



Ms Mariya Gabriel delivered a keynote speech, via pre-recorded Video message at the Novi Sad European Capital of Culture 2022 event

Brussels, 13 January 2022

Dear friends,

I cannot be with you today, but I couldn't miss this chance to send my heartfelt congratulations to all of you as Novi Sad becomes the first Serbian European Capital of Culture!

Today, all of Europe joins Novi Sad in celebration of the beauty and creativity of your cultural expression.

Today, you are writing history. Together, we are sending a message of hope and openness. We are reconnecting the links that bring Europe together, and paving the way to a more ambitious future for the Western Balkans and the EU.

And I could not imagine a better tool to do this than the European Capitals of Culture. Since the 1980s, our cities have tirelessly explored new ways of sharing their culture and building trust between communities across our continent.

This initiative is deeply rooted in the confidence that Europe's cities, no matter where they are, or what they have been through, share a passion to help their people express who they are.

Diversity is what as we have continuously found in our capitals of culture. To see the interconnections between so many different people, is each time renewed in our belief in the European project. And this can only drive us to do more, to do better than before.

Showcasing culture as a binder, our capitals incentivise all the people in Europe to meet, to explore their common values, to understand their differences, and work together on the future of our continent.

In 2022, Novi Sad takes up this promise. I am confident that, with its numerous international collaborations, Novi Sad 2022 will push the boundaries of this initiative even further.

We are talking about 1,700 artists from over 45 countries, participating in more than 1,500 cultural events!

Dear friends,

This year is also an invitation to reflect on how resilient we have been. Despite two very challenging years, and the delay from 2021 to 2022, we are moving forward. And we can stand proud of our European community's resilience and solidarity.

Let me conclude with a thank you to the people who have made this year happen – I cannot list everyone by name, but my gratitude, and the gratitude of the whole European Commission, really go out to all of you.

I wish you every success in 2022 and beyond, and I hope to see you soon, when I visit Novi Sad!

I wish you all a wonderful year ahead!