role of municipal cultural institutions, of cultural organizations in Sofia; on the importance of the funding programs of Sofia Municipality; on the prospects of Sofia's bid for European Capital of Culture in 2019; on the importance of festivals, decentralization and international cooperation; on the role of young artists and audiences.

As key tools for achieving the priorities and goals of the Strategy are included: improvement of legislation at the municipal level; many new financial instruments; development of marketing and management of culture; information provision of municipal cultural policy; regular surveys and analyses; cross-sectoral interactions, partnerships, co-productions etc.

A long-term **Action Plan** will be developed after the adoption of the Strategy by the Sofia Municipal Council, a concrete action plan for 2013 will also be adopted by SMC with financial parameters for its implementation. The action plans will include a number of specific ideas from the public discussions held.

*Expert team that prepared the Strategy and conducted the consultation process: Assen Assenov, Biliiana Tomova, Denitza Lozanova, Diana Andreeva, Momchil Georgiev, Nelly Stoeva, Svetlana Lomeva, Sevdalina Voynova, Yuriy Valkovski, Yana Genova.*