



European Commission - Speech [Check Against Delivery]



Speech by President von der Leyen on the occasion of the opening of Kaunas 2022: European Capital of Culture

Brussels, 22 January 2022

President Nausėda,
Dear Gitanas,
Dear Mayor,

and the entire community involved in realising this exciting programme.

What a special city you have: Kaunas.

Our European Capital of Culture for 2022.

Once a medieval city transformed into a vanguard of modernism. At that time, the capital of a newly independent nation, Kaunas accomplished a new beginning. In these interwar years, modernism in art and architecture stood for more than an artistic style. It represented a new vision for Lithuania's future and its people. Built on pragmatism, progress and independence.

Now, one hundred years later, we are again at a crossroad. Asked to reimagine our future, while protecting nature. But we can only succeed if we use all our talents: from art and culture, to technology and innovation. And this is why we launched the New European Bauhaus. A movement to combine sustainability and style. To support the European Green Deal. Our European Capitals of Culture can help lead this change.

Especially with the support of young people. And this is why I decided to make 2022 the European Year of Youth, to promote youth engagement at all levels. Like with 'Emerging Kaunas', your city's youth programme. So I call on all young Europeans, and those young at heart, to use their creative energy to build a greener European future.

It was here in Kaunas, one hundred years ago, that a young nation reimaged its identity through modernism. Again, today, Europe is reimaging its future through sustainability.

And once again, art mirrors this great transformation. In a free and united Europe.

I wish you a wonderful year of European Capital of Culture.

You deserve it and I hope to visit soon.

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