

# European Capital of Culture Oulu2026







Oulu  
2026

# Cultural Climate Change

has begun



# Now is the time to get excited!

- **Culture from Finland** is in the European spotlight in 2026
- The Oulu2026 programme is a window into **European culture**
- Oulu2026 has partner 39 municipalities
- Together we will make the Cultural Climate Change connecting people, art & tech, culture & nature





Budget 2021–27

€50 M

→ 2 million  
event visits  
→ 20% increase in  
the number of  
tourists

Finland  
celebrates  
European  
Capital of  
Culture  
year 2026

Oulu + 39  
municipalities +  
hundreds of partners  
all over the Europe

European visibility  
for Finnish culture

”

**A sneak peek into our Oulu2026 program...**

31.12.2025 – Jan 2026

# Oulu2026 starts at New Year's eve on TV

- 31.12.2025 YLE broadcasts New Year's Oulu2026-show from Oulu
- **Oulu2026 Opening Festival in 16.-18.1.2026** Invites locals and all of Europe to join the celebration.
- This urban winter festival unveils the essence of Oulu2026, in a weather-proof way
- The vibrant festival area brings you to the heart of urban culture. The festival energy will spread throughout the city centre – there's something unique for everyone!
- **January will be full of opening events in all 39 partner municipalities.**





JANUARY – DECEMBER 2026



# Layers in the Peace Machine

The **Peace Machine** media art-work at Oulu City Hall can be experienced as an immersive aesthetic experience. **Ekho Collective**'s art-work will be in interaction with the audience, using AI, machine learning and machine vision.

The art experiences will improve Europe's cultural climate and helps us to redefine common interests and common humanity.

The inspiration for this art-work was **AI researcher Timo Honkela**'s book 'Peace Machine' which searches for new ways to resolve conflicts and promote dialogue.



# The Layer of Sharing

The Peace Machine is built from different stories, perspectives and the shared will to create peace.

Share your own personal memory and you will be part of the Peace Machine. You can also explore memories shared by others.





JANUARY – DECEMBER 2026



# Fotografiska Tallinn at Oulu2026 Exhibition Center

- Fotografiska Tallinn produces a brand-new exhibition for **Oulu2026 Exhibition Center** in Pekuri Shopping Mall
- **The exhibition is inspired by the theme of Cultural Climate Change.** It invites us to see beyond the ordinary, and to envision a future where creativity and community are at the forefront.
- Fotografiska exhibition is **a destination to discover world class photography in Oulu** during 2026.



## Media Art from Kiasma

- The Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma in Helsinki will curate an exhibition of media art from the collections of the Finnish National Gallery.
- **The Media Art from Kiasma exhibition** will open in the exhibition spaces of Oulu City Hall in January 2026.
- The exhibition is **suitable for all ages** and is free of charge and accessible





JANUARY – MAY 2026

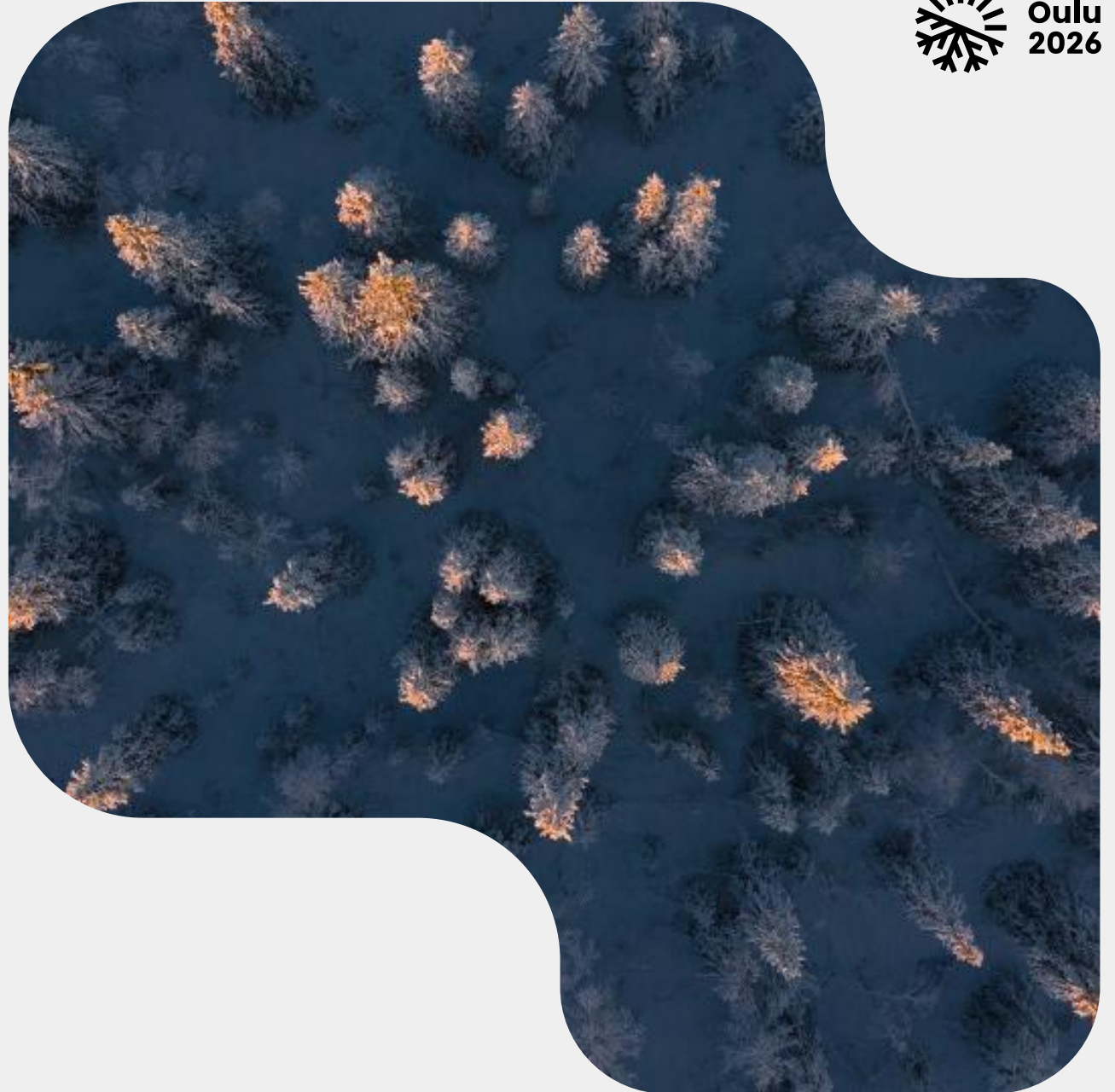


# Borderless Sámi Culture - RISKU

The culture of the Sámi people, the only indigenous people in the European Union will be showcased in a wide range of public events and activities.

**Sámi duodji, art, and events** fill Oulu Art Museum from Mid-January to early May in 2026. At the exhibition in Oulu Museum of Art, the visitors get to familiarize themselves with the variety, resilience and sustainability of Sámi culture.

**Ovllá opera** produced by Oulu Theatre will have the premier in 16.1.2026





# Eanangiella – Voice of the Land 16.1.–3.5.2026

- To mark the Oulu2026 European Capital of Culture year, the museum's programme will include a major exhibition of Sámi art, international high fashion, encounters between art and science, and experiences of falling out of time.
- The exhibition will feature the work of more than 50 artists and *duojáris* from Sápmi, showcasing contemporary multimedia art, art-historical pieces, *duodji* (Sámi handicrafts), and soundscapes. *Eanangiella – Voice of the Land* exhibition is curated by Inga-Wiktoria Påve, Fredrik Prost ja Áilu Valle.



Ann-Sofie Kallok, Guoddi, 2025. Dancer: Ann Katri Helander. Photograph: Albinas Liutkus.

# Ovllá

- The production brings to the Main stage of Oulu Theatre the perspective of the Sámi, the only indigenous people of the Nordic countries, and the painful consequences of state-led oppression that continue to affect new generations of Sámi.
- Ovllá is written by Sámi playwright Siri Broch Johansen, composed by rising Finnish composer Cecilia Damström with consultation from Sámi music expert Ánndaris Rimpi and directed by Oulu Theatre's director Heta Haanperä.

Ovllá opera. In the photo: Emil Karlsen and Albert. Photo: Knut Åserud. The opera is produced: Oulu theatre in collaboration with Oulu Sinfonia, the Sámi National Theatre Beaivváš, and Oulu2026.





# Climate Clock

Artworks created by world-leading international and Finnish artists will create a permanent art route around Oulu. Each unique location offers a moment of reflection and hope for the future.

**Climate Clock is one of the most significant productions of the Oulu2026** European Capital of Culture year, where art intertwines with the theme of climate change, and global warming in Northern Finland.

Climate Clock is curated by **Alice Sharp**, Invisible Dust (UK).





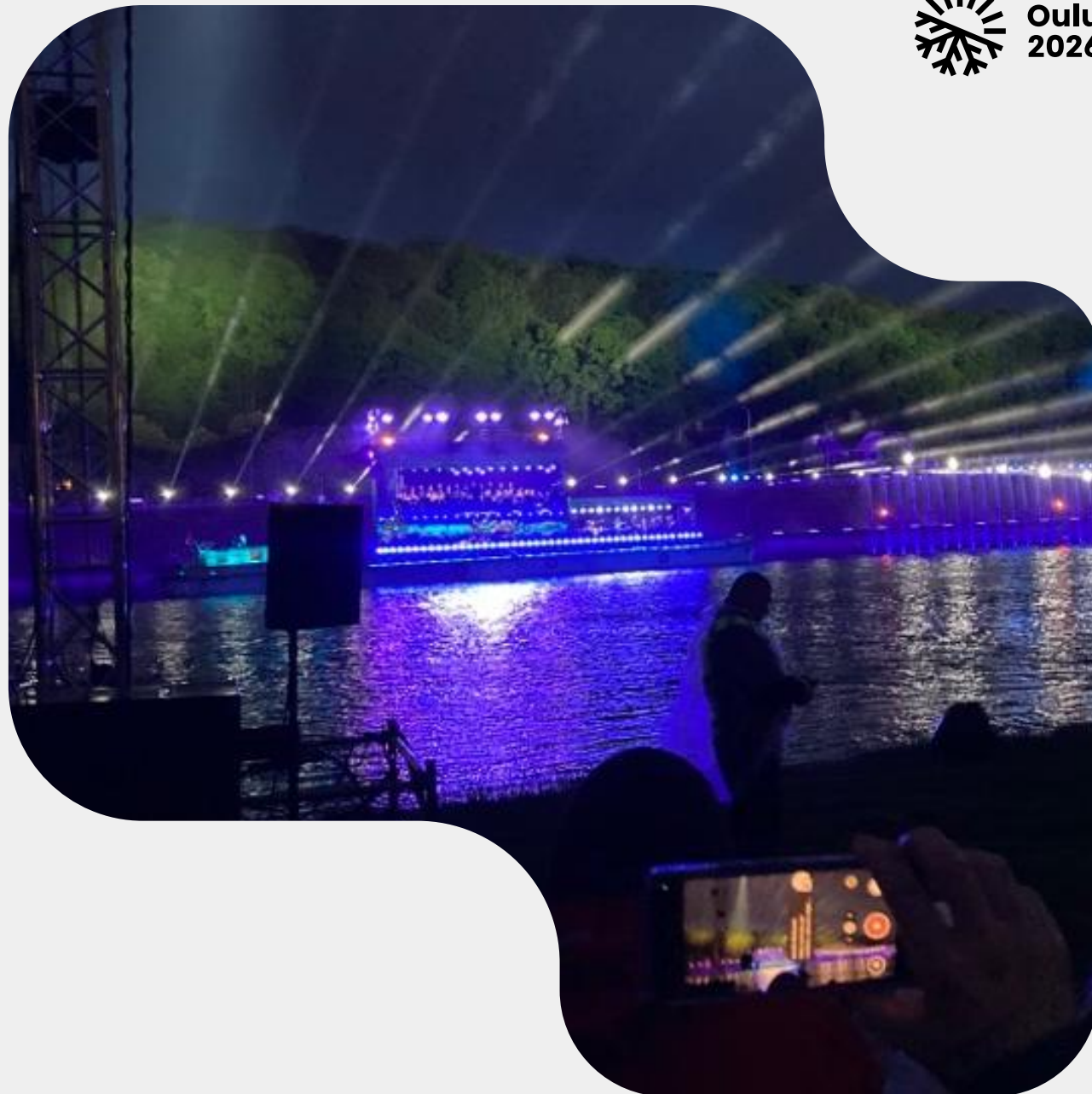
**AUGUST 2026**



## **Delta Life**

Delta Life is a journey along waterways. Along the Oulu riverfront there will be a series of immersive performances - expect unexpected pop-up-performances, workshops and community gatherings.

The Delta Life project invites an international group of artists to explore time, place and stories with locals along the shores of the rivers of the Oulu region.





# Roma Culture Fair ” Marakni”

- “MARAKNI – Roma Culture Market” is a project that bring different communities together by presenting the unique traditions of the Roma people. The core idea is to bring a breath of Roma culture from around the world to Oulu and its surroundings.
- “MARAKNI – Roma Culture Market” is a project that aims to bring people together through various events presenting Roma traditions. The core idea is to bring a breeze of Roma culture from around the world to Oulu and its surrounding municipalities, thereby promoting interaction between the majority population and the Roma groups.

Still from the animation series Mire Bala Kale Hin / Roma legends and stories, directed by Katariina Lillqvist

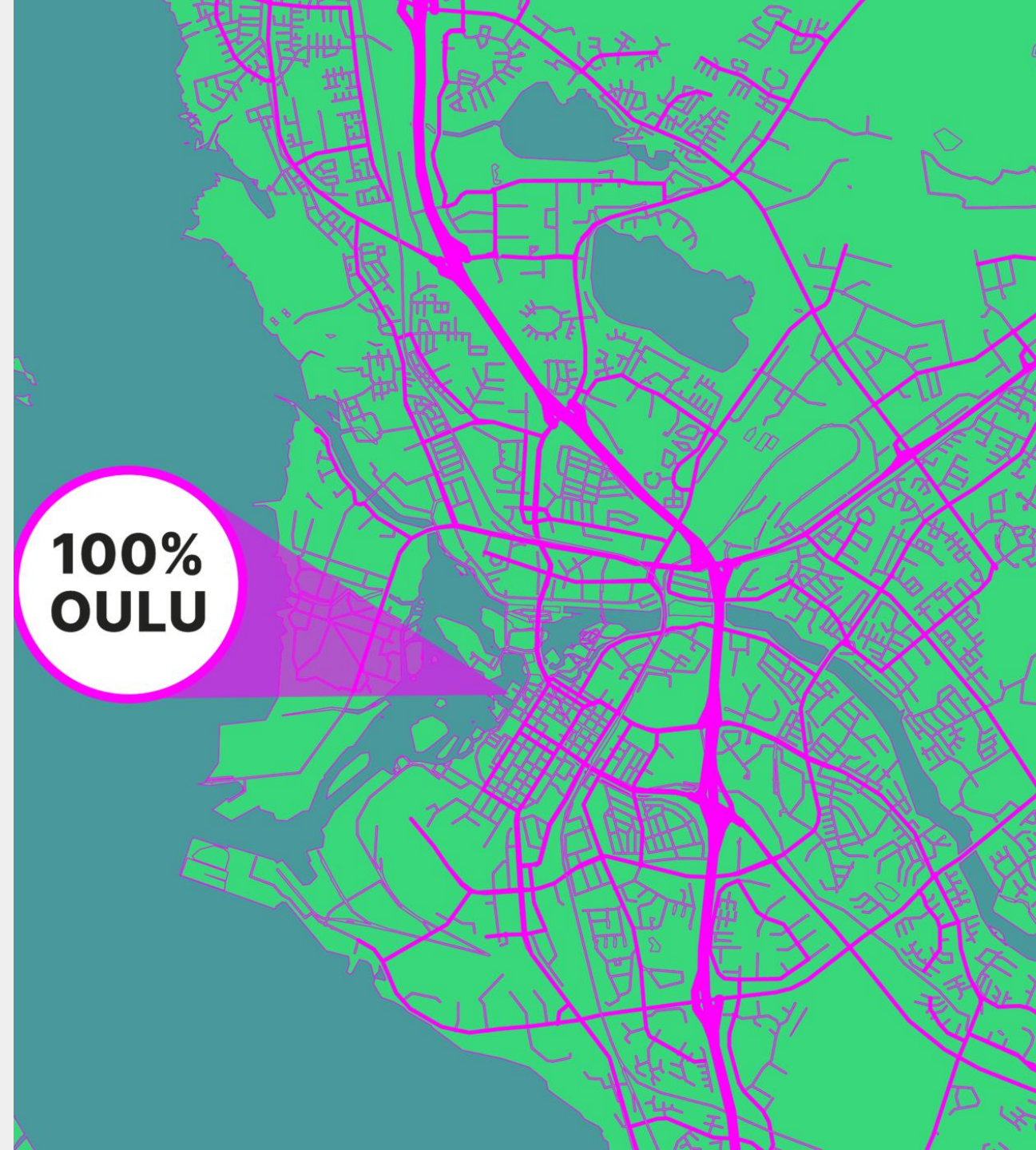




# 100 % Oulu

- The performance is a theatrical way of exploring the people of Oulu and Oulu of today. Also, the cast of 100 performers forms a community that would not have emerged anywhere else.
- A hundred citizens of Oulu take to the stage in 100 % Oulu, a theatre production that gives a tangible voice to the citizens. The performers are selected through a statistical chain reaction so that they represent the city's population as comprehensively as possible – as if the whole city were on stage in miniature.
- The piece brings together one of the top names in European theatre, Rimini Protokoll and ordinary people from Oulu, who may lack any previous relationship with theatre.

Oulu Theatre. 100 % Oulu. In the photo: map of Oulu.







## Arctic Food Lab – food culture also promotes a sense of community

- You can create connections between professionals in gastronomy, food culture, and local communities
- Bring people together. When we eat together, we share more than a meal — we share our stories, our cultures, and our hearts







Oulu2026  
European Capital  
of Culture



Kesäillan kattaus  
Summer Night's Dinner  
2025



# Equality and Diversity

- [Guide to Promoting Diversity in Cultural Services](#)
- Fostering Equality in Cultural Services
- Equality assessment
- Inclusion
- Safer space principles
- Checklist - Accessibility of cultural events and communication
- Pilot projects
- Equality and diversity in the ECOC process
- Oulu2026 Operational Equality and Non-Discrimination Plan



Co-funded by  
the European Union



”

**”The European Capital of Culture must make an explicit effort to expand participation in cultural events by targeting under-represented populations rather than merely wishing these groups to participate in the programme.”**

The European Commission's collection of recommendations from the 2007-2016 European Capitals of Culture

”

**”Instead of choosing subjects that are too safe, cities with European Capitals of Culture status can choose to focus on the key issues and challenges of their city. Cities are sometimes the scene of poverty, inequality and inter-community conflict, and the European Capital of Culture programmes can help partially solve these problems rather than ignore them.”**



# Principles of Safer Space

All our activities and events follow the safer space principles. The principles apply to employees, partners, and cultural programme organizers and audiences.

## **Be part of cultural climate change**

- The European Capital of Culture Oulu2026 belongs to everyone. Everyone has the right to enjoy culture without fear of discrimination. Everyone has freedom of opinion, but human rights are not a matter of opinion.
- Do not tolerate inappropriate behavior or discrimination in any form.
- Boldly address all forms of harassment.

## **Come as you are**

- Oulu2026 encourages participation and creativity. We have room for a variety of cultural expressions. Our events are carried out as accessible as possible. In experiencing culture, all emotions are possible, but you can still feel safe.
- Implement a climate of respect and encouragement for diversity.
- Respect everyone's personal physical and mental state.
- Assume good from others. Ask and listen.

”

**The Foundation’s cultural program will be enriched by actively integrating diversity themes and diverse representations. Through the *We Are Culture* program call, these themes are given particular emphasis, ensuring that the cultural program reflects and engages with the full spectrum of communities and experiences.**



## We Are the Culture - Open Call

- Let's show together that culture belongs to everyone!
- The open call as a form of outreach: The aim was to increase the diversity of the program
- We reached a diverse group of creators, content and locations

Criteria:

**How does the program promote participation or sense of community?**

**How is accessibility considered in the program?**



## Network of communities and organisations with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds

- Diverse migrants communities developed their own cultural programmes
- Art and culture professionals
- Community events

at Kotkaan.

"This is one of the most important events for Africans living in Oulu region and it also promotes the diversity of Oulu's culture scene", says Ojuolape Akinwunmi, founder and CEO of the community.



Read more: <https://oulu2026.eu/.../new-festival-in-oulu-promotes.../...> Näytä lisää





# Smiling Oulu 26

- **SmilingOulu26 is a free photography project** in Oulu.
- **SmilingOulu26 wants to highlight the experiences of minorities and loneliness**
- **In 2026, the Smiling Oulu 26 photo exhibition will also be part of Villa Victor's events**, bringing the best photos and stories of the competition into these shared moments. In this way, **art and everyday encounters intertwine**, allowing people to meet each other both through words and images.





”

**We avoid reinforcing prejudices or stereotypes related to minorities or gender, as well as cultural appropriation. The foundation reserves the right to cancel a program if its content or creators violate human rights.**

# We are a proud partner of Oulu Pride!

- **All the colors of the rainbow** –project open up the world of art and the Oulu2026 European Capital of Culture to everyone under the rainbow communities — and, through pop-up workshops, also to different special groups.
- **The Rainbow Magic** project aims to transform the cultural climate by highlighting the spiritual and artistic heritage of members of the LGBTQ+ community, especially the value of femininity and alternative lifestyles. The works break down norms, strengthen diversity and highlight community instead of competition. The project creates space for a more empathetic, inclusive and pluralistic cultural field.





## Accessible spaces and venues

The Oulu Culture Foundation's own cultural production events aim to be held only in accessible facilities.

When choosing an event venue, we follow the criteria for an accessible event (e.g. In accordance with the Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities' [checklist for accessible events](#) ).

Large-scale productions include a certain number of sign language translation and audio descriptions.

”

**Promoting social accessibility and understanding diverse audiences helps lower barriers to participation in cultural events. These initiatives foster a greater sense of community by making culture more relatable to people’s everyday lives and lifestyles. By ensuring social accessibility, we enable as many individuals as possible to engage on an equal footing and to feel a genuine sense of ownership of the European Capital of Culture.**



# Easy Finnish

- The texts, descriptions and communication of the artistic and cultural production of the cultural programme may be difficult to understand, which is an obstacle to participation.
- The basic descriptions of the cultural programme and other artistic productions, such as e.g. Easy-to-read versions of exhibition texts.

**Oulu2026 – Euroopan  
kulttuuripääkaupunki  
selkokielellä**



# Financial accessibility

## What is Kaikukortti?

With the Kaikukortti card you can get free tickets for example to festivals, museums, theatre performances or concerts. You can also attend certain adult education courses free of charge.

Culture belongs to everybody, regardless of their financial situation.

The aim of Kaikukortti is to improve the possibilities of young people, adults and families in a tight financial situation to participate in cultural life and engage in art.

# Kaikukortti

# The autism-friendly cultural services

At least half of the programme's productions (own and co-productions) implement autism-friendly services/solutions

## **Sensory friendliness (noise, crowds, smells, lights):**

- The sound level is moderate
- Earplugs or hearing protectors are available
- Facilities where you can take a break away from the crowd
- Determining opportunities or facilities to be fragrance-free and informing participants and employees
- Fragrance-free products used in cleaning and hand soaps
- Indirect light rather than straight from above
- Spot lighting for objects in need of bright light rather than bright lighting throughout
- Sites and information materials where essential instructions can be easily found
- Social guides



# Culture Companion 2026

- Equitable Inclusion Through Volunteering
- Cultural participation
- Social accessibility
- An inclusive volunteer program that actively embraces diversity



Co-funded by  
the European Union



# Let's keep in touch!

→ [www.oulu2026.eu](http://www.oulu2026.eu)

→ [info@oulu2026.eu](mailto:info@oulu2026.eu)

 [oulu2026official](https://www.instagram.com/oulu2026official)

 Oulu2026 Official

 Oulu2026 European Capital of Culture

 Oulu2026 – Oulu Culture Foundation

Pohjolan OP  KALEVAMEDIA 





# Subscribe to our newsletter!

