

human nature

Azores 2027

Ponta Delgada · Azores — European Capital of Culture
Candidate City

Pre-Selection Stage



Macaronesia

NORTH AMERICA

EUROPE

Azores Islands

Ponta Delgada

Madeira Islands

Canary Islands

ATLANTIC OCEAN

AFRICA

Cape Verde Islands

SOUTH AMERICA

Human Nature

Δzores 2027

Ponta Delgada • Azores — European Capital of Culture
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I. Introduction

Q1 Why the city wants to be part of the ECoC competition.

Ponta Delgada wants to be part of the ECoC competition because this is where Europe begins. We intend to affirm our centrality and become a cultural reference point, the compass of Europe. When navigation relied on celestial bodies, sailors took their bearings from the western part of the Azores to establish their routes. Now, the time has come to steer European cultural routes back to the archipelago.

The Azores archipelago, discovered by the Portuguese in 1427, is an autonomous region that boasts a solid cultural and geostrategic history. The city of Ponta Delgada is an oceanic frontier found between the European continent and the American continent. It belongs to an archipelago that can be the best ambassador for European values on the maritime route to North America if empowered from a cultural, social and economic standpoint. In the words of Onésimo Teotónio Almeida, professor at Brown University and president of the Azores 2027 Committee of Honour, "We have never lacked European cultural capital in almost six centuries of our existence. All that remains now is to transform it into the European Capital of Culture. Europe has been aware of the existence of this group of islands. But now, it will have the opportunity to become more aware of a vast heritage previously overlooked. Nevertheless, it will be one that it will discover with pleasure and enthusiasm once it realises that it is Europe itself that extends out into the Atlantic on the way westwards, beyond its continental borders." **Ponta Delgada wants to participate in the ECoC competition because this is where Europe becomes complete.**

In 1932, writer Vitorino Nemésio, inspired by Miguel de Unamuno's *hispanidad*, used the term *açorianidade* to characterise the Azorean condition—human, social, geographical and historical. He defined Azoreans as follows: "As men, we are welded historically to the people whence we came, and embedded in habitat to some lava mountains that release from their very entrails a substance that penetrates us." It is an essence that determines our way of being, much like geography. "Geography, for us, is just as valuable as history." Author António Machado Pires, whilst discussing the concept of *açorianidade*, added that it is part of a broader concept of *atlanticity*, the cultural solidarity between the peoples that cross the Atlantic shores.

There is a set of internal rhymes in Azorean life and experiences throughout the archipelago. Religiosity weighs heavily due to inclement shaking and the power of the elements: the

sea, the volcanic energy and the unstable weather shape our way of being. The expression most frequently heard in weather programmes is "cloudy skies with good openings"—a metaphor for the inconsistent weather pattern and the Azorean's mixture of courage and scepticism. Azoreans are also defined by having trodden upon poverty, the brave whaling, the search for "lost Californias of abundance", recalling the verse of poet Pedro da Silveira, the need to leave and the will to return, and an unusual curiosity. It is impossible to talk about the Azores without mentioning emigration, enshrined in a novel by an Azorean author with a much-repeated title: *Happy People in Tears*—how Azoreans often are, or sad people with smiles. Azorean emigration dates back to the 16th century, primarily to Brazil, Uruguay, Bermuda, Hawaii and North America. These are communities linked to livestock farming, agriculture and the whaling industry. These are communities that escaped the powerful volcanic eruption of Capelinhos to work in factories, fishing and the construction of railways and roads.

Linked to emigration, **one of the symbols of Azorean identity is the string instrument *viola da terra*.** It appears in a famous Azorean painting by Domingos Rebelo and is one of the items in the luggage of those who leave the island, searching for a better life. Two hearts represent the love between two people, who are physically apart but maintain a profound bond of spirituality and *saudade*. One is the heart of the one who stays, and the other represents the one who leaves. Its origins are continental (it arrived with the Portuguese who populated the archipelago), but it has gained an insular personality over the years. As one of the favourite instruments of the traditional Azorean musicians, it has undergone a revival over time with interpretations of performers of the new generations. Listening to them is listening to the Azorean soul.

The Azores of today is a territory that, while maintaining ancestral traits, is crossed by new winds that mark and influence it. The archipelago is diverse, plural, and is far more than the image too often sold in mainland Portugal and international media. The expression *Azorean Torpor*, coined by two English brothers who visited the Azores in the 19th century, means "contemplative and melancholic being". It mirrors the Azorean inertia caused by the impact of the climate and the moods of Nature, that primary infrastructure for which we are already known. Still, there are too many Azoreans with energy to be stuck in that vision. Plus, nature for us is much more than that.

We have several areas that have earned the seal of Biosphere Reserve—a UNESCO category focused on the **balance between humankind and ecosystems** and the defence of biodiversity. There are several nature parks,

forest reserves and countless species of flora and fauna. We have a geological memory of ten million years. Our Geopark, which includes 121 geosites on the nine islands and the surrounding marine area, reflects the archipelago's volcanic geodiversity, made up of lakes, hot springs, craters and fumaroles. **Nature has already given us recognition. Culture has yet to be recognised.**

Some solid signs emerge in the cultural affirmation. The cultural heritage is protected, a gesture also recognised by the European Commission and UNESCO, which classified the Azores as one of the destinations with the Best Practices of **Underwater Cultural Heritage**. Brussels emphasised that, between the 16th and 20th centuries, the archipelago had ties to multiple dimensions of European history and trade. Which highlights are behind the award? The Silver Route to South America; military conflicts such as the War of American Independence and the two World Wars; the ships that transported emigrants from Europe to the American continent; and the transatlantic slave trade.

Today, vibrant cultural events are taking place in the archipelago that now belong to a new Azorean cultural identity that is becoming more widespread. Many of them, by choice, cross tradition and experience. The contemporary Azorean cultural identity lies between the **Festas do Espírito Santo** [Holy Spirit Festivities] and the contemporary floating music and performance festival **Maravilha**. It lies between the **Santo Cristo dos Milagres** [Holy Christ of Miracles], a religious

manifestation that brings together thousands of devotees, and the international festival **AngraJazz**. It lies between the popular **Bailinhos da Terceira** (our Atlantic Vaudeville) and the rock and world music **Maré de Agosto** festival. It lies between the *romarias* [pilgrimages] and the **Santa Maria Blues**, the most outstanding blues festival in Portugal.

Apart from a museum and a heritage body, we are an art residency in the middle of the Atlantic, sought-after over time by renowned artists and creatives. Frank Sinatra performed on two Azorean islands as part of an international tour for the military allies during World War II. John Wayne was on São Miguel Island in 1963, giving out signed business cards to many people, kept in numerous Azorean homes. In 1974, Jacques Brel passed by the Azores on his yacht, and became friends with a local doctor. The Italian writer Antonio Tabucchi, who spent a season in the Azores in the 1980s on the island of Faial, wrote the short story "A Mulher de Porto Pim". Much earlier, at the end of the 19th century, Albert I, Prince of Monaco, made terrific discoveries on various islands and the region's seas, discovering the Princess Alice Bank and the Hirondelle Trench.

The geostrategic position of the Azores has resulted in the archipelago being a recurrent platform for political meetings of international dimension. In 1971, US President Richard Nixon and French President Georges Pompidou met on the island of Terceira. The Azores—more precisely the Lajes Air Base—also witnessed the reception of George W. Bush,



Musician and composer Rafael Carvalho with the *viola da terra* (Associação de Juventude da Viola da Terra)

Tony Blair and José Maria Aznar in 2003 by Durão Barroso, the Portuguese Prime Minister at the time, for a summit that led to the disastrous military intervention in Iraq. Bearing that in mind, we must insist on being the stage for the most inspiring events. We need Europe to make that happen. We need European values and sustainable investment for us to change. **We can be the best of mirrors and laboratories. Where there are 27 Member States, there are nine islands united in diversity**, seeking cohesion through their own culture that is open to the world.

Ponta Delgada is a city on the island of São Miguel, part of an archipelago of nine islands, with 600 kilometres of distance between the western and eastern ends. Each Azorean Island is like a neighbourhood in the middle of the sea. All of which are facing challenges rooted in poverty, education, school dropout rates and a lack of civic and political engagement. There is also an absence of internal cooperation, and for that, we must realise that the sea and the air do not divide—they unite. Even if it is true that each island has its own ways of organising, of valuing itself, of living traditions and mutations, it is undeniable that **each is part of a greater unit**, only affirmed if it is harmonised. We must stress that it is vital to look after these nine neighbourhoods with a sense—human, cultural and political—of unity. Because no neighbourhood, however distinctive and characteristic it may be, can live without the others. **The attention given to the archipelago and all its players will foster cooperation**, one of the EU's core values. **Awarding the ECoC title to Azores 2027 is to champion the idea of Europe**. It is to strengthen it in education and fundamental values such as dignity, freedom, democracy, respect for human rights, non-discrimination and pluralism. In a word: culture.

Ponta Delgada's candidacy for ECoC has a threefold function:

1. To unite the islands, break down prejudice, and affirm their place in Europe and the world as epicentres of identity and culture.
2. To deepen a cultural movement that has grown organically, with an openness and diversity sown over time.
3. To encourage Ponta Delgada, in a particular way, and the Azores, in a general way, to strengthen their overall cultural capacity.

We need Europe to achieve these goals. Europe needs the Azores as a model of unity by diversity.

Q2 The city's plan to involve the surrounding area.

Before answering the question, it is best to specify what is meant by the *surrounding area* in an insular-archipelagic context. The surrounding area may be understood as the municipalities bordering the city of Ponta Delgada or as the eight islands added to the island of São Miguel, home to the said city from which the bid for ECoC begins.

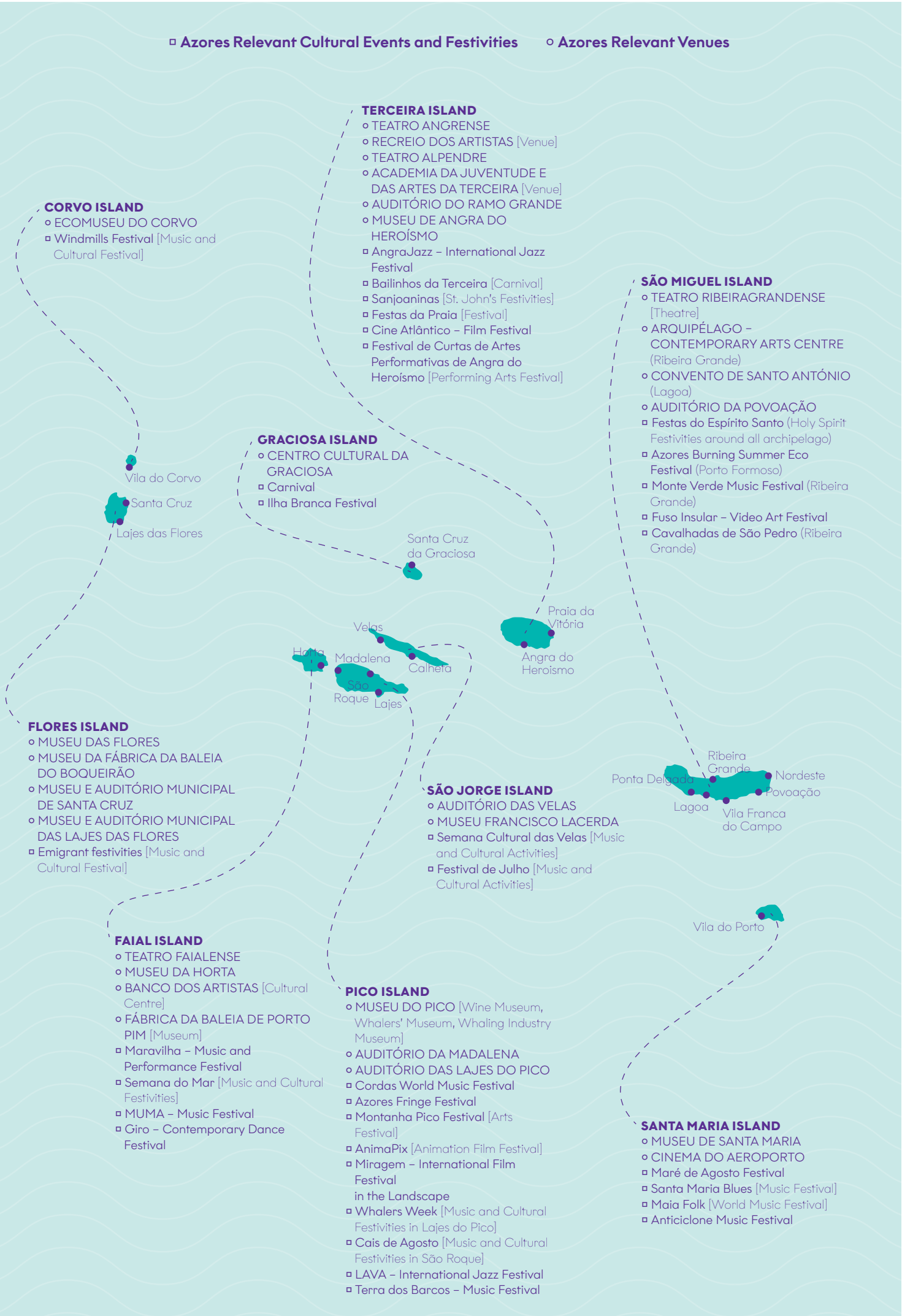
One should first state that culture should not be a centralised nor centralising movement but rather favour dialogue with all the areas that *involve* the city. In the case of Ponta Delgada, this movement becomes necessary in cultural, human and social terms because it is the urban ground of an island that asks for overall development. We are motivated by the right to participation and access to artistic and cultural practices, and we understand that to involve means breaking down physical and geographical barriers and reviving here the European sense of the collective by bringing the islands together, fostering cultural democracy and creating identification with culture on the different resident communities. Given clear social and economic imbalances, there is a need for integrated community projects especially linked to young people, women, the elderly and disadvantaged groups.

In terms of cultural facilities, there is also a dimension of complementarity that should not go unnoticed. In the neighbour municipality of Ribeira Grande, for instance, there is the **Arquipélago - Contemporary Arts Centre**, awarded with several architectural prizes and nominated for the Mies van der Rohe Award, with a demanding calendar in national and international standards and which is increasingly open, to the artists of the region, to value and stimulate them. Throughout the archipelago, performance halls, museums and communication platforms are multiplying, and we find as many artists of all disciplines as cultural stakeholders committed to keeping culture alive.

In a broad sense, it is decisive to state that **the involvement of the entire Azores is a fundamental element of this candidacy**. Ponta Delgada is not moving forward alone in this process. This candidacy is in partnership with other Azorean cities and towns with county seats, each of them with a cultural history that played a role in the development of this robust insular personality, with its cultural stakeholders, artists, musicians, painters, writers, as well as with prominent politicians and various personalities of post-Carnation Revolution (25 April 1974), a date that marked the end of Portuguese dictatorship.

It is from this **Archipelago of People** that we propose a programme with different scales of events. **From the smallest event to the largest, we will be connecting the urban and the rural, the land and the sea, and stimulating inter-island and intra-island cooperation**. Ponta Delgada is, thus, presented with all the Azorean municipalities that together make up a sort of Atlantic city: a place of encounters and crossroads, with a unique cultural body, and a magnetic destination for Europeans and non-Europeans. The movement rhymes with the tolerance and openness that Azoreans have always shown, wherever they go.

The Azores will make themselves known to Europe through an artistic and cultural programme that combines the preservation of Nature in its transcendental ways with the appreciation of Geography, History and creativity. Such elements are the foundations of an identity that is increasingly plural and diverse. We will go from the city to the municipality, from the island to the archipelago, from the archipelago to the mainland and become a **European Archipelago of Culture**.



CORVO ISLAND

- ECOMUSEU DO CORVO
- ▣ Windmills Festival [Music and Cultural Festival]

TERCEIRA ISLAND

- TEATRO ANGRENSE
- RECREIO DOS ARTISTAS [Venue]
- TEATRO ALPENDRE
- ACADEMIA DA JUVENTUDE E DAS ARTES DA TERCEIRA [Venue]
- AUDITÓRIO DO RAMO GRANDE
- MUSEU DE ANGRA DO HEROÍSMO
- ▣ AngraJazz – International Jazz Festival
- ▣ Bailinhos da Terceira [Carnival]
- ▣ Sanjoaninas [St. John's Festivities]
- ▣ Festas da Praia [Festival]
- ▣ Cine Atlântico – Film Festival
- ▣ Festival de Curtas de Artes Performativas de Angra do Heroísmo [Performing Arts Festival]

SÃO MIGUEL ISLAND

- TEATRO RIBEIRAGRANDENSE [Theatre]
- ARQUIPÉLAGO – CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTRE (Ribeira Grande)
- CONVENTO DE SANTO ANTÓNIO (Lagoa)
- AUDITÓRIO DA POVOAÇÃO
- ▣ Festas do Espírito Santo (Holy Spirit Festivities around all archipelago)
- ▣ Azores Burning Summer Eco Festival (Porto Formoso)
- ▣ Monte Verde Music Festival (Ribeira Grande)
- ▣ Fuso Insular – Video Art Festival
- ▣ Cavalhadas de São Pedro (Ribeira Grande)

GRACIOSA ISLAND

- CENTRO CULTURAL DA GRACIOSA
- ▣ Carnival
- ▣ Ilha Branca Festival

SÃO JORGE ISLAND

- AUDITÓRIO DAS VELAS
- MUSEU FRANCISCO LACERDA
- ▣ Semana Cultural das Velas [Music and Cultural Activities]
- ▣ Festival de Julho [Music and Cultural Activities]

FLORES ISLAND

- MUSEU DAS FLORES
- MUSEU DA FÁBRICA DA BALEIA DO BOQUEIRÃO
- MUSEU E AUDITÓRIO MUNICIPAL DE SANTA CRUZ
- MUSEU E AUDITÓRIO MUNICIPAL DAS LAJES DAS FLORES
- ▣ Emigrant festivities [Music and Cultural Festival]

FAIAL ISLAND

- TEATRO FAIALENSE
- MUSEU DA HORTA
- BANCO DOS ARTISTAS [Cultural Centre]
- FÁBRICA DA BALEIA DE PORTO PIM [Museum]
- ▣ Maravilha – Music and Performance Festival
- ▣ Semana do Mar [Music and Cultural Festivities]
- ▣ MUMA – Music Festival
- ▣ Giro – Contemporary Dance Festival

PICO ISLAND

- MUSEU DO PICO [Wine Museum, Whalers' Museum, Whaling Industry Museum]
- AUDITÓRIO DA MADALENA
- AUDITÓRIO DAS LAJES DO PICO
- ▣ Cordas World Music Festival
- ▣ Azores Fringe Festival
- ▣ Montanha Pico Festival [Arts Festival]
- ▣ AnimaPix [Animation Film Festival]
- ▣ Miragem – International Film Festival in the Landscape
- ▣ Whalers Week [Music and Cultural Festivities in Lajes do Pico]
- ▣ Cais de Agosto [Music and Cultural Festivities in São Roque]
- ▣ LAVA – International Jazz Festival
- ▣ Terra dos Barcos – Music Festival

SANTA MARIA ISLAND

- MUSEU DE SANTA MARIA
- CINEMA DO AEROPORTO
- ▣ Maré de Agosto Festival
- ▣ Santa Maria Blues [Music Festival]
- ▣ Maia Folk [World Music Festival]
- ▣ Anticiclone Music Festival

Q3 General cultural profile of the city.

Ponta Delgada is a city of convents and art galleries. Of debutante balls and veterans' taverns. Of traditional bookshops and new jewellery shops. Of steaks with chilli pepper sauce and vegetarian menus. Of shopping centres and farmers' markets. Of marinas and romantic gardens. Of record shops and concerts in shops. Of choral groups and rappers. Tea houses and tobacconists. Laundrettes and second-hand shops. And multiple facilities that allow it to host events from the most diverse artistic, cultural and educational areas.

Ponta Delgada is home to the **University of the Azores**, founded in 1976, whose first rector was José Enes, one of the most important Portuguese philosophers and one of the founders of the Conferences for the Study of the Azores, which, in the early 1960s, fostered a critical spirit against dictatorship and created an awareness of regional unity in the archipelago. The University of the Azores seeks to be a reference and establish academic, scientific and cultural bridges with the world, taking advantage of its location between Europe and the Americas. In addition to the campus in Ponta Delgada, there are two other campuses: one in Angra do Heroísmo, on Terceira Island, and another in Horta, on Faial Island. On the latter is the prestigious Department of Oceanography and Fisheries, whose fundamental purpose is to promote scientific understanding, the conservation of marine life, and the sustainable use of the Atlantic Ocean in the Azores.

Also located in Ponta Delgada are the **Teatro Micaelense**, a theatre with a capacity for 800 people, which hosts exhibitions, an artistic programme and congresses the **Coliseu Micaelense**, one of the three coliseums in the country, has a capacity for 3,000 people, geared towards a calendar of shows and busy Carnival balls, as well as the **Ponta Delgada Public Library and Archive**. Another important facility is the **Carlos Machado Museum**. It is a museum of art, natural history and religious artefacts, with spaces for contemporary art. It also holds a van designed to be a mobile art museum around the island of São Miguel. The city is home to several cultural centres and independent art galleries, namely **Fonseca Macedo – Contemporary Art**, which presents and represents local, national and international artists, and **vaga – space for art and knowledge**, which is not only a gallery but also promotes artists residencies, talks and workshops. Also of note is **Estúdio 13**, a creative industries centre with dance studios and a black box. Another highlight is the **Luís de Camões Auditorium**, a charming miniature of London's Barbican, with seating for 450 people. The **Conservatório Regional of Ponta Delgada** is a school of hundreds of students who learn the classical repertoire and take *viola da terra* classes. In Ponta Delgada, you can also find schools of ballet, contemporary and creative dance, as well as a school of aerobics for high competition and figure skating. Complementing these institutions are valuable spaces such as cultural associations, co-working spaces and well-equipped multi-purpose pavilions.

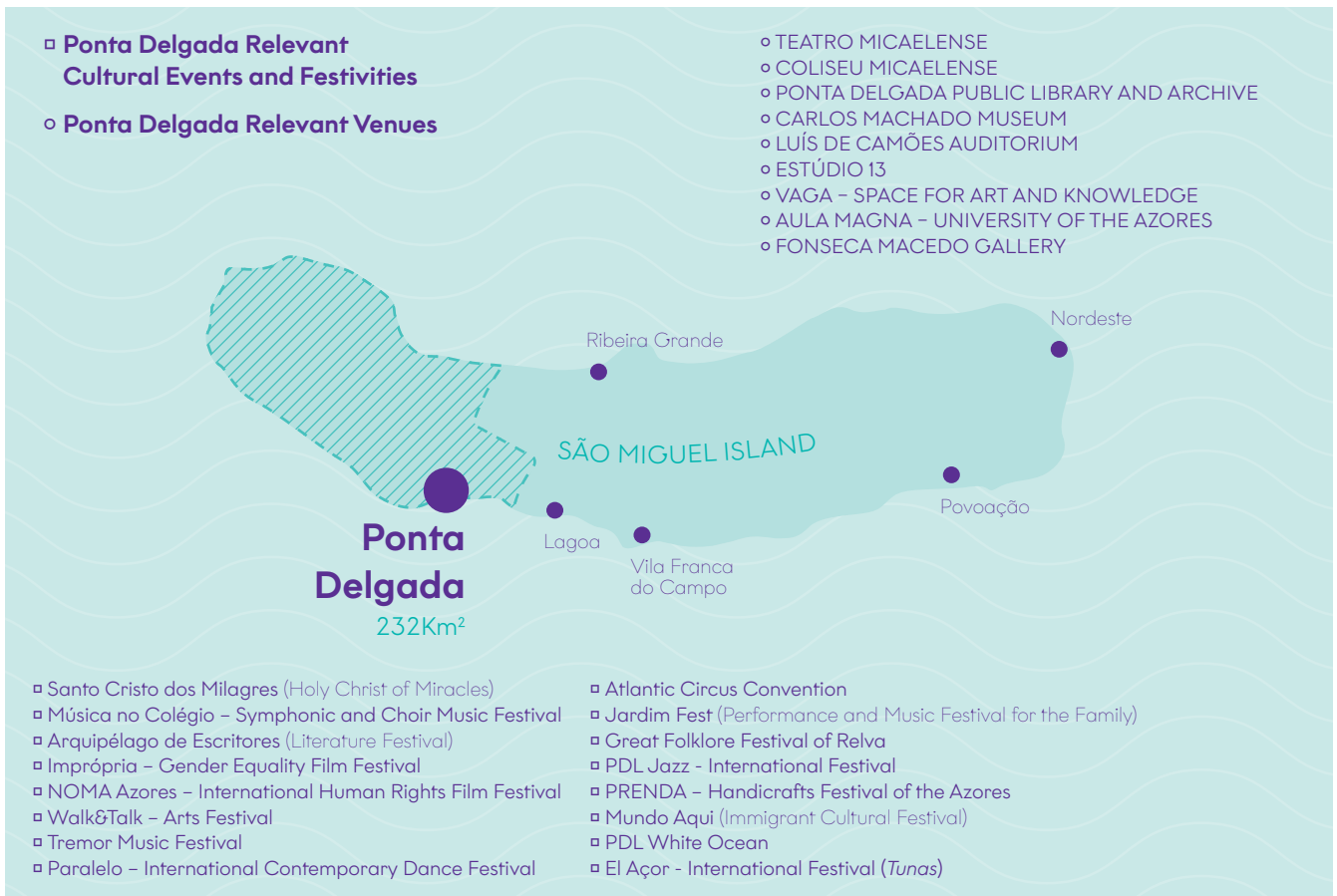
Reaching this stage of cultural development took time and implied changes and efforts. In the 16th century, the historian, priest and humanist Gaspar Frutuoso described how the city gained importance over time: "First, it was a Solitary Wasteland, a Wistful Place and a Poor Village, and then a Small Town, which is now a Great, Rich, Strong and Renowned City." After being established as a settlement, Ponta Delgada obtained the title of city in 1546, not only for its economic and social development but also for the support its port provided to the Indian ships that came to rest and restock their supplies. Three centuries later, it became a prosperous place, with a vast export of oranges to continental Europe and England; it was green, due to the number of gardens created at the time—until this day—and cosmopolitan, due to the arrival of numerous foreign citizens. The connection with Europe was particularly effective through youth's education among the local bourgeoisie encompassing a trip to the main European cultural capitals. Today, young Azoreans from various social classes travel to European countries other than Portugal, and some of them emigrate there.

Buoyed by the strength of its influences, most of them European, Ponta Delgada soon became a city of culture and artists. Like the writer, Natália Correia, an intellectual and prominent civic figure, once wrote: "I'm from the island of tongues of fire. With them, I learnt to metrify the spirit. The unspeakable." It was also the birthplace of anthropologists, like Arruda Furtado, who corresponded with Charles Darwin, thinkers and intellectuals like Antero de Quental and Teófilo Braga, president of the Provisional Government of the Portuguese Republic, and exceptional painters, sculptors, actors and travellers/explorers, like Roberto Ivens, one of the mentors of an expedition that, between 1884-85, crossed the African continent.

Today in this medium-sized city, there are three bookshops and a lineage of writers of different generations that respect and stimulate each other. Here lived the poet Armando Côrtes-Rodrigues, Fernando Pessoa's comrade in Orpheu magazine—in which he wrote under a female pseudonym—and one of the founding partners of the **Cultural Institute of Ponta Delgada**, which today also bears his name.

Given its isolation and geographical periphery, the Azores established itself as an autonomous cultural body, an illustrious entity over the centuries, with an intellectual tradition of cafés and tertulias, symbolised by its ancient journalistic practice. Today, three daily newspapers co-exist in Ponta Delgada, one of which, the **Açoriano Oriental**, is the second oldest daily newspaper in Europe, the oldest Portuguese newspaper in circulation, and one of the world's ten oldest to be published on a continuous and regular basis.

Ponta Delgada is home to a diversity of vibrant contemporary festivals of music, visual arts, handicrafts, dance, popular culture, film and circus. Some of them have an international arts programme and audience and enjoy global acclaim for their uniqueness, originality and interaction with local communities and landscape. This is a plural city, destined to be renewed in its historic centre, to become a place with fewer cars and more open to fresh air, and transform into a city of the future.



Q4 Concept of the programme that will be launched if the city is designated as ECoC.

Our concept is **Human Nature: Human means culture, Nature means place**. We are what we are because of where we are. Our relationship to geography has designed our history and our traditions. Now we need to value our sense of Humanity and respect for Nature as one thing. Azorean writer Daniel de Sá said that “the island is tailored-sized to men”—remembering that the idea of the island forces us to think about who we are and our place in the world. The notion of proportionality in the relationship between the island and the human being prompts us to look at ourselves not only in isolation but as members of a community.

In the Azores, it is easy to say that we are our Nature. It is our greatest treasure and is, therefore, our responsibility to care for and protect it so that it resists beyond us. **Azorean culture is born out of our intimate relationship with Nature. It is through culture that we communicate and establish relationships with others and with the landscape.** Culture is the best way to abolish borders, bring places together and blur dichotomies, such as centre and periphery, or island and mainland. Using the most diverse artistic languages and cultural practices, we want to create agreements of affection and give new forms to our coexistence.

Being human is challenging our limits, freeing us to dream, imagine and build new models for a happier, more just and egalitarian society. We want to face the fear of the unknown, celebrate the gift of life, connect with the divine and return to ourselves. Our Nature is human because we are social beings. We know that together we are stronger than we are apart and that we exist far beyond our isolation and peripheral condition. John Donne wrote, “No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less.” Our ECoC candidacy wants to contribute to the discussion of what Europe is today while claiming our place and relevance on the continent.

Human Nature is a history of mutation, marked by a fragmented identity, with much to do in terms of articulation. **Archipelagic thinking enables the mutualisation of resources, ideas and mobilisations here, in our region, and in exchange with Europe.** Therefore, fast-forwarding to the present, the Azores are facing numerous challenges: isolation, a magical but vulnerable nature, the loss of young population due to limited work opportunities, the preponderance of tourism and livestock monocultures (and its impact on the quality of life and the ecosystems), the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, migration, climate change, the several accessibility obstacles to mutual understanding between us and the world.

We are nine islands that are, in fact, hundreds of islands. One thousand islands. Our **Human Nature** embodies 250,000 Azoreans on the archipelago and around 1.5 million

overseas. Our diaspora comprises mainland Europe, the US, Canada, Brazil, Uruguay, Bermudas, a.o. Azoreans who were born here. Azoreans who emigrated and set out to travel. Azoreans who have become Azoreans by coming here from all corners of the world to rebuild and rediscover themselves. Together, they are one archipelago.

Human Nature is about a city, an island and an archipelago—several even—because **Europe is an archipelago. The whole world is becoming an archipelago.** In a world where nationalism, new forms of localism, and the refusal of solidarity re-emerge, the metaphor of **the archipelago is the alternative model to global thinking, based on the exchange from one island to another, which does not cause the loss of identity but enriches it.** We have an urgent need to do a work of convergence and unity, not separation. Yes to love, No to distrust. Yes to a common future, No to isolation. We need to connect these archipelagos and create new relationships. **Our concept comprehends the exchanges between nature and culture, geography and history, the vibrant landscape of the Azores, the cultural proximity to the Americas, the richness of our traditions and our ability to remain open to the world as a living laboratory of experimentation and innovation.**

We want to participate in the central discussions of the contemporary world. We want to be closer to a sustainable and empathetic future, one made of archipelagos of shared imagination, with more things uniting us than tearing us apart. Our humanity tells us that this exercise

is attainable through conversation and co-creation. New constructions can emerge from the dialogue between centre and periphery, diluting borders and isolation and focusing on the creative and regenerative potential of all possibilities of exchange. Our nature defies this sea of possibilities by launching collaborative networks, creating strands of coexistence and true processions, in which each contribution is as valuable as the whole because the whole operates as a dynamic project of unity.

Our concept represents our affirmative desire to be and inhabit the heart of Europe. We are not the “underdeveloped Hawaii” as the New York Times once stated—we are Europe, full of power in all its dimensions, questioning and virtue. **The Azores, the ambassadors for Europe.** Our programme shows who we are, a transformative experience, more than just an idyllic postcard. We want to be closer to Europe because we have a lot to tell, do and learn, and we want to share this with pride. It is also the prospect of going beyond what we think we can, to question and create space for the other with inclusion and intersection.

It is our opportunity to attract audiences from all horizons and transform our distance into proximity. We believe a lot in learning by doing, and we certainly want to learn more about hosting, caring and sharing. In all our **Human Nature**, we have an invitation for a complete cultural experience that merges with the landscape, an invitation to come and explore the Azores and, who knows, even stay here forever.



from the series *Narcissism of Small Differences*, 2018, Pauliana Valente Pimentel (Fonseca Macedo Gallery)

AZORES



236 657
Inhabitants



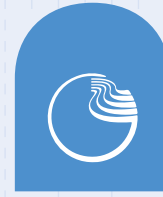
Citizens from
26 European
countries



Citizens from
100 countries
around the
world



25% of the
Territory are
Protected
Areas



1 UNESCO
Global
Geopark



4 UNESCO
Biosphere
Reserves
(Corvo, Graciosa, Flores
and Fajãs from S. Jorge)



2 UNESCO
World
Heritage



13 RAMSAR
Sites
[wetland sites of
international importance]



1st Archipelago
Certified as
Sustainable
Destination
[certified by EarthCheck]



400 Endemic
Species



6 000
Species and
Subspecies



33 Museums



29 Art
Galleries



10 Venues for
Live Shows



7 504 Full
Capacity
Room



+500 Religious
Heritage
Places



88 Nature
Trails with
800 km

PONTA DELGADA



67 287
Inhabitants



232 Km² of
area



1 University



4 Arts Schools



50 Immovable
Cultural
Heritage
Assets



10 Intangible
Cultural
Heritage
Elements



10 Parks,
Gardens



+ than
10 sandy
beaches and
bathing areas



7 Nature Trails
with 42 km

In 2027, the archipelago of
the Azores will celebrate its
600th anniversary

II. Contribution to the long-term strategy

Q5/Q6 The cultural strategy in place in the city at the time of the application, including plans to support cultural activities beyond the title year. How the action of the ECoC is part of this strategy.

The Municipality of Ponta Delgada promoted its first **Cultural Strategy [CS]** for 2030 by placing cultural resources at the centre of public policies and allowing the emergence of many talented voices and citizen initiatives. Resulting from an in-depth dialogue with all political forces, given the time coincidence with the city elections, the municipality has decided to wait for the transition of the new executive to approve the **CS** in a meeting of the City Council and Municipal Assembly that will take place in December 2021.

The assessment and outlined management model and the articulation between the municipality and the archipelago prepare solid foundations to pursue the **CS** beyond 2030. **Ponta Delgada historically opened up for the potential of cultural development, positioning itself as a city-laboratory for policies that may be replicated and scaled up in the archipelago.** The ECoC bid was the much-needed motor to rethink a shared future and open bridges of cooperation in the entire region.

We developed the **CS** in parallel with the bidding process, taking advantage of two autonomous working teams that shared their findings of the listening process, amplified by the momentum of the candidacy. The **CS** gives continuity to the **Ponta Delgada 2014-2020 Development Strategy**, which foresaw the possibility of bidding for ECoC. Then, we collected and assessed all existing strategic plans, implemented surveys, talked and listened to hundreds of people through one-on-one conversations and focus groups. We integrated the visions of Azorean citizens, the Government of the Azores, political

leaders of the various Municipalities, the various political forces in the City Council and cultural, educational, economic, tourism, activism and science stakeholders. We also initiated an ongoing **mapping** of more than 1,800 cultural and heritage resources at a regional scale.

Throughout this initiative, we conceived a future **vision** and a commitment to European and global aims in terms of culture that need to be delivered in the next decade, selecting indicators that allow for international evaluation of the city's development. The **CS** strongly assumes the challenges of local and global articulation, heightened by its island condition, and fully embraces the dichotomies of an urban-rural territory with action and management tools sensitive to the diversity of Ponta Delgada's twenty-four neighbourhoods. The **CS** is positioned in the context of São Miguel Island and the Azores, seeking to join forces and identify opportunities for collaboration. The key priorities to deliver the **CS** are traced in **Sense of Place, Cultural and Creative Sector, Cultural Citizenship and Global Archipelago**. The vision put forth here is one of Ponta Delgada as a transatlantic cultural hub supported in a dialogue between creative production and sustainability, where cultural and creative industries find resources and opportunities to work, where culture is a means of promoting mobility between places, communities and ideas.

Holding the ECoC title is a drive and a hope—or as we heard sometime this year, Azores 2027 is “the light at the end of the tunnel” after the devastating effects of Covid-19 for the cultural sector or the boost we need to go on. By involving the whole archipelago, we are championing civic galvanisation for culture. The possibility of inscribing the value of the Azores with the ECoC cities brand holds a strong motivation in this region. The **CS** oversees the long-term cultural development of Ponta Delgada, although it is not oblivious to the multiplier effect of the ECoC title on a path to transformation for a more democratic, sustainable and meaningful future in 2030, and from there, to 2040.

The **CS** is promoted by the Municipality of Ponta Delgada but is closely intertwined with the regional strategic guidelines, perfectly accommodating the ECoC design on an archipelagic scale. The candidacy stands as one of the main projects of the **Global Archipelago**, an axis transversally related to the whole **CS** focusing on regional and international cooperation. The Government of the Azores and all other 18 municipalities signed a formal

declaration of support of the candidacy, committing themselves to the goals underlying this initiative so that this collective purpose gradually inscribes strategic references at regional and municipal levels. The preparation process of the **CS** and the ECoC bid is an example of articulation between the two and a space for transformation through pilot projects. **We consider both the bidding process and the Azores 2027 programme as converging with the 2030 vision.** The implementation of the **CS** will gradually prepare

spaces and skills to host the ECoC programme in 2027 and further cement the conquered legacy. The **CS** speaks of the need for Azoreans to know the place they inhabit and take culture as a privileged tool to interpret the world and establish encounters with each other, along with diversity. For us, it is clear to see how this path will lead us to plunge into **Human Nature** in 2027. Here is the ECoC's programme contribution to the **CS's** Goals:

CS's axes	CS's Goals	ECoC's programme contribution
Sense of Place	Establish a network of cultural infrastructures , ensuring response along the entire cultural value chain.	9x9 – Every Artist is An Island Every Island is An Artist
	Implement supports for the interpretation of landscape and intangible and natural heritage .	Forest of Fiction Terra Incognita
	Favour the occupation of the public space through artistic and cultural practices.	Open Island ARTakeover
	To know, to debate and to devise ways of living the urban-rural relationship.	Open Island Body of the Land
	Commit to environmental sustainability between creativity and new models of tourism.	L(i)earing me Softly Terra Incognita
Cultural and Creative Sector	Train cultural stakeholders, technicians and decision-makers technically and creatively.	Human Academy (HA!)
	Promote creative entrepreneurship in connection with other business areas (technology, tourism and science).	Creative Inside Out: Cultural and Creative Industries Factory
	Establish tools to boost the professionalisation of cultural and creative stakeholders.	Creative Inside Out: Criativa
	Foster objects of knowledge, appreciation and reinterpretation of heritage as current significant value.	Prouvost 9 Islands Azores Slavery Memorial State of Grace
	Encourage innovation through transdisciplinarity between artistic practices, arts/ sciences, sustainability, technology, digitalisation, heritage and tourism.	Regenerative Future Weather Forecast Invention Parks for Playful Islands
	Enrich cultural practices, impulsing areas of collective strength like music, literature, performing and visual arts, and the audio-visual.	Become Ocean We Have Two Hearts European Juggling Convention 2027 All Together Now
	Articulate and expand outreach actions in association with urban regeneration and citizenship exercise.	MEXE – Azores
Cultural Citizenship	Increase the diversity of cultural and creative experiences for school communities.	Quant.tos Que.res, Quant.tos Que. remos
	Involve the associative fabric in collective movements between places, groups, creative expressions, and co-creation models.	Open Island All Together Now
	Develop itineraries to value religious heritage in relation to other cultural resources.	Top of the Church: Sound of the Organ All Together Now
	Train the sensitivity towards the local cultural context , simultaneously with the literacy training of the digital world.	We Are Running Out of Time Human Academy (HA!)
	Encourage citizens—in all their diversity—to be co-creators in cultural productions, starting from the most vulnerable.	Island of Women Between the Islands We Matter Mexe – Azores
Global Archipelago	Implement local, European and international collaboration networks between cultural infrastructures, institutions and practices.	European Archipelago of Culture The Overview Effect
	Strengthen and revise affective ties with the diaspora .	10 th Island Interlace Festival
	Communicate cultural production through plural and consistent means, in cooperation with tourism promotion.	9 Neighbourhoods Waves of Culture
	Produce knowledge about cultural and artistic fruition and production and evaluate the impacts of implementing the CS.	ECoC Monitoring & Evaluation
	Strengthen European ties through network projects that highlight common cultural heritage, namely the ECoC candidacy .	Theatre A-Z Underwater Europe Interlace Festival



Holy Christ of Miracles Festivities

Q7 The city's plans to strengthen the capacity of the cultural and creative sector by developing long-term links between this sector and the city's economic and social sectors.

Developing the **Cultural Strategy [CS]** brought us a keen knowledge of our cultural sector and recognised its superpower and weaknesses. We know now what work is in progress, who is who, what conditions are there and what needs improving. Looking at the economic activity, today, despite the apparent predominance of livestocking in the Azores, the economic engine is based on services and trade, representing 2/3 of the business turnover.

The diversification of the economy includes sustainable tourism practices, a hub of the sea and space and new technologies. **Taking culture as a catalyst for change, in the Azores, means we are serious about going from monoculture to diversity**, even if there is much to do with the cultural and creative sector's relationships with business, cultural tourism and the blue economy.

The **CS** triggered the mapping of the cultural ecosystem. We have a diversity of stakeholders, a dense and lively associative movement, and varied cultural infrastructures. Historically, music, literature, audiovisual, crafts, performing and visual arts have a standout collective potential that persists today. A rich tangible and intangible heritage is yet to be documented and set in dialogue with contemporary creation. Our cultural sector faces further challenges in renewing and professionalising skills and needs to increase regional and international networking. **In 2030, we envision a more professionalised cultural and creative sector** and a more articulated fertile ecosystem, fully integrated into urban and social development strategies.

To reach that vision, both **CS** and ECoC establish projects aimed at the cultural and creative sector along its value chain. They start from the capacity building of stakeholders and expand the training offer in performing arts and crafts, forming more technicians that support artistic and cultural practices, and renewing resources for policymakers and cultural institutions staff. **Human Academy (HA!)** is our major capacity building programme for the cultural and creative sector, based on an operational format working in institutions, festivals and local communities. **HA!** brings together cultural stakeholders, social and environmental activists, and community leaders to work on audience development and engagement; sustainability values; project management, communication, fundraising and digital transition; partnerships development with national, transnational, European partners and other ECoCs. **HA!** is complemented by the **CS's** actions:

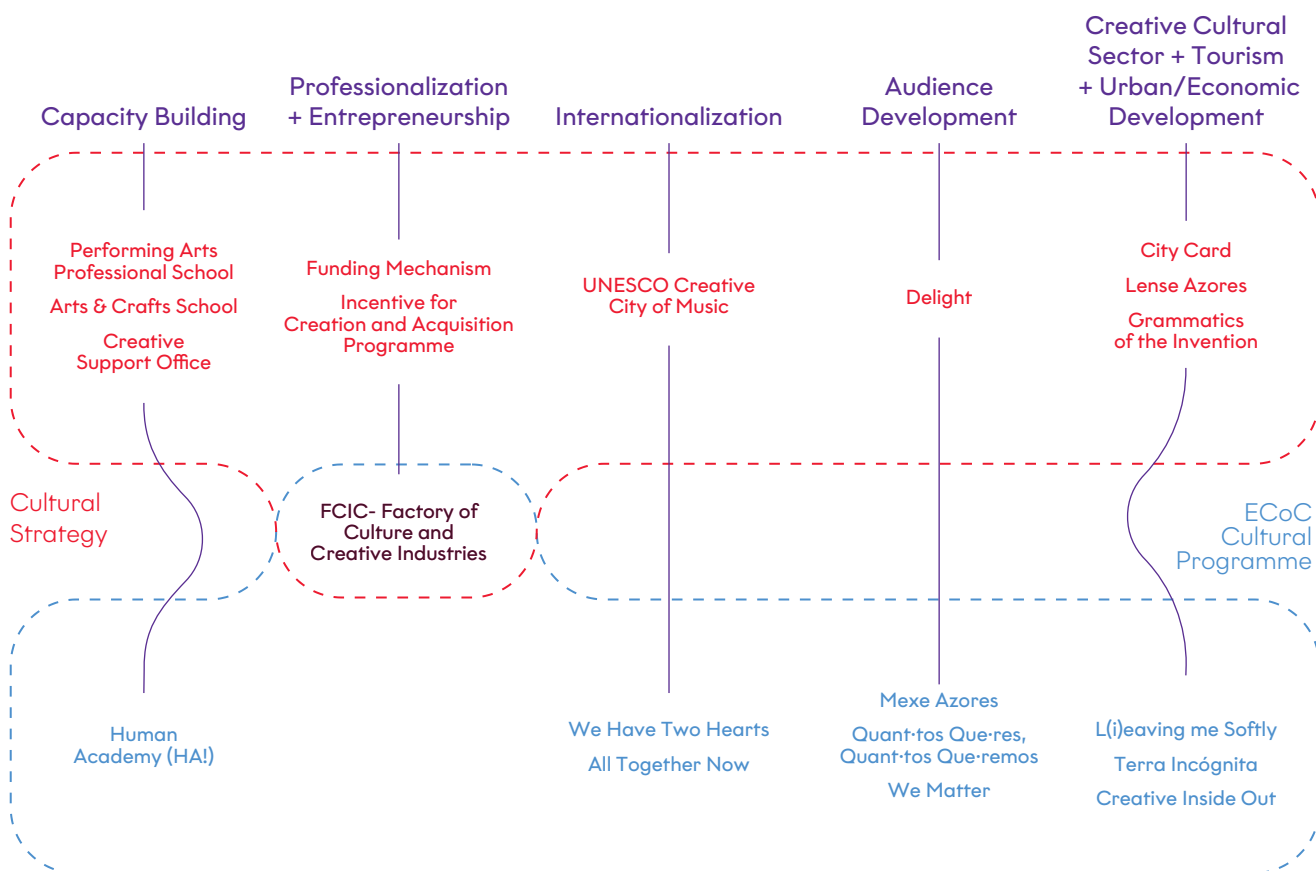
- 1 **Establishment of a Creative Support Office;**
- 2 **Set of cultural funding mechanisms and opportunities;**
- 3 **Incentive for the creation and acquisition of local artists' works;**
- 4 **FCIC - Factory of Culture and Creative Industries (CS+ECoC)** which establishes an incubator in the creative economy in Ponta Delgada's downtown, comprising local

commerce with the urban rehabilitation and cultural dynamisation of public spaces;

- 5 **City Card** available for every resident that offers shared benefits provided by cultural institutions, trade and transport companies, favouring a loyalty programme, more accessibility, support and promotion of culture.

Several other programmes boost creativity with significant potential, contributing to entrepreneurship and professionalisation, internationalisation, audience development and associating the cultural sector with urban development, economy and tourism growth. The programmes create convergences between the **CS** and the ECoC, affirming the intersection of artistic practices and natural sciences research, the role of the Azores as a scientific cluster of the sea and the importance of cultural, slower and greener touristic experiences.

The potential of the Azores as a film destination is developed together with the local music heritage through internationally renowned festivals and UNESCO's approval. We know that the cultural sector can only get stronger by broadening and deepening relationships with audiences. Through cultural democracy, we want the Azores to be an **Archipelago of Participation**, and the projects seek to create a multigenerational solid network of diversity. Here is how:



In our 2030 vision: we are more sensitive to what artistic practices can whisper to us, we express ourselves in more creative ways, our social fabric gains shape through otherness and participation, we know more faces, voices and stories, and artists have more stages to present professionally.

Q8 If awarded the title of ECoC, these would be the long-term cultural, social and economic impacts on the city (including in terms of urban development).

Our artistic and cultural programme is the script for the day after our ECoC title's handover. After and beyond, because Human Nature's four programme strands are archipelagos whose impacts contain **Cultural Eruptions, Social Shakes, Economic Waves** and **Urban/Rural Development New Winds**, all interconnected, complementary and forward-thinking.

We envision **the Archipelago of Multiplicity**, dealing with singularities, mobility and cooperation, leading us into a future of deep-rooted collaboration between cultural entities and stakeholders in Ponta Delgada, São Miguel Island, the Azores and Europe. Community, solidarity ties, the power of exchange and sharing of assets is an acquired reality. **The Archipelago of Participation**, dealing with accessibility, capacity building and cultural democracy—leads us into a future in which the cultural and creative sector becomes empowered and aware of local challenges, contributing to more development goals and respect for diversity, gender equality, inclusion and co-creation. **The Archipelago of Nature**, dealing with our ecosystem, slow tourism and research, leads us into a future of hope and environmental sustainability where the preservation of biodiversity gains momentum through artistic and cultural practices following the innovation of the tourism sector. **The Archipelago of Europe and The World**, dealing with migration, diaspora, history and heritage, leads us into a future with more creative tools to decipher our history, intangible, built and natural heritage, new experiences for visiting and staying and a sense of cooperation with our migrant communities and our continent. In the future, we are sure you will never forget this long word—archipelago—because here is what we expect to deliver:

Cultural Eruptions: Culture is at the heart of public spaces with strong ties with the society. Islands work cooperatively to share and showcase their singularities in decentralised, articulated and supportive ways. More opportunities to participate and co-create cultural events, making culture relevant to more people and growing attendance rates. Cultural projects in unexpected places broaden the understanding of culture, infrastructure and natural heritage. Cultural international cooperation increases, opening up European perspectives. The city and the region raise their international profile and visibility. The cultural sector's capacity is increased to work internationally and in large-scale events. Cultural practices are environmentally sustainable and offer ways to enjoy nature and culture all year on diverse scales. New slow and creative tourism practices increase and become permanent.

Social Shakes: Unity in diversity through an archipelagic cultural experiment involving different communities. More active cultural participation of residents in their city, island and archipelago life. Everyone from everywhere matters: new ways of participation empower new voices and places. Increased participation of minorities and socially disadvantaged groups brings visibility, representation, diversity and equality. More accessible prices and free cultural events encourage different communities to get involved. Outdoors cultural activities are beneficial for mental, physical health and intersectional encounters. Cultural events in rural, maritime and peripheral neighbourhoods bring access to different population groups, promoting inclusion and integration. Unexpected cultural events in non-conventional venues and formats attract young people, children and their families. More effective and regular cultural exchange with Europe and The Azorean diaspora.

Economic Waves: The International programme brings more visitors who use various services, contributing to the regional economy. Investments and cooperation boost our Cultural and Creative sector, encouraging new residents and work opportunities. EU projects bring more revenue for implementing ideas and contribute to the region's budget. All-year-round cultural and artistic programmes boost tourism and commerce, counteracting seasonality and attracting new businesses to the Azores. Our airport attracts new European and international routes. New infrastructural and marketing strategies see Ponta Delgada, Azores as a dynamic transatlantic hub. The region increases its budget for culture. A cultural and creative sector professionalisation allows more stakeholders to make culture their full-time job.

Urban/Rural Development New Winds: Urban spaces and cultural infrastructure correspond to the interests of citizens and ensure mobility and accessibility. Best practices in urban planning and city-thinking increase with international cooperation and participatory processes. The geographical scope of the programme showcases the potential of a richly diverse territory. New infrastructure encourages sustainable transportation (e.g. bicycle lanes, parking). New and renovated fix and mobile infrastructure develop and serve the city and region beyond the ECoC year, boosting the creative and cultural sector, retaining and attracting talent. Good articulation between residents and visitors maintains a balance between nature and the urban environments, the interests of permanent and temporary residents and different population groups. Cultural events in nature and nomadic projects stimulate new ways of mobility and experiencing the public space, bringing new ideas for the region's development.

Q9 Monitoring and Evaluation plans.

Monitoring and evaluating the ECoC in our city and region is vital for us. We want culture to remain forever a catalyst for development, so it is crucial to measure the impacts of our programme as we go, adapt objectives according to performance and continuously inform the population, stakeholders and the European Commission of the achievements.

The evaluation of Azores 2027 will be in line with the monitoring of the **Cultural Strategy 2030 [CS]**. The **CS** will follow indicators from the **UN's 2030** – 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the **Azores Regional Strategy for Research and Innovation for Smart Specialisation (RIS3) – 2021-2027** (where the SDGs are incorporated), **UNESCO's Culture | 2030** and **Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor**, assessing the city's Cultural Vibration, Creative Economy and Enabling Environment. It will study previous ECoC's experiences and analyse cultural indicators of various cities, regions and countries, and create a link between the ECoC's candidacy objectives outlined in the **CS** and Azores 2027's mission, assessing how links come through.

Our monitoring and evaluation plan is called **Cultural Footprint**, and by that, we mean the cultural habits and experiences of individuals regarding the cultural offer and the impacts of cultural and creative industries in an outermost region. We will seek to know, identify and understand the **Cultural Footprint** of resident and non-resident citizens who visit Ponta Delgada, São Miguel Island, other islands in the Azores, including our partnering municipalities, audiences, creative and cultural stakeholders and cultural policies. We will also make space for people to provide innovative and continuous improvement suggestions to learn about their cultural paths and characterise audiences, non-audiences, stakeholders and cultural institutions. **Cultural Footprint** involves an open discussion about where we are now, where we want to be and how we can measure our progress. **Quantitative** and **qualitative indicators** will help us measure our programme and its objectives regarding cultural, social, economic and urban/rural development impacts. Here are some of the indicators that matter to us:

- audience numbers in cultural events and spaces
- active cultural participation in creative, educational and community-based initiatives and learning processes
- international cooperation: participation in EU networks, artists exchanges, co-productions, international projects and events that raise the profile of Azores 2027 on the European cultural landscape
- growth of creative enterprises
- relation between cultural and artistic innovation and urban planning activities
- enhanced cultural infrastructure in the urban and natural environments
- integration of sustainable ecological guidelines in cultural production
- integration of natural and cultural heritage into arts, cultural and touristic management
- engagement in active tourism and number of new cultural and creative tourism products
- international and national tourists numbers
- hotel occupancy and growth in the average stay in the region

For the evaluation and monitoring of Azores 2027, there will also be in-depth data collected from **Eurostat**, the **National Institute of Statistics**, the **Regional Service of Statistics** and databases on cultural organisations in

Ponta Delgada and the region, socio-demographic, employment, income, culture, tourism and hospitality economic indicators. Methodologically, we will apply ecosystem mapping and network analysis from data that proceeds from surveys, interviews, focus groups and the gathering of the cultural preferences of the different actors in the ecosystem; the collection and analysis of testimonies and experiences of the individuals, media impacts, social networks and digital platforms outcomes; project stakeholders' activity reports according to evaluation indicators. As a baseline study, we will rely on the Cultural Participation survey carried out during the preparation of the **CS**. Monitoring will be conducted on an ongoing basis to regularly assess the implementation of the project and disclose the action, ensuring the preparation of reports (annually and at the end of each major cycle) to review the progress and results, subsequently analysed by the Advisory Board and the Mission Team.

The **Cultural Footprint** will be implemented by evaluation experts in the long term from **the Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences** of the **University of the Azores and NOVA University** (CICS.UAc/CICSNOVA.UAc), ensuring the communication of evaluation results. The Municipality of Ponta Delgada will have administrative responsibility for the evaluation. Observance and communication of evaluation and monitoring results will be a responsibility of a designated ECoC team member. Volunteers will receive training to carry out the evaluation of the cultural dynamics, involving local people in improving how the city and region work and connect. Each year the monitoring and evaluation will check the programme effectiveness and produce in-depth assessments regarding working methods, outreach strategies, management, economic impact, track communication between citizens and the mission team, and evaluate citizens' involvement and participation.

All monitoring and impact evaluations will account for the guidelines for cities' assessments published by the European Commission to ensure clear goals, efficiency, transparency of programme implementation and outcomes measures. The evaluation and monitoring results collected will be continuously included in **Ponta Delgada's CS 2030**. The evaluation and monitoring process timeline comprises all stages of the development, implementation and evaluation, including long-term effects of the Azores 2027 programme:

- 2022: Cultural Footprint** indicators are defined and included in the **Ponta Delgada CS 2030**;
- 2023-2027:** data is collected while the programme is running—all stakeholders involved in the implementation of the programme perform a self-assessment regarding anticipated results, and there will be monitoring reports;
- 2028:** delivery of Azores 2027 final evaluation;
- 2030:** final evaluation of the **Ponta Delgada CS 2030**;
- 2031-2032:** long-term Azores 2027 impact assessment in synergy with the final evaluation of **Ponta Delgada CS 2030**.

III. Cultural and Artistic Content

Q10 The Vision and Artistic Strategy for the cultural programme.

The vision and artistic strategy of Azores 2027 reflect the idea of Human Nature. **Human means culture, whilst Nature means place. Human Nature** aims to create a new cultural dynamic in Ponta Delgada and the Azores. It is a programme that celebrates our geography, the landscape and the uniqueness of our culture. It is an appeal for understanding and empathy. Between humans and non-humans, all that composes our nature. Our history, traditions and yearnings for contemporaneity come to life through a programme of worldviews. We intend to give them back to those who live on the islands and want to take them to the imagination of all Europeans.

As an outermost region, we want to take our limitations and integrate them to overcome them in our project. We are far from the centres of power and decision and far from the main markets. We have a small-scale economy and high exposure to natural disasters. Whether it rains or trembles, we will always have an anticyclone that protects us, our volcanoes are sleepy majestic lakes and 40°C hot springs, and the land shakes just enough to make us feel alive. We take our geography as an asset, and we want to assume ourselves as the meeting point between Europe, the Americas and Africa, celebrating the richness of our biodiversity and the potential of our skies and sea. We want to open a conversation about nature, multiplicity, participation, Europe and the world and try to go beyond the horizon to find ways for a more cooperative future. Culture can be the catalyst for true transformation from the inside out through the principles of collaboration and intersectionality. The *plural island* is a living laboratory of possibilities of universal value, a reconnection with ourselves and a reconciliation with the environment. This utopia is not just ours. It belongs to everyone, and we need it to move forward with hope and imagination.

Human Nature consists of proximity, resilience, trance, the tremor of the islanders and the friendliness and humility of their welcoming. We will start with the people to create a transinsular cultural programme, where they have the leading role, and then the nature, our stage and field of thought, to share an experience of astonishment with all the ingredients to transfix and pull the rug out from local and European audiences. There will be events in the usual

places but where you least expect them too, allowing people of all communities and backgrounds to get involved. We will develop new audiences, take over the digital space and present new ways of participation. We will present new voices and new places. We will support artists, producers and citizens of all ages to create things together. We will initiate new connections, decentralise and break institutional borders. **Challenge. Sustain. Regenerate. Transform.**

Our vision and artistic strategy come down to four programme lines. Each line is an archipelago. We call for participation, co-creation, communication and collaboration, and we take the territory as a playground, an academy and a stage. We need to bring everyone together. We realise our artistic vision by questioning and creating spaces for conversations that never happened and healing wounds through real encounters. **Through culture, we will rethink the world in which we want to live, regain our sense of humanity and transform the Azores into an Archipelago of People, of Europeans, an Archipelago of Europe.**

Q11 Overview of the structure of the cultural programme, including the variety and diversity of activities / main events that will mark the year.

Human Nature will go from the city to its neighbourhoods, from the island to the archipelago. Azores 2027 will take off with the ECoC's Opening (January) and conclude with the Closing Ceremony (December), a symbolic handover of the title to the ECoC 2028. Structured in three seasons, it will accompany the different cycles of culture, nature and spirituality. Each beginning of the season will see a highlight involving local and international artists and institutions to take over the city with art and culture:

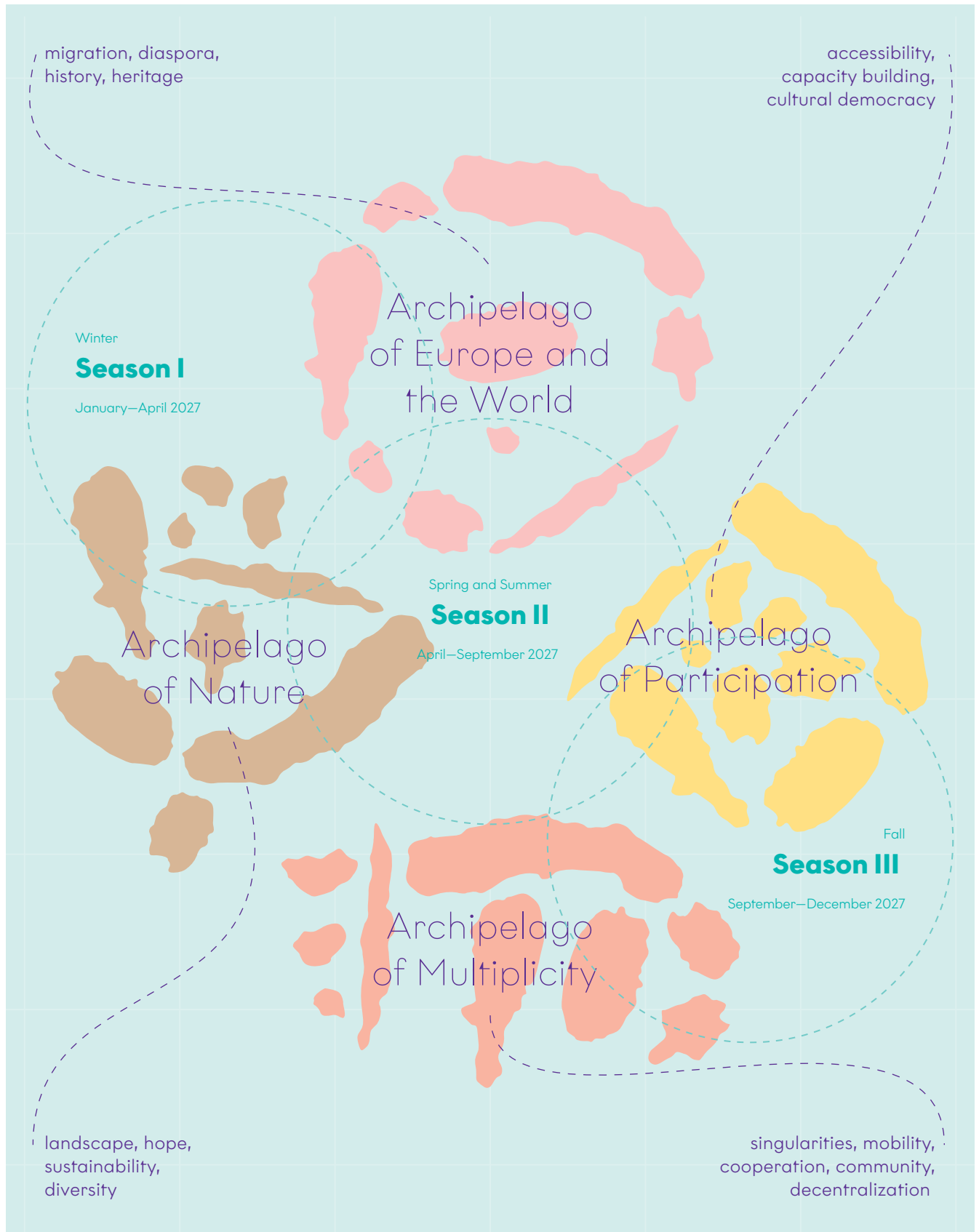
Season I crosses the winter until April;

Season II crosses spring and summer until September;

Season III crosses the fall until December.

The programme structure of **Human Nature** unfolds in four archipelagos, which we have named: **Multiplicity**, **Participation**, **Nature** and **Europe and the World**. They reflect our vision through a series of artistic and cultural projects of different expressions. They seek to involve, attract and include creative forms of participation and activation.

All the archipelagos are interconnected, complementary and exist to tell a narrative of Europe, the Atlantic Ocean, the Azores and Ponta Delgada. It is a social, cultural and ecological sustainability narrative that addresses European themes and values in current and future pivotal questions on the Azores.



Archipelago of Multiplicity

Puts into practice the principle that together we are stronger. Articulating singularities and establishing a regional, national and European conversation will allow us to practice cooperation and strengthen community ties from different geographies. As an archipelago of collaboration, affection and solidarity, it proposes a programme of unison, polyphony and gathering places, juggling several scales of cultural intimacy and island-wide collective experiences. Its projects address mobility issues in and between islands and archipelagos, the exchange and sharing of resources between territories, the creation of bridges with other islands in Europe and the world. It features nomadic, mobile, travelling, episodic, and fragmented projects with possible activations in the archipelago of the Azores and the archipelago of Europe.

PROJECTS:

9X9 – EVERY ARTIST IS AN ISLAND, EVERY ISLAND IS AN ARTIST is an A.I.R. programme for artists of all creative disciplines and geographic horizons, happening in the nine islands. Through partnerships with cultural actors, venues, city halls and science centres, this year-round project makes sure that artistic practices are for all territories and that no island is more peripheral than the other. This programme faces issues of isolation and difficulties in accessing cultural experiences. It is a way to unite all the singularities and narratives of such a fragmented archipelago: taking the experience of art to the streets, places of science, business or nature, resurrecting abandoned places, tackling important and contemporary European issues like isolation, island desertification, migration, ageing of the population, awakening material and immaterial heritage. The art residencies have variable extents, intersect other Azores 2027 projects and include moments of audience development and community outreach, which encourage participation and capacity building through talks, workshops, school visits and public presentations. An open call invites artists interested in engaging and collaborating with different communities, plus working as facilitators and articulators of artistic experiences that attain local transformation. The programme will also send local and Portuguese artists to European partner institutions.

Promoted by Azores 2027 **Potential Cooperation Partners:** Arquipélago – Contemporary Arts Centre (PT), Pico do Refúgio (PT), RE:Act – Artistic Residencies (PT), Horta Museum (PT), Corvo Ecomuseum (PT), Francisco Lacerda Museum (PT), Incuba+ (PT), Expolab – Centro de Ciência Viva [science centre] (PT), Station Narva (EE), Ministry of Culture and Creative Industries of Cape Verde (CV), Res Artis – Worldwide Network of Arts Residencies (INT), Galway 2020, Clermont-Ferrand Massif central 2028 – Candidate City, Skopje 2028- Candidate City, Latvia ECoc 2027, On The Move (EU), EU and US artists, different municipalities of the Azores, multiple businesses, schools and venues around the archipelago **Timeframe:** The project will be implemented in 2021-2030 with yearly open-calls, and in 2027 will intensify with monthly open-calls.

BETWEEN THE ISLANDS is an interdisciplinary arts programme held on public ferry boats and in the ports of the Azores, surprising the travellers who become part of the action either as audience or actors. A dialogue between artists, designers and academic researchers from the Azores and other European archipelagos will

allow us to discuss the human occupation of the sea and the multiple meanings of 21st century insularity. Boats and ports create and share affections and bonds between islands and islanders. Archipelagos are terrestrial and sea spaces that act permanently in concert and reconfiguration. Archipelagic thinking is an interpretation not only to insular phenomena but to a *world in process* in which its fluid and dynamic nature comes to the fore as the starting point for a programme that deconstructs the idea that the island is a static, isolated, peripheral and immobile place and the sea a “non-place”. Aligned with the European Commission New Bauhaus, this project recognises the prevailing diverse range of maritime traffic, promoting, through design and creativity, its innovation, renewal and articulation with a new generation of public policies of sea transportation aimed at cooperation and transnational problem-solving. It is activated as a set of one-off events and extended initiatives hand-in-hand with the islanders, presenting floating conversations, memory performances, fluid ethnographies, boat concerts, policy discussions and artist residencies at sea.

Promoted by Amaya Sumpsi (ES/PT) and Diana Diegues (PT) **Potential Artists & Speakers:** Chris Watson (UK), FoAM Network (BE/International), Jana Winderen (NO), Leena Kela (FI), Mariano Vilallonga (ES), Gloria Pungetti (IT), Jonathan Pugh (MT), Alison Neilson (PT) **Potential Cooperation Partners:** Maritime Transportation Companies and Ports of the Azores, Arquipélago – Contemporary Arts Centre (PT), Oceano Azul Foundation (PT), Sea Observatory of the Azores (PT), University of the Azores (PT), CHAM – Centre for the Humanities (PT), LAVA – Visual Anthropology Laboratory (PT), NOVA University (PT), CRIA – Centre for Research in Anthropology (PT), Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary (ES/AT), Contemporary Art Archipelago (FI), TU Dublin School of Creative Arts (IR) **Timeframe:** From 2023 on, produced in 2024-2027, with intense activity in May-September 2027.

EUROPEAN JUGGLING CONVENTION 2027 is the biggest juggling convention in the world that has taken place since 1978. We have EJA's (European Juggling Association) approval to turn Azores 2027 into the European Capital of Juggling, ten years after being hosted by our very own pioneer **9 Circos Company**. EJC is an eight-day event, an incredible opportunity to learn about juggling in a friendly crowd and a safe atmosphere of parity, equality, well-being, joy and community to try new things in a supportive way. The spectacle will be massive, gathering thousands of jugglers from all over the world and offering more than 200 workshops, various

stage and street performances, galas, mind-blowing spectacles in nature, a city parade, social circus exchanges, programmes for families and window circus sessions in hospitals and retirement centres. Thousands of jugglers will invade our grounds—in a participatory setting—taking circus as a tool for individual and community development for all and transforming us into a European stage, academy and laboratory for contemporary circus!

Promoted by: 9 Circos (PT) **Potential Artists:** Emil Dahl (SE), Gandini Juggling (UK), Jonglissimo (AT), Peden/Pezzo/Elmner (USA/SE), Taylor Glenn (USA), Roxana Küwen (DE) **Potential Cooperation Partners:** European Juggling Association (EU), Catapult (DE), Zartinka (DE), several municipalities and local venues **Timeframe:** 2027.

ARTAKEOVER makes **art accessible to everyone everywhere, flooding our city streets, neighbourhoods and coastline, to celebrate the creative talents of local, island and European Art.** We present you with some of its initiatives. **Eye For An Eye** is a takeover of public advertising spaces, urban framework and daily newspapers to propose a visual and tridimensional exhibition by **Bruï Gallery**, reflecting on colonisation, human occupation of land and its impact on the landscape with artists from islands Cape Verde, Canaries, Japan, Timor and Anjevida. **High Street** is a multidisciplinary cycle of performances and installations in several locations on the main shopping street in town. Initiated by the theatre company **Cães do Mar**, the project occupies cafés, shops, windows and houses and forges collaboration between local and international performing artists. Traditional and contemporary performance approaches create and communicate new narratives and images that link past, present and future, reimagining the stories of familiar spaces—this format called *Theatre of Place* was introduced in the UK by the theatre company Talking Birds. **ARTery** is an artistic intervention in the streets and the coastline. Streets get tailored by contemporary visual artists who create full-street immersive artworks and light installations with the help of local schools, making the city an ever-growing exhibition. The coastline turns into an enhanced open art gallery by the sea with a curated circuit of interactive art and architecture.

ARTakeover is a joint-project between Bruï Art Gallery (PT), Cães do Mar Theatre Company (PT) and Azores 2027 **Potential Cooperation Partners:** Oficinas de São Miguel (PT), Arquipélago – Contemporary Arts Centre (PT), Fonseca Macedo Gallery (PT), Estúdio 13 (PT), Casear Creation (PT), Talking Birds (UK), Cascoland (NL), Mindspace (HU), Heritage Europe (European Association of Historic Towns and Regions) (EU), The Everyday Projects (INT), municipalities, national and international artists, advertising companies, local newspapers, art schools **Timeframe:** All activities will happen from 2025 until 2028, gaining intensity in 2027.

CREATIVE INSIDE OUT will boost **O Quarteirão** with a **Culture and Creative Industries Factory** through the concession of spaces for young artists, associations and creative companies in a coworking regime and collective creation format. **O Quarteirão** is the artist-run creative quarter of Ponta Delgada—located in the heart of the city—home to a very diverse community. It is a residential area with restaurants, artists' spaces, galleries, fashion and craft shops, hostels, social associations and a Muslim Temple. The Factory will be a lab that combines tech, green economy and digital solutions to empower the creative sector through cultural hackathons, tech thinking & action sessions—an interconnected place of art, tech and business. When hosting the ECoC title, **O Quarteirão** will be a daily

venue for engaging exhibitions, performances, ephemeral architecture, vertical gardens, open studios and workshops for children and young people. **Creativity will spread downtown** and occupy storefronts and squares with stages, transforming from the Creative Quarter to Creative Downtown. In order to conquer Ponta Delgada from the inside out, we will also set in motion **CRATIVA**, a system of benefits for landlords and tenants, with instruments to empower creative entrepreneurship.

Promoted by: O Quarteirão and Ponta Delgada Municipality **Potential Cooperation Partners:** Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Ponta Delgada (PT), Startup PDL (PT), Nonagon (PT), Platoniq (ES), EBN – European Business and Innovation Centre Network (EU), Trans Europe Halles (EU), European Creative Hubs Network (EU), MitOst – Citizenship in Action (EU), Climate Designers (INT), MateraHub (IT), Medialab Katowice (PL), Mindspace (HU), Galway 2020, Tartu 2024, local artists, galleries, festivals, tourism companies and businesses **Timeframe:** Implemented from 2025 on with the opening of the Factory.

THEATRE A-Z is an archipelagic theatre festival that brings contemporary European dramaturgy to the centre of the Atlantic. This project showcases local, national and European contemporary dramaturgies; provides artistic and technical tools to different groups and audiences; and values and defies traditional theatrical and ritualistic archipelagic forms. It brings conventional and unconventional theatre spaces back to life with site-specific venues in natural, urban and rural areas. The aim is to foster the performing arts by conducting technical and artistic training—lights, sound, acting, directing, production, dramaturgy—and provide artists with the knowledge to professionalise their sector. We will stimulate theatre experiences in amateur groups and all-level schools, revive the Azorean repertory and support the emergence of new authors and texts. **Theatre A-Z** will celebrate and revive popular theatre, from *Vaudeville* to singing and dancing and social satire. It will do a retrospective of the work of **Zeca Medeiros**, who has been staging and filming our culture in dramas, musicals and documentary features. The programme will present contemporary artists writing the future of the history of theatre like **Philippe Quesne**, **Miet Warlop**, **Rimini Protokoll** or **Phia Ménard** or tell the phenomenal story of the cargo ship that shipwrecked in Faial Island with a bunch of theatre props from Giorgio Strehler's "Harlequin: The Servant of Two Masters" from **Piccolo Teatro di Milano**—this story must cross Europe!

Potential Cooperation Partners: Cães do Mar Theatre Company (PT), Teatro de Giz (PT), Performing Arts Service – Serralves (PT), Piccolo Teatro di Milano (IT), Kunsten Festival des Arts (BE), New Theatre Institute (LV), Ministry of Culture and Creative Industries of Cape Verde (CV), EFA- European Festivals Association (EU) **Timeframe:** The project will be produced in 2026, implemented in 2027 and stay as an Azores 2027 legacy project.

ALL TOGETHER NOW is a project fostering new compositions, experimentation and European exchange based **on philharmonic bands**. With 102 philharmonic bands, the Azores are the Portuguese region with the most philharmonic bands, which sustain a tradition that dates back to the 19th century and that, with their music schools, play a cultural and social role of public importance. This project will mark the highlight moments of Azores 2027 because there is no Atlantic celebration without a philharmonic band. An expert curator and several representatives from the different islands will take the lead, featuring a number of bands. The regional band **Lira Açoriana**—with musicians from all nine islands—will tour the archipelago from east

to west and visit Latvia to present an Euro-Azorean repertory. The project fosters musicians training and capacity building, new composers and compositions and collaboration with other art forms and music genres. A festival of philharmonics will invite other European ensembles to present their traditions across the Atlantic. In addition, we will support a radio show and a digital platform to map and connect all projects. Every week, on the same day and time, we invite bands to perform in the churches during winter and bandstand squares of the archipelago in the summertime. Our summer highlight will be the English composer and maestro **Tim Steiner** devising a giant travelling philharmonic band procession with the various ensembles of São Miguel Island. Steiner worked with professionals, amateurs and beginners, from a 100-element rock band created at Casa da Música, to BBC shows, or the 2009 Paralympic Games and Guimarães 2012. In 2027, we will all be together surrounded by horns and percussion!

Potential Cooperation Partners: Federation of Philharmonic Bands of the Azores, Philharmonic Bands of the Azores and the diaspora, Antena 1 Radio Station (PT), Angra's Diocese (PT), Regional Directorate for Culture (PT), Quadrivium (PT), A Música Portuguesa A Gostar Dela Própria (PT), WEAVE – Widen European Access to cultural communities Via Europeana (EU), Liepāja 2027 – Candidate City **Timeframe:** 2025-2028, having its highlight moments in 2027.

PROUVOST 9 ISLANDS is a **public art circuit on the nine islands of the Azores created by the French visual artist Laure Prouvost**. Prouvost is a Turner Prize award-winning artist known for her lush, immersive films and mixed-media installations, displayed in galleries, museums and site-specific in cities and nature. As one of the most renowned visual artists in Europe, Prouvost's works are fantastic narratives that make us dream and at the same time touch feminist, ecological and familiar themes. Through her work, she addresses viewers directly, pulling them into her unruly, imaginative visions. Prouvost's projects take the landscape in a dreamlike way and are a public art asset to any place. For Azores 2027, she will create a public sculpture on each of the nine islands. Here lies an unprecedented opportunity of creating a public art circuit, uniting the archipelago, and an international asset to position the Azores in the art world as a destination of culture that connects all the inhabitants of the islands' spaces.

Curated by: João Mourão—Arquipélago – Contemporary Arts Centre (PT)
Potential Cooperation Partners: Municipalities of the Azores, Azores Geopark, The Government of the Azores, Studio Laure Prouvost (BE), Institut Français (FR)
Timeframe: Works will develop from 2025 till final implementation in 2027 and stay for legacy.

EUROPEAN ARCHIPELAGO OF CULTURE shifts the centre of all cultural activities from Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, to all the other eight neighbourhoods. If we look at the Azores as one city, it consists of nine neighbourhoods. Together they form an Atlantic metropolis of cultural diversity. Now, **what if each of the archipelago's neighbourhoods became one of**

the ECOC's hosts? While respecting the scale and sustainability of each singularity, the project ranges from one-week to one-month programmes that challenge local cultural operators and municipalities to engage in cultural takeovers of their islands. It activates different sites, venues and practices, addressing the relations between nature and culture through a multiplicity of art and cultural forms. From **Graciosa's** Architecture of Water itinerary demonstrating humans' capacity to store water and the **100 Pianos Festival**, with players of all horizons and ages celebrating the island's heritage, to **Terceira's** literary routes, jazz and contemporary performances in UNESCO World Heritage sites. From **Corvo's** Ecomuseum, wool celebration, bird-watching and Pablo Neruda's publisher to **Flores'** poetry, architecture, whaling heritage, and Eden-like nature as a stage for music. Or **Santa Maria's** history of aviation, ceramics practices and world-music, folk and blues festivals. From **Pico's** Mountain sanctuary and UNESCO world heritage vineyards, *chamarrita* dances, whaling heritage and literature to **Faial's** 70-year eruption of the Capelinhos volcano, sea life, and active associative movement. From **São Jorge's** tradition of music, theatre, and gastronomy, with its breath-taking *fajãs* for hiking trails and nature events, to the land and sea **Triangle Music & Arts Festival** connecting three islands through a musical and arts cruise, a unique Euro-Atlantic creative touristic experience.

Promoted by Azores 2027 Potential Cooperation Partners: Government of the Azores, Azores Tourism Association, Regional Network of Museums and Libraries of the Azores, Municipalities of the Azores, Twin Cities (INT), Galway 2020, Matera Basilicata 2019 Foundation, Station Narva (EE), European Museum Academy (EU), WEAVE – Widen European Access to cultural communities Via Europeana (EU), NEMO – Network of European Museum Organisations (EU), Heritage Europe (European Association of Historic Towns and Regions) (EU), The Everyday Projects (INT), local artists, festivals, cultural associations and Azores 2027 Ambassadors
Timeframe: Activities will be developed throughout 2027.



Mariana Sales Teixeira's art residency project *Land Vessels – Moorings to the Sea*, Santa Maria Island, during the **Azores 2027's A.I.R. Pilot Programme 9x9**

Archipelago of Participation

Is about the right to participation to access cultural and artistic practices and capacity building opportunities. We want to overcome physical, economic, social and intellectual obstacles and regenerate Europe's sense of the collective through mutual understanding, social intersectionality, cultural democracy and the representation and identification of the different communities with culture. We want to create a set of tools to develop new audiences, involving diverse communities in cultural projects—from several age groups, disadvantaged communities to differently-abled people—not as mere spectators, but as participants that take the reins of their initiatives, narratives and places of speech. The projects defend gender equality and offer new opportunities for women, telling stories and showing alternative points of view. Equality, inclusion and trans-generational and social co-creation are the basis for developing artistic and cultural projects. We also expect participation to align with capacity building because knowledge is ECoC's main legacy, so we want to strengthen the cultural and creative sector in their technical and artistic dimensions. From local to European, this is the archipelago of people, in which democracy expands and pulses with diversity!

PROJECTS:

OPEN ISLAND is a **bi-monthly event designed to experience the city by walking, biking and getting cars out of the way.** Here is our plea for fewer cars and more bikes, better participation and activation of the public space and better cultural options in peripheral areas. We invite local cultural forces and commerce to show a city of diversity through an artistic map with open studios, exhibitions, performances, special sales, tastings and parades. This project kicks off our main highlights and includes a **9 Circos' Big Parade, Marinella Senatore's Parade it Now, or Tim Steiner's Philharmonic band extravaganza.** There will be contemporary architecture visits, *soundwalks* and guided visits. Plus, you can count on collective dog walks, concerts and performances in private houses and World Cafes in plazas on sustainable shopping and the need for a greener and more accessible cultural city. Knowledge is hitting the streets and we invite fellow ECoCs to come participate. The opening expands from the city to the country and sea-side with **MAPAS—a mobile cultural centre** showcasing on-the-move local and international talent in rural and coastal neighbourhoods with photography, video and film exhibitions, performances, concerts, workshops, walks and installations. Through group programming sessions, audiences can design their own events and choose what they want to see taking place in their neighbourhoods. The programmes take shape with local initiatives, entrepreneurs, community groups and centres. We launch **a participative, sustainable and inclusive vehicle** that creates cultural itineraries and strengthens the inclusion of different communities, mapping the *humanity* and *nature* of the neighbourhoods and keeping track of people's stories, traditions and sense of place.

Promoted by Azores 2027 together with Municipalities of the Azores **Potential Cooperation Partners:** European Creative Hubs Network (EU), EFA – European Festival Association (EU), MitOst – Citizenship in Action (EU), Flamingo Imbatível (PT), Blind Signal Berlin (DE), Cascoland (NL), Mindspace (HU), MateraHub (IT), Medialab Katowice (PL), Platoniq (ES), Lisbon Architecture Triennale (PT), Open House Worldwide (INT), Anda&Fala (PT), Azores DMO (PT), Atlantic Bikes (PT), BlackSandbox Skate Park (PT), Expolab – Centro de Ciência Viva [science centre] (PT), Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the Azores, National Association of Parishes – Azores, Galway 2020, Trenčín 2026 – Candidate City, Clermont-Ferrand Massif central 2028 – Candidate City, restaurants, different artists and music, dance, circus collectives **Timeframe:** It will be implemented annually from 2026, gaining a bi-monthly activation in 2027. MAPAS will take place in 2026-2027.

ISLAND OF WOMEN proposes **a transdisciplinary programme** that presents actions, festivals, capacity building programmes and community projects **facing the global challenge of gender equality**—reflected in the unfavourable social position of women in the region and the highest national numbers of domestic violence. It produces and presents contemporary and bold artists, raising issues of discrimination, condition for women in culture and society in general. Only gender equality can make the world a more sustainable place. That is why participation promotes women's empowerment, intersectional conviviality, equal access to resources and opportunities, and fights violence against all women and girls. Co-creation, protest and awareness come through exhibitions, performances, inspiring talks, a feminist library, and toolkits to deal with power and oppression. Artists and activists of different geographies are invited to present works on being a black woman, female force, sexual abuse and feminist ecologies of knowledge. Art, actions and projects reflect on the importance of women in society. Some of the activities include a city-wide **Women's March**; a one-week invasion of women clowns in **Bolina – International Clown Women Festival**; **Marta Górnicka's The Chorus of Women**, reclaiming women's voices through a choir theatre that takes the collective body and the voice as an instrument of power; and **Imprópria – Gender Equality Film Festival** to debate these topics in articulation with national and international institutions and associations of social solidarity, with film extensions and feminist workshops. In addition, we will have **Maria Emanuel Albergaria's A Big Clothesline in Sete Cidades**, evoking the history of the laundresses through a giant participative happening with cloths and messages extended on a large wire that runs along the shores of Sete Cidades' Blue Lake, raising awareness about contemporary environment and women issues.

Curated by: Catarina Saraiva (PT) **Potential Artists:** Catarina Vieira (PT), Paloma Calle (ES), Leslie Mannès (BE), Meytal Blanzaru (IL/BE), Zia Soares/Inmune – Institute of The Black Woman (PT), Lois Weaver (UK), Ana Vujanović and Saša Asentić (RS), Edit Kaldor (HU/NL), "The Black Market of Useful Knowledge and non-knowledge" by Hannah Hurtzig (DE) **Potential Cooperation Partners:** Bolina – International Clown Festival (PT), Public Library and Regional Archive of Ponta Delgada (PT), Silêncio Sonoro (PT), UMAP Azores (Women's Union), Mobile Akademie Berlin (DE), Center

for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra (PT), Walking Theory (SR), Fórum dos Cidadãos (PT), International Festival City of Women (SL), tranzit.org (EU), Public Libraries 2030 (EU), Live Art Development Agency (UK), several venues, schools, archives, museums, youth associations and ecological associations **Timeframe:** The project will have a 3 year span between 2026-2028.

HUMAN ACADEMY (HA!) is our main capacity building programme, based on non-formal learning, the transmission of knowledge and community building in Ponta Delgada and the Azores. Set up in 2023 as a nomadic knowledge academy, it will build capacity for stakeholders on the way to 2027. Not settled in four walls but driven by the encounter and will to share and exchange knowledge, the academy works from learning by doing, providing toolkits for cultural access, management, thought and outreach. **HA!** will count on culture operators, community-led institutions, local arts professionals, sustainability specialists and actors for change to lead workshops, meetings, networking sessions, assemblies, internships, visits and artist-institution labs aiming at undisciplined, intergenerational and intersectional collaborations. This programme will address cultural management, communication, technical direction, audience mediation, local and transnational cooperation, plus sustainable nature & heritage practices, giving tools to the cultural sector to professionalise and stimulate our local and European cultural foundations. **HA!** will cover community involvement through inclusion, active participation/equal access and audience mediation practices; creative and technical skills development (marketing, digital opportunities, documentation, grant-making); cultural producers training to support artistic creation and co-creation, international mobility and sustainable practices; European network-building and internationalisation; volunteering methods and ambassadors programme; tutoring school children, youth and teachers for cultural participation; seniors training through third age units; and internships in local festivals and partner ECoCs.

Promoted by: Azores 2027 **Potential Cooperation Partners:** CRESAÇOR (PT), Azores DMO (PT), Government of the Azores, Forum Dança (PT), Acesso Cultura (PT), InterArts (ES), Platoniq (ES), On The Move (EU), Trans Europe Halles (EU), EFA – European Festivals Association (EU), MitOst – Citizenship in Action (EU), Bad Ischl 2024's Leader, Kaunas 2022's Tempo School, Bodo 2024's Room for Culture?, Tartu 2024, Nova Gorica · Gorizia 2025, Oulu 2026, several local institutions and festivals **Timeframe:** 2023-2026.

MEXE – AZORES builds on the idea that participating in artistic practices must be transversal to all communities, provoking crossings between distinct populations. The programme arises from community forums to build spaces, involve people, define activities, communication and production: bottom-up and completely based on capacity building, providing toolkits for the autonomous development of projects. **A festival meets art residencies, workshops, 360° capacity building, and the affirmation of the different communities and their empowerment.** Imagine a group of pregnant teenagers marching the streets and taking the city by assault. Imagine choreographed city maintenance workers dancing in uniform with their utensils. Imagine forest rangers with their electric saws sharing stories of working in nature. Imagine children and young people with school underachievement making music to the beat of a basketball and succeeding. Imagine a giant herbarium made with plants from the 100 or so nationalities of immigrants of the Azores. Can you imagine?

Mexe – Azores will result from a partnership between Azores 2027 and Mexe – International Art and Community Meeting, a platform for participatory artistic practices working closely with local stakeholders. The programme will assess the quality of participation in artistic processes with communities, including its relationship with local dynamics.

Artistic Director: Hugo Cruz (PT) **Potential Artists:** Caterina Moroni (IT), Work Dancers (USA), Basket Beat (ES), Rastros de Diógenes (BR) **Potential Cooperation Partners:** MEXE (PT), University of Porto (PT), University of Évora (PT), International Community Arts Festival – Rotterdam (NL), Festival de les Arts Comunitàries de Catalunya – Barcelona (ES) **Timeframe:** Production and preparation will happen in 2026, projects will develop throughout 2027.

QUANT-TOS QUE-RES, QUANT-TOS QUE-REMOS is a non-formal participative education project dedicated to the youth of the Azores, encouraging them to participate in the making of Azores 2027 by creating their learning initiatives, participating and making a real impact in their present and future environment. By mapping the existing creative resources on the islands (both human and material infrastructure resources), the project fosters relationships between cultural stakeholders, creative communities, and local organisations, transforming them into learning opportunities. The methodology is based on co-curating a training programme with youngsters, offering them the chance to develop their local “curriculums”. Based on the interests and needs of youth, the project promotes their responsibility and empowerment, fostering the creation of networks of knowledge and practices of creative communities. In 2025-26, the project coordinator recruits and trains local mentors, launches an open call for youngsters and starts working with artists in several islands of the Azores. The project will be constantly evaluated and adapted, monitored and documented. It will include mentors and young people's exchanges, visits and other events for the wider community. In 2027, these youngsters will all be ECoC's ambassadors! We will close with a **multi-island Quant-tos que-res Festival**, presenting their artistic takeover of projects and ideas.

Curated by Filipa Sousa (PT) **Potential Cooperation Partners:** MateraHub (IT), European Creative Hubs Network (EU), European Museum Academy (EU), NEMO – Network of European Museum Organisations (EU), Clermont-Ferrand Massif central 2028 – Candidate City, Everyday Projects (INT), municipalities, cultural institutions (museums, libraries, cultural centres, a.o.), Regional Directorates for Education and Youth of the Azores (PT), local, national and European visual and performance artists, architects and designers, filmmakers and audiovisual producers, cultural programmers, print artisans, welders, tinsmiths and local businesses **Timeframe:** From 2025 to 2027, with a grand-finale festival in 2027.

WE MATTER examines our human potential and many flaws in inclusion and unity by integrating **three very special resident companies in Azores 2027**, where everyone matters. The **INCLUSIVA Dance Company**, led by dancer/choreographer **Catarina Medeiros**, creates a professional context for dancers with Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy and autism. Through the DanceAbility method, dancers get technical and artistic skills in dance, therapy, mobility and communication to step on any stage with other dancers with different capacities. For our ECoC year, there will be open classes, social inclusion sessions in schools, and a performance programme with invited national and European choreographers. **VIBRATE** is a capacity building and community performance project led by **ondamarela**—an artist collective founded in Guimarães 2012—to cement a collaboration with the **Deaf Association of São Miguel**, various local and

international artists and European deaf communities. As an open laboratory of music, theatre and dance, it develops creative structures to support the deaf citizens and encourage social intersections and the exercise of active citizenship, leading to several programmes, with performances in our main stages and a tour of Latvia's ECoC to include more participants. **All the Mermaids Have a Fishtail** focuses on the **Music School of Rabo de Peixe's** ground-breaking social and cultural project of experimental jazz education for kids and teens in the village of Rabo de Peixe. Through workshops, they will perform with international artists, take over the neighbourhood, develop music-for-all improvisation practices, exchange with other music schools and move audiences with their talent. Here is our cultural punch to raise public awareness of all social barriers and different abilities!

Promoted by The Deaf Association of São Miguel (PT), Music School of Rabo de Peixe (PT) and Catarina Medeiros (PT) **Potential Cooperation Partners:** ondamarela (PT), Valmiera 2027 – Candidate City, Liepāja 2027 – Candidate City, CiM – Dance company (PT), Plural Dance Company (PT), DV8 (UK), Axis Dance Company (USA), StopGap (UK), InterArts (ES), European Union of the Deaf (EU), The Everyday Projects (INT), local schools and municipalities of the Azores **Timeframe:** From 2023-2030, on an ongoing project of structuring, artistic creation, capacity building and performance.

INVENTION PARKS FOR PLAYFUL ISLANDS appeals to inventiveness through **laboratories and immersions in urban and natural environments set for children to co-create, learn from each other and feel free.** It is a playful system for mixing realities while creating narratives for possible and desirable futures through interactive spaces and costumes, mechanical creatures, inflatables, technology, games and sounds. From children to children, Azores 2027 becomes an aesthetic and synesthetic collaborative phenomenon activated in cultural centres, parks and urban communities throughout the year. While building a network of continuous and reciprocal learning processes, the children will be the protagonists, supported by their families, artists, biologists, scientists, architects, educators, gamers and storytellers to co-create a series of actions through creative practices, social engagement and critical thinking. The idea is to endure it by enhancing connections and trust among communities. Using recyclable materials, local resources, and data collection will foster collective intelligence to design products and actions based on the children's inventions that sustain over time. In the year 2027, the island is to become a playground. Thus, the future is to be written by our little ones.

Curated by Livia Diniz (BR/FR) **Potential Artists:** Hello!earth (DK), Isabelle Arvers (FR), Maria Lynch (PT/BR), Roger Bernat (ES), Compagnie des Quidams (FR), Renato Rocha (BR), Casa Comum (BR) **Potential Cooperation Partners:** AA Visiting School (UK, PT), Labea – laboratorio de artes vivas y ecología (ES), Maraberto Filmes (BR), SDNA (UK), Reevo – alternative education network (AR), FARO – Fluxonomia Aplicada al Rediseño Organizacional (Iberoamerican/EU countries), UNICEF Portugal – Child Friendly Cities Programme (PT), European Creative Hubs Network (EU), Ecsite – European Network of Science Centres and Museums (EU), Expolab – Centro de Ciência Viva [science centre] (PT), local operators, artists, educators and architects **Timeframe:** 2027.

WE ARE RUNNING OUT OF TIME is a **visual marathon** that will take place on the island of São Miguel, divided into four courses (42.4 km, 22.4 km, 7 km and 3 km), passing through magnificent landscapes, volcano ridges and dirt roads. Anyone can participate—either by running or walking—because one alone cannot fight all injustice. We are running out of time to fight for gender equality, against homophobia, transphobia and racism, to fight for a more sustainable world and climate change, for a world without war, hunger and domestic violence. The body of each participant serves as visual support based on their watchwords and causes. The project defends intersectionality as a way of looking at the world, where **art, sport and citizenship** meet to generate spaces for encounter and dialogue. In the days before, the route will be painted with watchwords using stencil, so that the streets can remember “A country without culture is a country without voice”, “Racism is not opinion”, “Protect the Landscape”, “My body is my choice”, and many more urgent social and ecological reminders.

Promoted by: ilhas studio (PT) and Walk&Talk (PT) **Potential Cooperation Partners:** Endurance Sports Company, with the participation of several social and activist associations of São Miguel island: Solidaried'arte Açores, CRESAÇOR, Azores for Diversity, APF [Family Planning Association], Pride Azores, AIPA [Association of Immigrants of the Azores], Kairós [Cooperative of Incubation of Solidarity Economy Initiatives], Novas Rotas School, A Alternativa [Association against Dependencies], Arrisca, Novo Dia [Social Inclusion Association] and many more **Timeframe:** 2027.



We Are Running Out Of Time marathon, by Ilhas Studio, Walk&Talk 2021

Archipelago of Nature

Addresses our connection to nature with an island, archipelagic and European vision of green thinking and sustainability. The nature surrounding us is our greatest asset. It is not separate from us; we belong to it. In this archipelago, transdisciplinarity takes artistic practices into the natural world and brings back environmental issues to the art world. The projects explore the relationship between science and culture; value sustainable, slow and transforming ideas for creative and cultural tourism; measure the impacts of humans on the landscape; rethink the landscape in light of good sustainability practices and value our endogenous materials, promoting the circular economy. They address not only the threats of climate change and the issue of monocultures but also enhance our natural heritage, whether on land or sea.

PROJECTS:

BECOME OCEAN proposes a summer full of ocean-themed events around ecological awareness, art, sports, fruition and education. World-renowned marine biologist Sylvia Earle has classified the Azores as a Hope Spot of marine protected areas, from the sea surface to its depths. We were a whale hunting spot, but today we live on respecting whales and welcoming people to visit them as fellow citizens of the planet. A programme of sports competitions will happen on land and at sea, whilst well-being activities like paddling, diving, and whale watching call us to experience the ocean to the fullest. Imagine sea orchestras, whaling boat processions, floating sculptures and underwater photography contests and exhibitions. Whaling culture and preservation of sea life create sea and land itineraries on whaling boats and watching sites, and the sustainable pole-and-line fishing and the fish canning industry turn into a giant photo exhibition in several islands' factories in ruins. In addition, cleaning actions, recycling art workshops, a school programme on ecological awareness, and an international film festival on environmental issues and the sea of the Azores. And, that is not all: after all, we are one of the largest sea regions of Europe, so you can count with a seafood gastronomy festival, intersecting traditional and experimental cuisine; and with **Iceberg**, our sailboat cultural centre run by sailors/artists, which will sail the nine islands as an art stage, an artistic object, an ocean and climate change educational space, set by the active role of communities and schools, staying as a long-lasting ECoC legacy.

Potential Participating Artists: Nico Nubiola (ES), Robin Mora (FR), Lia Goulart (PT), Caramantran (FR), Time Circus (BE), HankyTonk Boat (FR), Djelali Tricks (FR)
Potential Cooperation Partners: Fazenda Cultural Association (PT), Expolab - Centro de Ciência Viva (PT), Francisco Lacerda Museum (PT), Carlos Machado Museum (PT), Teatro Micaelense (PT), Fablab Benfica (PT), Syn Fab Lab (GR), PoliFactory (IT), Ecsite - European Network of Science Centres and Museums (EU), Ocean Foundation (USA/INT), AIR Centre - The Atlantic International Research Centre (INT), Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions - Islands Commission (INT), Cultural Digital Imaging (USA), Galway 2020, Trenčín 2026 - Candidate City, Azorean naval clubs, sea entrepreneurs and tourism companies **Timeframe:** Most activities in May-October 2027. **Iceberg** is an ECoC legacy.

BODY OF THE LAND combines art and territory through a series of art residencies, open studios, talks, essays and a 20-hectares international site-specific exhibition. The project fuses with a new and more sustainable forest and farmland, embedded in Pico do Refúgio's arable soil, natural reserve and historical buildings, where the changing seasons offer a different gaze with every visit. For about 400 years, **Pico do Refúgio** has served many purposes: from pirate lookout post to militia fortress to tea factory; its land has accompanied the island's agricultural cycles, each lasting around 100 years. This monoculture system, highly dependent on external demand, reduced the island's self-sufficiency and posed financial, environmental and social sustainability challenges. By gathering artists and experts from agriculture, landscape, forest management and sustainability, this inclusive, participating and transformative project discusses the problems that a monoculture system poses to an island's human and natural landscape. It aims to propose more sustainable alternatives to deal with the land in an international artistic environment. **Art meets nature meets the human in a completely sustainable and historical Art Park.**

Curated by Bernardo Brito e Abreu (PT) and Andrea Santolaya (PT/ES) - Pico do Refúgio (PT) **Potential Artists:** Pedro Vaz (PT), Thiago Rocha Pitta (BR), Marcelo Moscheta (BR), Fernanda Fragateiro (PT), Gabriela Albergaria (PT) and more **Potential Cooperation Partners:** Inland - art, agriculture & territory (ES), IN CONTEXT - contemporary art and experimental music residency (RO), Cow House Studios (IR), European Association for Landscape Ecology (EU) **Timeframe:** 2025-2027.

L(i)EAVING ME SOFTLY makes tourism a transformative experience of expanded time and softness, in which sustainability means responsibility when experiencing the land and its resources. Our nature is our culture, and whoever visits us becomes a temporary resident who slows down and undertakes pure cultural exchange. This initiative is a counter-model to mass tourism, with nature-driven travel ethics based on authenticity, direct contact with the communities, and culture intertwined with the landscape. When we lose our connection to

nature, we lose our spirit, our humanity, our sense of self. Going through a pandemic, we have come from being apart. In the coming years, we need to get out there to reconnect, regenerate, take care and benefit our mental and physical health. **We will design one hundred natural and culturally immersive itineraries** to go through surprising paths in our green sanctuary of Ponta Delgada and the Azores. Soundscapes, bird watching, waterfalls, hot and cold water pools, sleepy volcanoes, lava fields, botanics, vineyards, tea plantations, pineapple greenhouses and heritage spaces unfold through fictional and factual storytelling. There will be expedition options for groups, couples, individuals and people with reduced mobility: walks, running, bike-riding, blindfold itineraries, under the sun or moonlight. We will work with tourist guides, artists and historians as storytellers and nature/culture connectors that lead adventurers into surprise-filled routes. There will be time to rest, sleep, read, eat *GEOfood*, see performances, history lessons and find balance.

Potential Cooperation Partners: Azores Geopark (PT), Amigos dos Açores (PT), The Association of Tourist Guides of the Azores (PT), Regional Directorate for Tourism (PT), Azores Tourism Association (PT), Carlos Machado Museum (PT), European Association for Landscape Ecology (EU), Heritage Europe (European Association of Historic Towns and Regions) (EU), Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions - Islands Commission (INT), scout associations, wellness and tourism professionals, artists and historians **Timeframe:** Implemented from 2025 as a pilot version and updated and expanded in the next three years.

FLOWs is a series of site-specific media art installations sprouting from a collaboration between three Portuguese candidate cities for the ECoc title: **Braga, Faro and Ponta Delgada**. Scientifically speaking, there is a deeper and deeper understanding that ecosystems (a forest, a lagoon, a volcano) function as one living organism. Based on the data flow analysis of the biodiversity from outermost landscapes—the mountain forests in the Peneda-Gerês National Park, the sea lagoon in the Natural Park of Ria Formosa, and the volcanic activity of the Azores Geopark—artists and researchers are brought together in an **art, science and technology co-creation programme**. More than mere representations of data for didactic-informative purposes, these media artworks seek a critical look at how we preserve (or not) and interact with our natural ecosystems. All art installations resulting from these collaborations will be presented in a travelling exhibition in the three partner cities in 2027 and later on within the worldwide **UNESCO Creative Cities of Media Arts network**.

Curator: Luis Fernandes (PT) **Co-promoters:** braga'27 - Candidate City, Azores 2027 and Faro 2027 - Candidate City **Potential Cooperation Partners:** Braga Media Arts (Creative City of UNESCO initiative), gnration (PT), University of Minho (Master in Media Arts) (PT), University of Algarve (PT), Museu Zer0 (PT), Ria Formosa Natural Park (PT), Peneda Gerês National Park (PT), Azores Geopark (PT), vaga - space for art and knowledge (PT), Arquipélago - Contemporary Arts Centre (PT), UNESCO Creative Cities of Media Arts (INT) **Timeframe:** 2026-2028.

WEATHER FORECAST crosses climate change, meteorology, ecology activism, sciences and arts. Our anticyclone and geographic position make us the weather guardian of Europe, preventing it from big storms. The weather unites us in our collective feeling of the land. We keep talking about heat, cold, rain, wind, or humidity. We constantly see and feel the impacts of climate change, and we have a collective responsibility to prevent them. We know less and less what comes

next, so in the weather, we must be together! The project proposes **a debate around the impacts of climate with an ecocentric vision**. It is a month-long think-tank to identify common problems, inspirational ideas and best practices towards a sustainable ecological footprint and carbon-neutral world. We will gather **artists, activists, scientists, and politicians from all corners of Europe to discuss and have a say in eco-friendly and sustainable solutions** in architecture, design, fashion, landscaping, gastronomy and daily life. In addition, we want to take artists to meteorology services. We envision the creation of *meteo-haikus*, *meteo-songs*, daily weather video, audio and drawing reports. Let us have cloud interpretations and their consequences in the atmosphere, rain or shine performances and last, but not least, artist residencies for cloudbusters and climate refugees. This project is an invitation to stay present, take responsibility and action, imagine, have fun and work through our shared world.

Potential Cooperation Partners: Centres of Science of the Azores (PT), Regional Directorate for the Environment and Climate Change (PT), RTP-Açores (PT), Azores GeoPark (PT), Ecsite - European Network of Science Centres and Museums (EU), Climate Designers (INT), AIR Centre - The Atlantic International Research Centre (INT), Galway 2020, Oulu 2026, Trenčín 2026 - Candidate City, Liepāja 2027 - Candidate City, Clermont-Ferrand Massif central 2028 - Candidate City, architecture and design studios, visual, fashion and performing artists **Timeframe:** 2027 in multiple platforms/locations and several moments of intensification.

FOREST OF FICTION is a community project of art, literature and reforestation in Ponta Delgada. Livestock monoculture has transformed our landscape into a giant green pasture, and despite being still active in the production of high-quality milk and meat, the industry has fallen sharply. We want to transform green pastures into forests and gardens. We need to plant trees. Not only do they fertilise our soil anew, but trees are also oxygen. It is **a reforestation process of a green pasture with araucarias, cedars, cryptomerias, pines, maples and endemic plants that shifts into a garden with a reading area and library, a storytelling and group reading haven, a park for forest baths and contemplation**. If a *book is like a garden carried in one's pocket*, each tree is a source of life and fiction, and each tree is a story of Europe, a book and a literary destination. This project gathers landscape architects, scientists, community leaders, environmental activists, sculptors, writers and book publishers to create a new convivial space that transforms monoculture into diversity. It is an opportunity to promote our rich literature and the literature of Europe, translate it, republish it, edit new collections and give the island a forest of books. Each tree will be cared for by the community, and an action named **"Everyone is a tree"** will ensure the island gains 10,000 new trees by 2027.

Promoted by: Municipality of Ponta Delgada **Potential Cooperation Partners:** Public Library and Regional Archive of Ponta Delgada (PT), Amigos dos Açores (PT), Regional Directorate for the Environment and Climate Change (PT), Expolab - Centro de Ciência Viva (PT), Arquipélago de Escritores [literature festival] (PT), Public Libraries 2030 (EU), European Association for Landscape Ecology (EU), Bodo 2024, Arcadia/Leeuwarden-Fryslân 2018-2028, writers, publishers and landscape architects **Timeframe:** 2024 onwards and stays ever-after.

TERRA INCÓGNITA invites artists of all horizons and musical types to create **a programme of music routes, soundscapes and exclusive in situ performances on a selection of the 88 certified hiking trails** of the Azores. For each trail, the artists compose a soundtrack to experience while walking, complemented by a live performance/exhibition in the middle of nature.

This project merges with the Azores Islands and their communities. It creates an app with a map of hiking trails and soundtracks that remain forever to be experienced at any time, taking expeditions as a form of knowledge and an allegory of exploration. The inland connections show nature, our history of commercial exchange, the cycles of water, stories of plane crashes and valuable architectural heritage. It maps the unknown, the imaginary and the remote, organising a new artistic cartography of experiences. In collaboration and exchange with several European and global partners, the project begins in Ponta Delgada and goes on in the Azores, showcasing the newest musical and visual talents from a myriad of styles. It builds a year-long programme of musical creation, with community projects, conversations and projects with schools, children and families, setting a sustainable example of taking nature as a stage and encouraging other ECoCs to create a musical EU of hiking trails.

Promoted by Plutão Camaleão (PT) **Potential Cooperation Partners:** Azores Geopark (PT), Fat Out (UK), Le Guess Who? (NL), zdb (PT), Eurosonic/ European Talent Exchange Programme (NL/EU), Nyege Nyege (UG), Kinact (CD), Fengaros (CY), Mama (FR), Keroxen (Canary Islands, ES), Monkey Week (ES), Bodo 2024, Bad Ischl 2024, Oulu 2026, Trenčín 2026 - Candidate City, Clermont-Ferrand Massif central 2028 - Candidate City **Timeframe:** Created and presented in 2027 and leave an everlasting legacy.

THE OVERVIEW EFFECT is a multinational, interdisciplinary and collaborative art & science action whose aim is to raise transformational literacy on the collective connection to the earth, nature, and human-human relationship. **The Overview Effect** is a highly exclusive phenomenon experienced in the history of humankind by only 600 astronauts. We believe that all humans have the right to experience the identity of the Earthling, even if they did not have the privilege to reach the Cosmos and make macro-connections between its elements with their own eyes. **Together in co-creation, the Instytut B61 collective with several international artists and scientists from oceanography, astronomy, culture studies and quantum physics will start site-specific and open projects with the community on the nine islands.** The project consists of nine art residencies that result in nine socially engaged collaborative projects and four online micro-summits. The grand finale will be an immersive performance narrated by **Instytut B61** on nine local fishing boats travelling between the islands and becoming actors of a larger-than-life immersive opera. The performance explores the four perspectives of human existence: universal, global, local and personal, reaching for the **Overview Effect** cognitive shift within the participants and the audience. That is why the Cosmos will happen in the Azores in 2027!

A project by Instytut B61 (PL) **Potential Cooperation Partners:** University of the Azores (PT), Centres of Science of the Azores (PT), Research Centre For Communication and Culture (Católica University) (PT), Leiden University (NL), The Story of Foundation (IND), Kujawsko-Pomorski Klaster Brewstera (PL), Ecsite - European Network of Science Centres and Museums (EU), AIR Centre - The Atlantic International Research Centre (INT), several local venues, festivals, individual artists, citizens and communities of each island **Timeframe:** From 2025 onwards with the grand-finale in 2027.

MOVING ECOLOGIES is an exhibition and knowledge programme setting off in vaga – space for art and knowledge to propose four main collective exhibitions— they explore the overlapping boundaries between visual arts, science and geopolitics to address new ecologies of space, knowledge and power. Weaving in and out of these multiple practices and agencies, it focuses on the environment, identities and emotions. The programme explores natural/human and natural/artificial tensions, presenting artists who work around the **issues of decoloniality of the Anthropocene and cultural ecologies.** It aims to create a space of investigation within contemporary art, acknowledging the potential in cultural spaces trailblazing and paving the way for further awareness and discussions. It will include new commissions to artists—through an A.I.R. programme— and present existing works/installations. The knowledge programme works in order to expand these questions in movement through various conferences and publications, island excursions, curatorship labs, assemblies, guided visits and activities with children.

Promoted by Anda&Fala (PT) **Potential Curators:** Mariana Pestana (PT/UK), Margarida Mendes (PT), Cooking Sections (UK), Manuel Segade (ES) **Knowledge Programme:** Liliana Coutinho (PT) **Potential Cooperation Partners:** Culturgest (PT), CA2M - Contemporary Arts Centre (ES) **Timeframe:** The production and the A.I.R. programme will run in 2026, and the exhibitions will go on display throughout 2027, each lasting 3 months approximately.



Interstellar SUGAR Center, by Instytut B61, Tremor Festival 2019

Archipelago of Europe and the World

is about our history, our place of departures and arrivals, our eternal return. It is about our history of Europe, the Atlantic Ocean, Portugal and the Azores, a story of survival and confrontation with the elements of nature and our multiple community extensions, houses and connections around the world. We are Europe building bridges to the world. From this Atlantic hub, we present projects that highlight the history of the Azores in the minds of Europeans, from ocean expeditions to migration flows to the Americas and the World. It starts with a rich and unique asset, an intangible and underwater heritage, to explore the power of our legacy and traditions in music, literature and gastronomy, giving them an experimental dimension that exchanges views with Europe. The aim is also to invest and reach out to a diaspora in twenty-one cities and several continents to stimulate cultural exchanges.

PROJECTS:

10th ISLAND focuses not only on the **history of the Azores and our communities worldwide but the experience of those who migrated here**. It updates transatlantic ties with new ways of cooperation of Azorean creativity within new generations and celebrates the cultural diversity in the region. We are a European Maritime Embassy on the way to the Americas and a melting pot of worlds and cultures. We will renew our dialogue and build bridges of commonality with our global community through literature, our Atlantic history of whaling, the practices of the Holy Spirit Festivities and gastronomy. This new-added island proposes a literature programme with writers' exchanges, a conference programme on Euro-American cultural relations, European identity and a multidisciplinary and participatory **World Arts & Culture** festival. We will work on mentoring programmes by Azorean descendants for youngsters at the start of their careers and educational tools on European culture for US schools and the Azorean diaspora. The project brings new generations of migrants closer to the Azores, including those in Europe, through contemporary visual and performing arts, design, music, film and technology, **reconnecting the Azorean memory with its descendants, and establishing new future bridges through collaborative storytelling**. Gastronomy will mix flavours, create new recipes, open new doors, reveal new houses, make us learn about cultural adaptation and present the protagonists of our international resident community. Our **10th Island** will unveil a future of different accents, miscegenated cultures and celebration of diversity.

Potential Cooperation Partners: Regional Directorate for the Communities (PT), FLAD – Luso-American Development Foundation (PT), AEAzores [Azorean Emigrants Association] (PT), Azorean Museum of Emigration (PT), AIPA [Association of Immigrants of the Azores] (PT), FUSO Lisboa (PT), Ponta Delgada's twin cities, Council of the Azorean Diaspora (INT), Houses of the Azores Network (INT); USA: Portuguese Without Borders – Azorean Diaspora Center – Fresno State University (CA), Fabric Arts Festival (MA), Electronic Arts Intermix (NY); Canada: Daniel Faria Gallery, Portuguese Canadian History Project and Working Women; Vie des Hauts Productions (FR); VideoBrasil (BR), Projector Video Art Platform (ES), Clermont-Ferrand Massif central 2028 – Candidate City **Timeframe:** 2025-2027 Arts residencies and exchanges. Several events in 2027.

TOP OF THE CHURCH: SOUND OF THE ORGAN proposes a **one-month immersive programme** of Portuguese, French, German, Italian organs, reviving this powerful sound and heritage through different concerts with national and European musicians. We have over **500 churches and chapels in the Azores, championing an**

incredible number of 56 organs in eight of the nine islands. Since the 18th century, the organs of the Azores are a testimony to the experience of Azorean society, marked by deep religiosity and artistic capacity. Artistic activity has revolved around this powerful instrument since the 19th century. Many of these instruments get restored. But, if they do not play, they run the risk of falling silent again. **Top of the Church** aims to value and activate this profound religious heritage, by presenting a programme that crosses the canonical and contemporary repertoires, as well as other activities like labs, workshops and art residencies for musicians and composers. The interaction between musicians, the audience and organs is the best way to make known this valuable heritage.

Curated by Isabel Soares Albergaria (PT) **Potential Artists:** Javier Artigas (ES), Luca Scandali (IT), Maurizio Croci (CH), a.o. **Potential Cooperation Partners:** Orgel Festival (NL), Silbermann Society (Gottfried-Silbermann-Gesellschaft) (DE), Angra's Diocese (PT), Music Conservatories of the Azores, Municipalities and Government of the Azores **Timeframe:** 2026-2027.

REGENERATIVE FUTURE is an **international platform** based in the Azores designed to co-create a future ethically and environmentally responsible, aiming to leave solid foundations for long-term sustainable development. During six years, it commits to **exploring the potential of the island's regenerative raw materials, assimilating its ancestral knowledge, analysing the present and prototyping a future in symbiosis with nature**. From 2023 to 2026, a multidisciplinary programme makes participants travel between the scales of the **territory, architecture, design, handicrafts and heritage**. Its natural resources, wealth, vernacular constructions, popular crafts and renowned contemporary architecture are showcased and studied through the activation of thematic routes, practical workshops and exhibitions. A summer school makes space for research and knowledge, bringing together international experts from the worlds of architecture, urbanism, design, bio-technologies and neurobiology, generating a programme of conferences, film screenings and conversations that open this discussion to the people. **BASE (Biennial of Architecture, Sustainability and Ecology)** arising in 2026 will add to the research and set a base for the creation of the **2027 Regenerative Forum**, along with an exhibition and a Pavilion, an architectural prototype

built on sustainable guidelines, which will be of use to welcome Azores 2027 summer's programme. In 2028, every piece of knowledge is getting summoned up in a publication.

Promoted by: Mezzo Atelier (PT) **Potential Participants:** Space Caviar Studio (IT), Atelier LUMA (FR), ciguê (FR), Assemble (UK), Stefano Mancuso (IT), Department of Seaweed (UK) **Potential Cooperation Partners:** BASE by Anda&Fala (PT), vaga – space of art and knowledge (PT), Arquipélago – Contemporary Arts Centre (PT), REU-PDL – Reinventing the Urban Strategy of Ponta Delgada (PT), Ordem dos Arquitectos – Azores (PT), CADA - Azores Handicraft and Design Centre (PT), Passa ao Futuro (PT), ISCTE (PT), Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa (PT), Eindhoven Design Academy (NL), Future Farmers (USA), Matera Basilicata 2019 Foundation **Timeframe:** 2023-2028.

UNDERWATER EUROPE develops from the Azores' Underwater Cultural Heritage,

certified by the European Commission and UNESCO, consisting of 30 public dive sites centred on shipwrecks connected to European history and trade from the 16th to 20th centuries: the Silver Route to South America, the transatlantic slave trade, military conflicts (American War of Independence, plus both World Wars), emigration ships from Europe to America, and exploration expeditions such as the Beagle voyage (on which Charles Darwin travelled around South America). This heritage bears witness to the role of the Azores in European history as the world's *bottleneck* for transcontinental sailing over the centuries. The Azores' shipwrecks provide material evidence of the expansion of Europeans across oceans and the starting point of globalisation. These shipwrecks are time capsules of European history, symbolic of different times and different territories. The project develops from its vast potential and focuses on further scientific investigation of the underwater sites; further development of the model for managing underwater heritage with the international dive community; presentation of its research results to audiences through **travelling exhibitions, digital and virtual visits and publications; intersections with arts and sciences, and experiences of immersion in the sea.** Divers become tour guides and storytellers. The broad richness of these sites is made accessible to the public through documentaries, texts, maritime expeditions and group dives, all intersected by literature, photography, storytelling, film and water-dipping in an ocean museum of world history.

Promoted by: Government of the Azores **Potential Cooperation Partners:** Horta Museum (PT), Regional Directorates for Culture and Sea Affairs (PT), University of the Azores (PT), Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, UNESCO (INT), The ICOMOS International Committee on the Underwater Cultural Heritage (INT), diving companies, artists, historians and touristic guides **Timeframe:** 2024-2028.

WE HAVE TWO HEARTS is a project based on *viola da terra*, our very own and unique 12 string two hearts guitar. **It is our artistic translation for our isolation and history of migration.** In recent centuries, hundreds of thousands of people emigrated to North and South America seeking a better life or to escape natural disasters. *Viola da terra* tells our story of *saudade*, which means longing for family and friends who have emigrated abroad and nostalgia for the homeland left behind. The sound of a *viola da terra* contains all our multitude as a people: our experience of division from the ones we love, our Atlantic condition, our *açorianidade*. Our history of emigration has a musical legacy that captures loss, separation and distance. **We Have Two Hearts** is a full-year programme that takes *viola da*

terra as a motif for a series of learning apprenticeship programmes, from building the instrument to playing it; knowledge exchanges between players from different islands, the Atlantic region and the diaspora; photo exhibitions; diffusion of the ***Viola da Terra Orchestra*** and intersection with electronics and other artistic disciplines; a documentary film, a publication and the celebration of *Viola da Terra's* day on 2 October. This programme includes recording videoclips, publishing new music, school exchange and children programmes, open stages and small music festivals. We will bring string instruments from Europe and invite Ponta Delgada's twin county of Kauai (Hawaii) to bring along their ukulele and our twin city Praia (CV) to bring their string instruments for a Euro-Atlantic feast.

Potential Cooperation Partners: Viola da Terra Youth Association (PT), MiratecArts (PT), Sons do Terreiro (PT), Xarabanda (PT), A Música Portuguesa A Gostar Dela Própria (PT), Ponta Delgada's twin county and city: Kauai, Hawaii (USA) and Praia (CV), Ministry of Culture and Creative Industries of Cape Verde (CV), Regional Directorate for the Communities of the Azores (PT), WEAVE – Widen European Access to cultural communities Via Europeana (EU), hundreds of *viola da terra* players in the Azores and the world **Timeframe:** 2025-2028, having its highlight moments in 2027.

AZORES SLAVERY MEMORIAL builds a memorial—a knowledge awareness centre—and a programme that tells a piece of history that is still an open cultural wound that needs discussion in the public space. **Conferences, field visits, exchanges, exhibitions, publications, educational activities for kids and audience outreach to tell the story of Azorean slavery.** North Africans, Sub-Saharan Africans and Canary Islanders contributed to the settlement of the Azores in addition to the Donataries—they were private persons (often noblemen) that the Portuguese Crown bestowed a substantial piece of land to administer—and their helpers. In time, they came together from all the worlds subjected to European expansion. But that was not the whole story. Soon the Azorean coasts began to be devastated by pirates who, before reaching Europe, saw here the quickest opportunity to seize the treasures of the fleets that came from far away. Of these, the Maghrebis also stood out for carrying out occasional raids on land to capture people, who took and sold them as slaves, the so-called captives. Of the many more who left, more than five hundred were “rescued”, i.e., they were brought back from the 16th to 19th centuries. When this form of capture ceased, coinciding with the end of slavery in Brazil in 1850, the period of clandestine slavery began. Many Azoreans who emigrated to Brazil found themselves in illicit networks of illegal traffic, which continued until the end of the century, becoming known as the period of “white slavery”. Let us talk about that.

A project by Horta Museum (PT) **Potential Cooperation Partners:** Horta Municipality (PT), University of the Azores (PT), African Presence in Portugal – Collaborative Networks (PT), Tourism of Portugal (PT), Batoto Yetu Association (PT), NEMO - Network of European Museum Organisations (EU) **Timeframe:** 2025-2027.

ALBERT I, PRINCE OF MONACO – 1,800 NAUTICAL MILES TOWARDS THE AZORES is a **city-wide exhibition that unveils the personal bond between a European Prince and the archipelago of the Azores—and an unlikely friendship with a Portuguese army captain.** It addresses a period of science marked by oceanographic campaigns, the construction of the Meteorological Service, and the contribution of the

Azores to the European panorama of Natural History. The exhibition will spread over Ponta Delgada within public and private spaces, such as the Carlos Machado Museum and our very own Prince of Monaco Avenue. This action will convert the sea coast and facades into an itinerary of affection with scientific knowledge and photographs, allusive flags, wooden ships and astrolabes, and telling the story of a worldwide famous character and his contribution to science and the understanding of the Atlantic Ocean. It will go on for an entire year, and it will propose several educational activities carried out with science centres and sea observatories. Furthermore, it will include sea expeditions to identify plankton, micro-plastics and experiments on water salinity. We have already sent an invitation to Albert II, Prince of Monaco, to be our ambassador since he carried on the legacy of his great-great-grandfather and has been an advocate of ocean conservation, ecological preservation and the adoption of renewable energy sources to tackle global climate change.

Promoted by Carlos Machado Museum (PT) **Potential Cooperation Partners:** Afonso Chaves Society (PT), Ponta Delgada Cultural Institute (PT), José do Canto Foundation (PT), Ponta Delgada Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PT), Port of Ponta Delgada (PT), University of the Azores (PT), CIBIO – Azores (PT), IAC – Azorean Culture Institute (PT), Network of Museums of the Azores (PT), Azores Science Centres (PT), Portuguese Museum Network (PT), Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (PT), Oceano Azul Foundation (PT), Ciência Viva Agency (PT), GEPAC (PT), Oceanographic Museum of Monaco (MC), Rebikoff-Niggeler Foundation (DE), Stefansson Arctic Institute (IS), Husavik Whale Museum (IS), Whalesafari Andenes (NO), The Arctic University (NO), coastal and marine environment NGOs **Timeframe:** 2026-2027.

INTERLACE FESTIVAL unites the various islands of the Azores, their diaspora and European cities through an **urban chain of screens**. This live projection, **linking public spaces and communities**, includes a series of events (conversations around sustainable strategies through urbanism and education, performances, film and gastronomy) held occasionally and **attended at the same time in all selected locations**. It is a new meeting place for the local communities to broadcast content with a futuristic projection—a platform for sharing and communication between communities. Geographical barriers break down, and urban life comes into play by reinforcing the sense of proximity. By taking over empty storefronts, valuing structures in gardens and squares and creating site-specific installations in the different locations, the project invites communities to join forces through a window of participation. The project also develops an interactive map of the Azores, organised by cultural areas—a basis for discovering, exploring and connecting different themes/projects/teams/partnerships and their projection in a sustainable future. This project meets the new premises of the European Commission New Bauhaus, related to sustainable social and urban structuring and its relationship with the notion of beauty.

A project by: Atelier Backlar (PT) **Potential Cooperation Partners:** European Creative Hubs Network (EU), ECoC Latvia 2027, Houses of the Azores: Lisbon, Porto, Funchal, Algarve (PT); São Paulo, Santa Catarina, Rio de Janeiro, State of Rio Grande do Sul, Bahia (BR); Quebec, Toronto, Winnipeg (CA); Maldonado (UR); Fall River, Hilmar (USA), Bermuda (UK); local museums, universities, research centres, schools and different municipalities of the Azores **Timeframe:** Streaming from January-December 2027 and live events in May-October 2027.

STATE OF GRACE is a multidisciplinary project centred around Ponta Delgada's charismatic farmers' market—**Mercado da Graça** [Grace]—a bustling square of *fresh* knowledge, a **mirror of the Azores in the world and**

its crossings between nature and culture. Among restaurants, commercial spaces and stalls, the best products are here—from meat to vegetables, flowers to cheeses, and crafts to the popular culture of land and sea. The project initiates an exhibition and interpretive space for social and experimental encounters, namely tasting sessions, workshops and lectures about healthy eating and cooking. A mediation service creates interactions and opportunities with the visual and performing arts, promoting co-creation with nearby institutions for film and performance cycles, school workshops, immaterial heritage and slow-tourism services. The month's feature draws on festivals, nutritional and historical sessions and their relation to arts, film and design. The story of producers and traders gets told through videos, photo exhibits, and talent shows—a barber here is also a *viola da terra* master! We aim to value our products—their history, production techniques, botanical features and various uses—by creating product sheets, culinary and medicinal recipes, a website for visitors with merchandising products, and island itineraries of the products sold in the market. **Grace** invites everyone to meet people, learn, see, smell, eat and be surprised by the cycle of local and world production, thus, creating exchanges with other markets in the region and Europe.

A project by: Maria Emanuel Albergaria (PT) **Potential Cooperation Partners:** Regional Directorates for Agriculture, Fisheries, the Environment and Climate Change, and Culture of the Azores (PT), University of the Azores (PT), Ponta Delgada Municipality (PT), Markets in Horta and Angra do Heroísmo (PT), Liepāja 2027 – Candidate City, Valmiera 2027 – Candidate City, Alliance Old Market Hall (SK), CascoLand (NL), Mindspace (HU), Heritage Europe (European Association of Historic Towns and Regions) (EU), cultural stakeholders and institutions, vegetable production farms, restaurants, associations, schools, health services, doctors, artists, mediators and teachers **Timeframe:** 2024 onwards with a lasting legacy in the new market configuration.



Gorreana's Tea Factory Plantation, , São Miguel Island

Q12 How the cultural programme will combine local cultural heritage and traditional art forms with new, innovative and experimental cultural expressions?

We will take the archipelago to be a place where nature is a stage and geography rhymes with history. History is an ongoing process of rewriting our human/nature relationship. Traditional and new expressions of culture will merge and co-exist within the interaction of nature and culture. We will create bridges between tradition and contemporary art until everything meets and matters because people and practices experiment and find themselves together. Our programme will show our traditional manifestations because they are essential to our cultural identity and annual calendar. We will integrate them into our programme, allowing visitors to experience their genuine propositions, and challenge them to cross other practices, giving rise to new experiences. We can imagine our archipelagos flooding with *viola da terra* clowns, *storyteller-trees*, Holy Spirit traditional soups with middle east flavours, folk dances with electronics, *aerobics-philharmonics* or *sci-fi-handicrafts*.

The **Archipelago of Multiplicity** strand line strives to transform our version of a European Capital of Culture into a **European Archipelago of Culture**, crossing worlds together in absolute multidisciplinary non-hierarchical cultural experiences. Our **9x9**, a **nine island A.I.R. programme**—unfolds in central and remote communities and promotes experiences with artists based on our rural and maritime stories. The **ARTakeover** projects occupy entire streets, coastlines, advertising spaces, newspapers, thus coupling roots and pure imagination in wild performative, visual and musical forms that weave their way into everyday life.

In the **Archipelago of Participation**, music, performing arts, crafts, visual arts and unknown thresholds will be experimented and devised by our youth (**Quant·tos que·res, Quant·tos que·remos**), and by everyone who has a story to tell (**MEXE – Azores**). **HA!**, our capacity-building programme, is based on knowledge transfer, co-creation, cultural intersectionality and from that on, new possibilities will arise. Women will become empowered from tradition to the future: marching, clowning and claiming for a world of parity and equality (**Island of Women**). Then, participation will cross multiplicity through: **Open Island** and sub-projects like **Parade it Now**, getting everything and everyone together for an archipelago of no divisions; or **MAPAS** that displaces cultural practices and provokes meetings and collaboration with neighbourhoods with local initiatives that extinguish all cultural borders.

The **Archipelago of Nature** strand mixes sea and land, nature and heritage. Things we recognise and places we never knew existed cross paths in **Weather Forecast** or **L(i)aving me Softly**. **Become Ocean** takes the Atlantic for an ancestral and *avant-garde* exploration of our own Bauhaus of the Sea. **Terra Incognita** experiments with technology for an expedition into the unknown in the million-year-old land. There is still a lot of distance and strangeness towards contemporary art and cultural expressions, and we will make sure to bring it off the walls, making propositions that resist our “four seasons in one day” climate, like **Laure Prouvost’s 9 Islands** or **Body of the Land**.

In the **Archipelago of Europe and the World**, our musical tradition gets stimulated, renewed and shaken up—good examples are **Top of the Church: Sound of the Organ** (reviving this religious heritage instrument) and **We Have Two Hearts** (our 12 string viola crossing with other chord instruments and innovative music forms). Architecture meets art, crafts and design (**Regenerative Future**). Our heritage (from what we eat to the shipwrecks in our ocean) is renewed and digitised. **Interlace Festival**, a futuristic festival led together with other European and American cities, explores interconnectedness and commonality in the public space around old and new urbanism and education, film and gastronomy.

Waves of Culture makes Azores 2027 become Europe’s favourite streaming service available on a phone or computer screen through virtual visits, 3D, 360°, VR and high-quality video content that tells our history of mixing practices of all times. One thing we know for sure: **Human Nature** is about finding innovative ways to explore traditional approaches to culture and experiment with the future with uncanny, unimaginable and never-ending artistic possibilities.

Q13 How did you involve the city, or how do you plan to involve local artists and cultural organisations in the design and implementation of the cultural programme?

Our bid comes from a civic manifesto called “For an ECoC in the Azores in 2027”. This action was driven by citizens and cultural leaders, signed by over 800 people—all supporting this bid. During the first phase of our candidacy, we have involved representatives from Ponta Delgada and the Azores cultural institutions in devising our cultural programme through one-to-one meetings and workshops. Our primary goal in this stage was to map Azorean cultural stakeholders and understand how we attain a European Dimension, ensuring that everyone finds room in our programme. We did countless online **Sharing Imagination labs**

mixing people directly from their living rooms. We promoted encounters and synergies when many people did not know each other. From those meetings, we have gotten to our concept and programme strands. Once the pandemic restrictions had eased, we travelled to the nine islands. We met representatives from the nineteen municipalities and culture leaders from around our region—being present made a huge difference! We sowed the seeds of new opportunities and conversations: **9x9, our nine islands A.I.R. programme** came from a suggestion of countless stakeholders, and a 2021 pilot edition created an opportunity for artists residing in the Azores, receiving 358 applications from all over Europe; or **9 Neighbourhoods**, a participative digital publication with interviews, profiles of Azorean artists and chronicles mapping our artistic diversity. Our **Advisory Board** comprises museum directors, artists, architects, gallerists, art students and curators, who contributed to our cultural strategy and informed our programme development. We will continue developing a network of ambassadors to support our candidacy. The Azores 2027 mission team kept open for ideas and suggestions on projects and creative partnerships, and on the way forward, we want to keep it that way.

We have received proposals from local public institutions and artists that transformed into projects involving several local organisations and hundreds of artists and non-artists. We plan to include as many local artists and cultural stakeholders as possible through their projects and converge with visiting artists. If there is a reason for pursuing this candidacy, it is for them because we want to leave a vibrant mark in our creative community. To mention a few examples in the programme: **Between the Islands** (Amaya Sumpsi and Diana Diegues); **Prouvost 9 Islands** (Arquipélago – Contemporary Arts Centre); **Terra Incógnita** (Plutão Camaleão); **Interlace Festival** (Backlar Atelier); **State of Grace** (Maria Emanuel Albergaria); **Inclusiva Dance Company** (dancer and choreographer Catarina Medeiros) or **Iceberg – A Boat for the Arts** (Fazendo – Cultural Association). The list will go on as we enter the second phase and continue to open doors and (do) open calls. Yet, from our conversations, here are more inputs on how our creative scene will be vibrating:

The 37.25 - Nucleus of Performing Arts will make a new choreographic piece with a European choreographer, tour it and develop dance education projects.

Quadrivium will produce a season of symphonic, chamber music and opera, including the Sinfonietta de Ponta Delgada, with a new opera on the early settlement of the Azores islands, commission new works and performances for string quartets, wind and brass quintets with training initiatives with philharmonic bands and music schools.

Coral de São José will propose a participative choir event and an International Meeting of Choirs.

The Conservatório Regional de Ponta Delgada will undertake multiple exchanges with other conservatories and create several artist residencies, training, commission opportunities and musical cycles based on local and European repertoire.

AFAA (Amateur Photographers of the Azores)

will give the city new meaning through photo expeditions and exhibitions with local and visiting photographers, connecting Ponta Delgada with other European cities.

Musiquim

will develop a workshop and performance programme for babies, young children (6-12 years old) and their families and educators.

CADA (Azores Handicraft and Design Centre)

will work on a route of the Holy Spirit on the nine islands, betting on the experiential and immersive tourism experiences that integrate handicrafts, gastronomy, arts and architecture, in relationship with the most significant popular manifestation of the Azores.

Festival organisers will integrate their programmes, human resources and facilities in our ECoC's project. Their projects will be empowered through highlights and city-wide initiatives and, by 2027, will be driven by European cooperation. Let us name them: **The Great Atlantic Circus Convention** [a contemporary circus festival], **Tremor** [a music festival], **Arquipélago de Escritores** [a literature festival], **PDLJazz - International Jazz Festival**, **Walk&Talk - Arts Festival**, **Música no Colégio** [a choir festival], **Great Folklore Festival of Relva** [a folk dance/music festival], **Paralelo – International Contemporary Dance Festival**, **Prenda – Handicrafts Festival of the Azores**, **O Mundo Aqui** [an immigrant cultural festival]. In the next phase, we will delve into more details and extend our festival circuit from Ponta Delgada to all nine islands of the Azores. Going forward, we want our artists and organisations to respond to our pre-selection programme. There is much room for inclusion, getting hands-on and co-creating our ECoC's project. We are nowhere but the beginning.



Organist Gustaaf van Manen playing the organ of Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Guia, Angra do Heroísmo Museum (Terceira Island)

IV. European Dimension

Q14 General summary of the planned activities, in view of:

a) Promoting Europe's cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and greater mutual understanding between European citizens;

Human Nature's artistic vision and cultural mission deal with issues central to Europe: **isolation, migration and the integration of past, present and future on a humanist venture that integrates history, the challenges of present-day European society, and an urgency to act sustainably at all levels.** It promotes cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, and mutual understanding among European citizens through cooperation, mobility and exchanges between us, our continent and the diaspora, creating transatlantic bridges with the Americas.

We know what it means to migrate. Migration might lie with moving in search of a prosperous living, escaping nature's instability, looking for an alternative land immune from conflict, war and sudden political change. We know that living in this archipelago equals both quality of life and a culture of peace. So, **Azores 2027 is about connecting those who left with those who stayed with those who arrived. It is about caring to unite, creating spaces for dialogue and other stories to come into view and fully affirm their condition and existence.** We know it is a never-ending European issue, yet we can be part of the solution. We will add a **10th Island** to our archipelago to make that conversation happen. We will open up for European Artists and take the opportunity to send our Artists to Europe and enrich their horizons. It is giving and taking back. It is not simply empathy. **Our nature is human.**

Innovation, creativity and archipelagic thought can illuminate the need for unity, encounter and conversation. We will act towards knocking down walls and setting up bridges. European history accounts well for that, and we make sure we expose that dimension in our programme. We anchor ourselves in the present and fly towards the future, so our projects aim for collaboration, intersection, decentralisation, transformation, empowerment, inclusion, and cultural

democracy. Our programme promotes a broad dialogue of tolerance and understanding aimed at a polyglot, diverse and intergenerational audience made of locals, non-natives, visitors, tourists. They are families, individuals, neighbours, children, teens, lovers, friends – humans! We will connect them as one.

Culture has always connected us all, yet we have not figured that out. We need to recognise it and make a flag out of it. So, Azores 2027 is a community connector, a reviving traditions force, a creator of possible futures. We take dispersion, fragmentedness and diversity, not as flaws or obstacles but as powers to give access to culture to all, and we truly trust an ECoC to be the catalyst for that movement. The Azores are essentially maritime and rural. Jobs and opportunities are short if we do not work towards strengthening our very own characteristics. How can we avoid desertification and the ghosting of territories? How can a rural environment reshape tourism and hospitality? How can culture promote unique experiences, move an economy and stimulate a better connection between the human, the natural and the sense of place? We have a few answers to those questions, yet we need first to grant access to culture at all means and make an action plan that moves like an octopus—a solid active artistic centre and a tentacular inclusive outreach.

These are big European themes. We wish to explore them with several past and future ECoCs, and other national and international partners looking at them from their perspectives. We are not alone in this. We are indeed united by diversity, searching for new European ways for a life-work balance, sustainable, cultural and creative tourism, and a more human and natural, nicely balanced creative economy.

b) Common European aspects of cultures, heritage and history, as well as European integration and current European themes;

From Isolation to Centrality

The Azores are a periphery, the limit and the beginning of Europe: we are isolated. We have a long tradition of relating to the world and trust that our past will help us to shape the future and expand our relations. It will make us understand

ourselves better, discover who we want to be, and find new ways to address our challenges. Plus, our history and culture need that recognition to unfold in Europe. The time is now: culture can help us build a new centrality. Our insular cultural identity is unique and resilient—rural and maritime, urban and cosmopolitan—our diverse “personality” needs to be shared. Over and above, it can bring new intersectional social dynamics, work opportunities, attract young people to come back or make a living here, have a closer involvement in how they want to change their island, do it collectively and be active agents of change.

Migration: Intercultural Dialogue and Mutual Understanding

As the first ECoC of the Atlantic, our geographic nine island dispersion represents a rich assortment of different cultures. All are as important as they are singular, and we want to create space for everyone and their multiple expressions. That diversity does not end in our borders. As our sperm whales and birds migrate, our people have a centennial history of migration, displacing themselves in boats and aeroplanes to escape natural disasters, extreme misery, slavery and searching for better lives. They have come to build growing communities that keep European culture thriving in the most diverse geographies. We need to reconnect them to this place of departure and turn it more and more into a place of arrivals. Also, we are home to around 100 nationalities, including 26 EU nationalities. We need more interaction and integration, better dialogues between different communities, spaces of equality, exchange and diversity, and our Artistic Programme will reflect this activation.

Cooperation as a way to cultural democracy and collective learning

We need to protect the diversity of European cultures, the feeling of belonging, and enthusiasm for sharing a common cultural space. History, cultural heritage and contemporary culture help us understand these challenges and make everyday life meaningful. They form the values that hold Europe as one. These values are under threat, so we need to enhance the shared understanding that culture brings. The question “What can Europe learn from the Azores and what can the Azores learn from Europe?” has been central to our bidding process. Being an ECoC is an opportunity to reinforce and invest in local and transnational cooperation to improve experimentation, synergy and cultural intersections. We think we can do that by proposing an academy, a laboratory and a stage for new conversations, explorations and crossings. Ways that grant cultural access and participation, turning conventions upside-down, bringing together new spaces for culture, heritage, education, and spirituality. Bringing people together, beyond social, economic and intellectual borders. That is why we need to “take the Azores to Europe and bring Europe to the Azores!”

Transforming towards Sustainability

Our history and culture can trace their roots back to our immersive relationship with nature—our geography. Globalisation, capitalism, industrialisation have led us to issues, namely, climate change, extinction, and less biodiversity. It is a particularly challenging time for Europe just now and in the

next decade. We have a role in making Europe greener, and we can help by discussing and taking regeneration actions and establishing a clear commitment to sustainability and preservation. We have a history of transformation: from whale hunting to whale preservation. It is the decade of the Oceans. **Become Ocean** and an exhibition dedicated to **Albert I, Prince of Monaco**, and his advocacy for ocean conservation and ecological preservation will celebrate our sea heritage and potential as one of the most significant sea regions in Europe. Now, we want to go from a green pasture flattened landscape to a reforested, green and lush landscape. We want our cities to be more open, more human, more walkable and liveable. We are committed to going from monoculture to diversity, from destruction to protection, from separation from nature to sustainable integration.

Slowing Down & Opening New Conversations

We have a culture of peace where time is valued, plus we have two hearts, one that stays and one that goes away. We can offer ways to enhance our unique landscape and take on new approaches to slow down and give high-quality experiences of creative and green tourism. We are a laboratory for the intersection of traditional and contemporary practices. We have the oldest tea plantation in Europe and enough quality time to open stimulating conversations around a hot cup of tea. During an epoch of fake news, digital revolution and manipulation, it is important to stand out that we have more than ten local and regional newspapers - one of them being one of the oldest in Europe (Açoriano Oriental); several radio stations and a regional public tv channel. We can experiment with new ways of communicating through accessible, democratic and fair communication platforms. We have our very own university, air and sea companies as a means of cohesion. We have dealt with connecting, coming together, failing, and we want to keep on trying it. Now, as nine islands that are one cultural archipelago articulated with Europe.

We are confident the Azores have much to offer. Our programme strands reflect our utopian vision of recognition, reconnection and sustainability. It is a story designed to represent and shake the idea of Europe, making it a more robust, more diverse and decentralised project ahead of future challenges. We are in for the challenge of being Europe’s mirror through creative ideas and deeper inter-cultural bonds.

c) Presenting European artists, cooperation with operators and cities, in different countries, and transnational partnerships.

In Azores 2027, we will include European, American and regional networks, in which the city and region are already involved, and aim to create new connections. We know we can only benefit and trust future capacity building and wide networking to expand our future possibilities. Our aim is that our programme ensures networking among various European institutions and individuals, helps local cultural operators to share their experiences, builds capacity in European and International partnerships and promotes new networks and projects.

1. Our **transnational twin Cities partnerships** in North and South America, Africa and Europe will be renewed and strengthened: San Leandro, California, USA; Praia, Santiago Island, Cape Verde; Fall River, Massachusetts, USA; Newport, Rhode Island, USA; Florianópolis, State of Santa Catarina, Brazil; Pleven, Bulgaria; Kauai County, Hawaii, USA; Caué, São Tomé and Príncipe; Belmonte, Castelo Branco, Portugal;
2. Our **16 Casas dos Açores (Houses of the Azores) Network** in three continents will participate, cooperate and host some of the projects, namely the **10th Island** and **Interlace Festival**. Additionally, our communities on individual and institutional levels will turn their attention and participate in our ECoC from such locations as Europe (Portugal – Lisbon, Porto, Funchal, Faro), North America (Canada – Winnipeg, Montréal, Toronto; USA – Fall River, Hilmar); Bermuda; and South America (Uruguay; Brazil – Rio Grande do Sul, São Paulo, Santa Catarina, Rio de Janeiro);
3. We are in contact with other islands. To find possible common ground, we have established connections with other former ECoC island Galway 2020 (IR). We have reached out to our Atlantic neighbours of the Macaronesia region (Madeira, Canary Islands and Cape Verde) to deepen cultural exchange relationships between institutions and cultural operators. Moving forward to phase 2, we would like to establish contact and cooperation with the other French European outermost regions such as Martinique, Mayotte, Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Réunion and Saint Martin.
4. The programme will include internationally recognised artists, composers and theatre directors to present and create newly commissioned works that meet our programme lines. We will invite them to intersect with our artists in programmes that cross the local, the European and the global. Our writers, dancers, bands, visual artists, architects, photographers, artisans and festivals will support, share stages, collaborate and learn from them. Turner-prize winner **Laure Prouvost** (FR) will display outstanding work in the nine islands; **Marinella Senatore** (IT) will make everyone parade together. Our theatre programme will present remarkable contemporary theatre artists such as **Philippe Quesne** (FR), **Rimini Protokoll** (DE) or **Miet Warlop** (BE), to name a few. Our **Island of Women** project will present international female clowns and **Marta Górnicka's The Chorus of Women** (PL). International maestro **Tim Steiner** (UK) will create a gigantic philharmonic band. Our community-art festival **MEXE – Azores** will be programmed by Hugo Cruz (PT), with several European partners, including universities and high profile Italian and Spanish artists. **High Street** will have the contribution of **Talking Birds** (UK) in collaboration with our very own **Cães do Mar** (PT). [\[Many more potential participating artists are mentioned on specific projects on Q11.\]](#)
5. We have approached several **EU networks** which have shown a big interest in the Azores and in cooperating with our programme. Our strategic approach was to partner up with networks to collaborate with us on a transversal activation of our programme-archipelagos, and to maximise specific projects connected to the relationships between art and science (**Ecsite – European Network of Science Centres and Museums**), artistic programming (**EFA – European Festivals Association**), capacity-building (**Trans Europe Halles**), communication (**On The Move**) innovation and the creative and cultural industries (**European Creative Hubs Network**, **EBN – European Business and Innovation Centre Network**), art, landscape and new models of sustainability (**European Association for Landscape Ecology**, **Public Libraries 2030**), active citizenship and participation (**MitOst – Citizenship in Action**, **European Union of the Deaf**) heritage and digitalization (**European Museum Academy**, **NEMO – Network of European Museum Organisations**, **Heritage Europe (European Association of Historic Towns and Regions**, **WEAVE – Widen European Access to cultural communities Via Europeana**).
6. Ponta Delgada already has experience of international partnerships through three of our international contemporary art, music and circus structures who participate in European networks and present emerging European talent. **Walk&Talk – Arts Festival** integrates **EFA-European Festival Association**, the Centriphery network with partners in France, Croatia, Austria, Spain, Finland, Romania and The Netherlands, and has future projects with the Canary Islands, Norway and Iceland. **Tremor Festival** integrates the **European Talent Exchange Programme** (NL) and has ongoing partnerships with **Lovers & Lollypops** (PT), **Le Guess Who?** (NL), **The Norwegian Society of Composers** (NO) and is starting **EDGE**, a new network with island festivals **Keroxen** (Canary Islands) and **Fengaros Festival and Music Village** (CY). **9 Circos** will be hosting more than 2,000 jugglers in São Miguel in the **European Juggling Convention**, as the representatives of the **European Juggling Association** in Portugal.
7. Some of our sea connected projects will include artists, universities, foundations and festivals. **Become Ocean** through our **Iceberg** arts-boat will host several European sailing contemporary arts companies such as **Time Circus** (BE), **Honky Tonk Boat Association** (FR), **Djelali Tricks Association** (FR). **The Overview Effect**, run by **Institut B61** (PL), will gather partners from Portugal, Poland, The Netherlands, India and Belgium. **Between the Islands** will gather institutions, researchers, artists and explorers specialised in islands, namely **Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary** (ES/AT), **Contemporary Art Archipelago** (FI) and **TU Dublin School of Creative Arts** (IR). [\[More potential cooperation partners are mentioned on specific projects on Q11.\]](#)

8. Our **10th Island** will cross the US to California, passing through Massachusetts. It will also include Canada and the Azores diaspora, coming back to Europe through **Vie des Hauts Productions** (FR), **FUSO Lisboa** (PT) or **Proyector Video Art Platform** (ES).
9. Finally, we made bridges with several global and international outlets that operate worldwide and that we believe can connect our project to all corners of the universe, connecting culture to science, design, innovation, digitalization, research and artistic creation: **Climate Designers, The Ocean Foundation, Digital Meets Culture, The Everyday Projects, AIR Centre – The Atlantic International Research Centre, Res Artis**. We are in touch with several transnational and European artists, platforms, networks, institutions and universities, who all see great potential in establishing bridges and developing new projects in our region and together with Azores 2027. There is much interest in crossing the ocean until this mid-Atlantic. Going further, we intend to develop more conversations to extend our network of partners and invite more culture makers.

Q15 Strategy to attract the interest of a broad European and international audience.

We are going to sell: "The next New Zealand"; "Imagine Iceland iceless, but with the views." Or for those seeking a real emotion-filled experience: "Your subtropical destination filled with happy cows and thermal waters where you can experience a live earthquake, a volcano in eruption and female named-tempests like Lola, Grace or Ophelia." We are kidding. We will not lie, though: The Azores is a paradise in itself, a slow, green and rich cultural piece of paradise.

Our strategy to attract a vast international and European audience will propose a new approach and connection to our glorious natural heritage and a transformative and cultural programme to live it. An experience of immersion. Sea, air, earth, a heartbeat, and many stories to tell and unite. Tourism is connected to its human dimension in which locals are not mere extras on a beautiful movie set, but they are the actual protagonists and storytellers. Living a place intensely, but also with responsibility. **So our promise to Europe is to scale our ECoC project to our dimension, staying humble and listening to our needs, and projecting it into the future with respect for the nature to which we belong.** We are not going big just because, but going big enough to unite through dreams, little revolutions and upgrades. **This is our opportunity to tell the story of a culture that exists because of its nature.**

Human Nature presents projects of international appeal united by a contemporary narrative enlightened by a beacon of hope for a more diverse, open, human and natural Europe. Remember that imaginary and much needed transatlantic bridge to the US and the Americas? We are that bridge! So, picture us as an Atlantic hub, an articulation of worlds—we are Europe as a connector.

We will have billboards in Boston and Brussels, and our sea of the internet will be sending unique content through underwater cables to both sides of the world. Our nature will go along with our culture: the tourism flyer, the video and the slogan "**Our Nature is Human**" will reach the hearts of Europe, and we will make sure to fine-tune our communication with The **Tourism of Portugal** and the **Azores Tourism Association**. For those who will not be able to travel, we will let them know we have two hearts and take over the media, social media and online platforms to create a channel that offers 3D, transmedia, immersive, expanded, engaging, playful experiences and jaw-dropping imagery. All of this will happen before, during and after the ECoC year. In other words, if you do not come now, this will stay in your memory, and you will have to make it here very soon. [\[There is more on communication strategy in the marketing section - Q34.\]](#)

Yet, Europe has a heart beating here. After all, we are a young piece of the old continent. Our programme brings up connections and questions that reach broader audiences, niches, the generally interested, the curious, the "I don't care much" folks, the ECoC obsessed and the island dreamers. We will do that by addressing European themes and common issues:

European Dimension: Europe related and relevant topics of the main projects are the target of our programme, tackling human/nature relationships in projects such as **Become Ocean, Forest of Fiction, Weather Forecast, Regenerative Future**, to name a few. These projects accumulate and showcase common European issues and values. They will gather international teams and will relate to a broad cultural region of Europe.

Artistic Excellence and high profile events: renowned artists, exhibitions, festivals, conferences, art residencies, happening in diverse locations in collaboration with prestigious European institutions and networks that will communicate broadly and make sure the Azores are on numerous European minds;

Waves of Culture: cutting-edge technologies produce several digital and visual objects with direct interactive transfer to other European, American and world cities, enabling people from different places to access, watch, explore, communicate, connect, and relate through them.

AZORES 2027 Ambassadors: Our communication is humanised and relies on people to be its best holders. Our ambassadors will spread internationally: in the Azorean diaspora, in Europe

and worldwide, through a partnership with the international network of Houses of the Azores, a group of associations that unites the most successful and influential members of our global community; in Europe and other continents, through our twin cities in Cape Verde, Saint Thomas and Prince, Bulgaria, Brazil, USA and the Portuguese mainland; internationally, with personalities that share cultural links to our city and the Azores—artists, curators, island lovers—and everyone that gets hypnotised by the Azores.

Q16 Developing links between our cultural programme and the cultural programme of other cities with the title of ECoC.

Listening, reading and talking with past and present ECoCs and its current candidate cities has been essential to building an understanding from almost four decades of this competition. We have undertaken thorough research and dove into bidbooks, panel reports, guidelines, literature on cultural sustainability, creative and cultural tourism, community building and outreach. We have also attended several video-transmitted conferences and participated in clarification sessions. We had countless conversations with people involved in ECoC teams and programmes, getting us to learn from each other's projects and how to establish collaborations.

We heard and spoke with people that made past ECoCs in Portugal. Hence, we have learnt how the ECoC competition has evolved over the years and how it makes sense to approach it from a 21st century's perspective and vision towards the future. **Marseille-Provence 2013** taught us that conflicts might occur and showed us the power of involving a whole region. **Linz 2009** showed us how culture puts a city on a map. **Leeuwarden 2018** showed us that an ECoC is not about us (Mission Team), but about the region, and that anything can be part of the programme by supporting audiences and communities to become cultural producers and diluting borders between the urban and the rural. **Matera 2019** opened up a world of creative potential to explore participation. **Wroclaw 2016** called us out to empower citizens by putting in their hands the responsibility to lead projects. **Tallinn 2011** gave us the confidence to make proposals that do not wait for participation, instead go full-on on the move and take our programme directly to where people are. **Donostia-San Sebastian 2016** taught us about potential ECoC political specific conflicts and advised us to pursue

working on strengthening our communities. **Galway 2020** truly inspired us through a programme around their weather specificity and diverse island geography, giving an example of resilience in how they reimagined their project in the face of a global pandemic.

Capacity building and cultural and artistic participation are central aspects of every candidacy. Knowledge is the most impactful human legacy of our project. It is the future we wish to secure for all generations, especially kids and teens, but also, and of course, our cultural and creative sector. We want to make sure that we follow the accomplishment of projects and deepen our relationship to the capacity building projects **Kaunas 2022's "Tempo Academy of Culture"**, **Bodo 2024's "Room of Culture?"** and **Bad Ischl 2024's "Leader"**, but also those of **Tartu 2024**, **Nova Gorica • Gorizia 2025** and **Oulu 2026**.

We have exchanged views with almost all fellow national 2027 ECoC candidates. It made us realise that, even in our country, we are close, yet far away. We are too self-centred and in real need to open up dialogues and develop inter-city cooperation. We have created **Fluxus**, a shared project developed with **Braga '27** and **Faro 2027** candidate cities connecting the north, south and islands. We have connected with other Latvian candidate cities— **Valmiera** and **Liepāja**—and were able to identify possible lines of cooperation and ways to cross each other's programmes concerning projects connected to nature, heritage, alternative culture and music. With **Arcadia/ Leeuwarden-Fryslân 2018-2028**, **Matera Basilicata 2019 Foundation**, **Bodo 2024**, **Oulu 2026**, and candidate cities **Trenčín 2026**, **Clermont-Ferrand Massif central 2028** and **Skopje 2028** we found bridges of understanding for partnerships around projects touching environmental, social and heritage issues. Here, we established a commitment to following up with each other to develop stronger future links.

We want to create space for **Latvia's ECoC 2027** to develop an entire artistic programme during Europe Week in May. We will work on sending Azorean artists to participate in A.I.R. programmes of other ECoCs, and we will create space in our nine island A.I.R. programme to host artists from all over Europe. We will promote contemporary art practices, cross-cultural exchanges and artists mobility. Furthermore, we will undertake intensive exchanges with upcoming ECoCs for the next few years to learn from their experience, build capacity and partnerships, export the Azores to the heart of Europe and make sure Europe has a more consistent presence out here in the Atlantic Ocean.

Decorated ox cart during Holy Spirit Festivities, Parish of Rosais, São Jorge Island



V. Outreach

Q17 How the local population and civil society were involved in the preparation of the nomination and will participate in the implementation of the year.

Azores 2027 ignited from a civic movement titled “**For an ECoC in the Azores in 2027**”, a manifesto signed by more than 800 people from the local population and civil society trusting this project to be a catalyst for change through culture. This bidbook comes from the inside of this “multiple” archipelago. The Azores 2027 team—Gina (Pico Island), Nuno (Terceira Island), António and Carolina (São Miguel Island)—is composed of a communication specialist, a writer, a curator and a cultural/tourism manager. Raised here, we lived on different islands, and together we visited the whole archipelago. Azores 2027 takes a bottom-up and community-led strategy. In this preliminary stage, we were able to talk to 400 people from the nine islands of the archipelago and the diaspora. This bidbook comes from the many contributions, desires and urgencies we have heard along the way, always attentive to the archipelagic specificity.

Talking & Sharing Imagination: We did **Open Door** sessions in our Ponta Delgada downtown office to listen and clarify this project. In-person or online due to the pandemic restrictions, we collected contributions in sold-out sessions. We also took this discussion to markets, museums, gardens, public swimming pools and theatres and gathered many ideas. We did **Sharing Imagination Labs** to project the future together, connecting stakeholders from the nine islands of culture, environment, urbanism, human rights, education, and tourism. We met, shared, learned about significant challenges and identified possible creative solutions to shape future projects. When it felt insufficient plus other islands felt peripheral, we got our backpacks and notebooks and did **9 Islands in Conversation**. In a month, we went island-hopping in the nine islands of the Azores. We held public focus group sessions on culture-related topics and went to schools to ask and play with young people about their **Archipelago of the Future**.

Community-Building: We kept an active media presence in TVs, newspapers and social media platforms—Facebook and Instagram—with strong engagement and a sense of

belonging. Our website (www.azores2027.eu) informs and invites everyone to suggest and get in touch through an **Archipelago of Ideas**. We invited an Ambassador to represent the candidacy on each island and encourage the population to contribute to the programme. We held a series of online conversations with different guests around themes relevant to our candidacy. We created an **Advisory Board**, composed of 30 personalities, who contribute constructively to our candidacy in multiple areas and their relationship with culture; and a **Committee of Honour** formed by more than 100 people who contribute to the regional, national and international affirmation of our purpose.

Exercising Responsibility through Co-Creation: We created two pilot programmes in partnership with other institutions:

Hand in Hand, a microcredit programme that supported nine projects favouring collaboration between islands and municipalities, the rapprochement of generations, practices of inclusion, sustainability and storytelling;

9 Neighbourhoods, a digital participative publication with interviews, profiles of artists, chronicles, recipes, island suggestions and a collection of clouds.

What comes next? We met lots of people, full of ideas, with little opportunity to participate and very eager to find new ways of cooperation. The ECoC 2027 can make a difference and reach out to many more people to make these ideas happen. From our intense work on listening and talking, we learnt that we have to keep our programme porous to suggestions. We need to create open and democratically accessible opportunities and platforms for people to meet, learn and exchange both in-person and digitally. In the next phase, we need to go from **Open Door** to **Knock the Door** to intensify our mapping further. We need to plant seeds of participation, and therefore our pilot projects **Hand in Hand** and **9 Neighbourhoods** shall continue, in addition to other proposals and open calls that can include more people. Our goal is to expand our network of ambassadors to an extensive collective through a volunteering programme to host, promote and make our ECoC happen. Attaining social, cultural and ecological sustainability, we will plant another seed right away. We will train event organisers to reduce environmental impact by teaming up with Azores DMO (sustainability management of the Azores) to create sustainable cultural productions and events, including a guide to reduce carbon emissions and footprint. Programming wise, we will develop the strand **Archipelago of Participation**, proposing several opportunities to give access to culture and artistic practices to various audiences

(**Island of Women, We Matter**) through capacity building (**HA!**) and development of their initiatives (**Quant.fo.s Que.res, Quant.fo.s Que.remos**). Everyone shall be a protagonist of their own stories (**Mexe – Azores**), and this programme shall do this by opening up to new places and new voices and creating intersectional experiences.

Q18 Creating opportunities for the participation of marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

We are a world in profound change. We have a strange feeling of disintegration, enhanced by a pandemic that made everything more intense and hard to grasp. We want to keep a constant pursuit of unity through encounters and conversation, searching for the Humanity that remains within us in contact with our fellow humans and other life forms, with the nature to which we belong, and with a tomorrow that is yet to come. **We are interested in implementing an expanded social inclusion concept. Citizens need to feel that their participation makes a difference, in which they sense the consequences of their involvement. Cultural democracy can go beyond artistic fruition and take over the mode of cultural production.** We want to implement a model that encourages an intense dialogue between artistic practices and social realities, especially those living under heavier inequalities, yet never ceases to propose a transversal vision focused on all citizens. Only the intersection of very different people can stimulate the desire to creatively build a community with genuine respect for diversity, independently from social provenience. The model focuses on participative displays and principles of citizenship, where participants become protagonists and not mere objects of artistic practices. Azores 2027 will become an inclusive and intersectional stage for the marginalised and the disadvantaged, everyone from young people, children, women, men, seniors, emigrants. Different worlds come together because we ought to have the capacity to create space for more stories and know their names because we all matter. Everyone will benefit from that and learn from being and staying human.

It is hard to list the social problems that assail an outermost paradise in the middle of the Atlantic: poverty, low education and early school dropout, teenage pregnancy, alcoholism, drug addiction, and domestic violence. It is even harder to define our social diversity, but here we go. There are multiple ethnicities that have always lived on the fringes. More LGBTQ+ kids are coming out of the closet—there is more structure to support them, even though the milieu remains conservative and hostile. Some till the land, some fish from the sea, some live far away isolated in rural areas, and some have found refuge here from climate or war. There are some for whom these islands feel like a great Alcatraz because they got deported from the Americas after serving prison sentences. Some are seniors hungry for love and people with visual impairment wanting to learn the visual arts.

There are people whose jobs reduce their visibility: street and house cleaners, forest keepers, bakers, night workers or call centre operators. Some live in stigmatised places that others are afraid to visit. But like everything else, in a paradoxical world, there are also couples opening bio-sustainable farms and Airbnb magnificent properties. Our Catholicism is both religious and profane. Groups of men walk eight days on the road because of earthquakes or dance with castanets for the Holy Spirit, whilst women make promises on their knees in honour of *Ecce Homo*. Our society is mainly patriarchal, which results in violence and gender equality issues in access to opportunities.

Azores 2027 will only fulfil its goals if there is a contribution to improve these realities. Through our **Archipelago of Participation** which is about the right to participate, access cultural and artistic practices and capacity building, we want to overcome physical, economic, social and intellectual obstacles because only democratic access to opportunities can confer social equality and knowledge. We want to involve all audiences of all age groups, disadvantaged communities and people with different abilities to take the reins of their narratives. We wish to propose projects that defend gender equality and deal with the lack of equality of opportunities for women. Equality and inclusion are the basis for artistic projects of co-creation based on personal experiences, experiences of place and newly acquired worldviews.

There is a song by Zeca Afonso, a Portuguese protest singer, called "Traz um Amigo Também". It means: Bring a friend along. Let this be the motto to always bring someone along with whoever, whatever economic or social condition they are in, or however far they might live. Azores 2027 has to create a cultural opportunity for those who do not have it and find new ways to break distances and bring people together: crossing artistic practices with community traditions and providing means for cultural access. Here are some envisaged mediation actions:

Dream Community: Theatre, dance, music, film and visual arts workshops compose this programme for the deportee population sent to the Azores from the United States and Canada. It aims to fight the existing discrimination that goes around their inner and outer circles in a continuum. At the end of each workshop, the groups present the works to the public.

A Visit is Needed: A volunteering arts programme proposes visits to elders, homeless people and people with economic difficulties who suffer from loneliness to tell them stories and do small concerts.

New Age: A programme of intergenerational activities with workshops, classes and clubs sets children, teenagers and seniors together to share skills in traditional activities such as crafting, computing, singing, fishing or planting. From tech use to living nature and storytelling, primary schools and youngsters exchange with Universities of the Third Age and retirement centres.

Curiosity is for All: Workshops and visits for people with dementia, Alzheimer's, physical mobility problems, people with visual and hearing impairments whose limitations

keep them away from cultural events to increase cultural participation and active audience opportunities in theatre plays, classical and contemporary music shows and museums.

Cultural Pilgrimages: Religious pilgrimages are one of the most meaningful Azorean traditions. For a week, a group of pilgrims follows the roads on foot, visiting churches and hermitages, fulfilling a tradition that, in 2022, will be 500 years old. Azores 2027 wants to seek intersectional collective cultural walks seeking to promote creativity.

The Art is Ours: displaces film, concerts, performances, workshops, talks to places associated with social-cultural marginalisation and deconstructs the idea that “high culture” is restricted to the elites. It encourages discussion and get-togethers about these events and promotes artistic residencies and capacity building actions for cultural and social leaders. This action is being implemented together with the **MAPAS** project of the **Archipelago of Participation** strand.

Q19 Overall audience outreach strategy and, in particular, the link with education and school participation.

Audience Outreach Strategy: We would be lying if we told you that we have no audience for culture because we do have an audience. It is a curious, open audience who takes risks towards the unknown and is also willing to experience novelties. The problem is: our audience is fragmented. It navigates through cultural mobility efforts, the eternal separations between the urban and the rural space, the traditional and the contemporary, and a real disarticulated communication strategy. Some institutions can stop people from crossing doors, either because they think it is not for them or they think they will not understand what is displayed. So in the so-called palaces of culture, we tend to see the same faces attending activities like a class privilege of the very few.

We know that cultural consumption tends to increase among the same old groups of active participants in cultural life. However, we have an audience that wants to participate, and by that, we mean that Azoreans are all for taking action. They cherish a culture that is not merely for watching but for participating. A culture where they can mirror themselves and their loved ones and stumble in newness. So here is our **14 positive actions for an audience outreach plan for Azores 2027:**

- 1 Mobilise new people through capacity building and participation opportunities;**
- 2 Work with artists and institutions to develop collaborations and establish communication and actions strategies so that they “come out”, invade the public space, keep their audiences, share them and find new ones;**
- 3 Go from a culture of passive spectatorship and social inclusion to active participation and cultural immersion: participants are doers and protagonists;**
- 4 Stimulate projects in which people contribute with what they want, not with what they get told to do and watch;**
- 5 Promote intersections between contemporary culture and popular culture, breaking the walls of the different practices;**
- 6 Create more projects beyond urban centres in rural and maritime neighbourhoods;**
- 7 Displace cultural and artistic offer to streets, nature and accessible venues and places;**
- 8 Promote free or very low-cost events;**
- 9 Use the digital arena as a lab, an academy and as a stage for projects, producing exclusive content and intersectional experiences between the onsite and the online: Waves of Culture is a commodity, accessibility, a community builder and a tool of cultural democracy;**
- 10 Develop more outreach activities: conversations, workshops and volunteering opportunities, providing learning by doing platforms;**
- 11 Implement an Artistic and Cultural Mediation programme that combines audiences, artists and institutions, providing tools for all to understand, access and participate in different forms of artistic intervention.**
- 12 Increase cooperation with the region’s and country’s tourism sector to promote cultural activities and creative tourism for residents and visitors.**
- 13 Use clear, simple bilingual and accessible communication, keeping a solid digital and physical presence, taking over media and virtual platforms and having a good and easy to navigate cultural agenda;**
- 14 Make more initiatives for children and their families beyond school time.**

Education and School Participation: We depart from the belief that arts promote creativity, collaboration and experimentation. Art and creative processes give problem-solving tools, improve motivation and tailor the educational experience. We will start with our young people from pre-school, primary and high school ages. We will be working with teachers and education agents and cross them with artists of all disciplines. We are planning a programme of cultural education which makes cultural democracy as natural as learning to read, write and do math. These activities go together with our **HA!** capacity building programme.

We are articulating Azores 2027 with the current ten-year **National Arts Plan (PNA)**, which is implementing long-lasting educational measures locally and nationally, taking cultural democracy as a motor to transform schools into cultural hubs—that value and collaborate with their surrounding resources. So we can transpose walls inside and outside institutions, this strategy builds on the principles of networking, cooperation and exchanges between organisations. The goal is to *undiscipline* the school through the arts and create a **Cultural School Project** as a strategy for the educational community in connection with partnerships in the territory. Actions envisaged:

PNA Teachers Academy – Face-to-face and online interdisciplinary training project connecting the arts, creative processes, natural, tangible and intangible heritage with other areas of knowledge like sciences and humanities. Designed by artists and cultural specialists and aimed for teachers, cultural mediators and education agents, exploring the possibilities of co-creation and co-learning;

A.I.R. School programme arises from a directory of artists, mediators, artisans, cultural associations for three-month artist residencies in schools. This programme aims to generate more freedom of action, break prejudices, work on emotions and subjects of children and youngsters' interests.

Detour – Exit – Establish visits to cultural institutions for shows, workshops or guided tours; **Enter** – Establish visits to schools by mediators, institutions and artists; in partnership with schools, municipalities, education leaders and institutions.

Cultural backpack creates a package of itinerary shows and other artistic proposals that travel through schools in the region.

Art and Education Biennial 2027 – From experimenting in their premises to opening up exchanges with other schools, this initiative proceeds through a presentation of good practices, exhibitions, shows and conversations. Teachers, students, artists and cultural mediators all come together.

But that is not all. **Musiquim – Music Theatre Association** specialises in art and music education for children, families and educators to instil ecological awareness in children and babies from an early age. We wish to create **The Government of Children of the Azores** so that adult decision-makers listen to children's wants and needs, and to involve them in political and social programmes. It will be carried out by teachers and psychologists and organised through school assemblies, games and exchanges between schools.

Our **Quant. tos Que. res, Quant. tos Que. remos** project runs from 2025-2027, involving teens and young adults from different high schools and universities in the Azores and beyond. They develop their initiatives through implementing their curriculum. In the end, they all come together for a final festival with lasting memories and experiences supported by artists, cultural makers and their municipalities.

But because school ends, culture should not stop. So we plan to do a set of **Summer Schools** for young people, encouraging continuous lifelong learning and profit from a hefty palette of local and visiting artists. All Azores 2027 festivals will have special educational programmes for children and families: from dance performances to community games, jazz for babies, immersive installations and exhibitions, children parades, video and tech interaction opportunities for youngsters.



Children making the *Xanaia* dive [a popular form of diving in the Azores], Rabo de Peixe, São Miguel Island

VI. Management

A. Finances

The current situation, marked by the restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, justifies more than ever the implementation of strategic planning and expenditure in culture. **It is the time for Ponta Delgada and the Azores to invest in diversity and value a vibrant cultural life and heritage.** Despite coming from an outermost region considered one of Europe's poorest regions, the change shows a clear investment in our citizens, in the community and the cohesive and sustainable development of Ponta Delgada, as the driving city for the cultural activity in the Azores. The goal is to create international attractiveness through a progressive move from monoculture to valuing a diversity of cultures as a motor for transformation and

development. The budget reflects our strategy to attain a European dimension. The main focus of this budget will not be on building new physical infrastructures. Local and regional authorities have done a great work creating cultural and urbanistic structures in the last decade. But now these spaces need an articulated artistic vision following a clear cultural strategy, which is why this budget focuses mainly on the cultural and artistic programme. The aim is to strengthen the cultural sector, with the certainty that we will not divert resources already allocated to culture in the city and region to finance ECoC 2027. The feasibility and reality of this budget allows reaching the high standards of an ECoC.

Q20 City budget for culture: Annual budget for culture in the city for the last 5 years (excluding expenses for the current candidacy for ECoC).

Year	Annual budget for culture in the city (Operational Expenditure)	Operational Expenditure in % of the total annual budget for the city	Annual budget for culture in the city (Capital Expenditure)	Capital Expenditure in % of the total annual budget for the city	Total Annual budget for culture in the city	% of budget for culture in the total annual budget for the city
2017	€2 659 547	6,49%	€305 759	0,75%	€2 965 306	7,24%
2018	€2 887 938	7,40%	€259 630	0,67%	€3 147 568	8,07%
2019	€2 912 649	6,79%	€27 973	0,07%	€2 940 622	6,85%
2020	€1 957 482	4,63%	€3 444	0,01%	€1 960 926	4,64%
2021	€1 846 120	4,23%	€3 444	0,01%	€1 849 564	4,24%

In the last years, the city has gradually allocated a considerable percentage to the culture budget in operational expenditure, culminating in 2019 with an amount of €2.9 million, which corresponds to 6,79% of the city's overall budget. Our budget for culture includes expenses and subsidies for cultural stakeholders and city institutions. The figures for 2017-2019 are finalised and certified by the National Institute of Statistics. The figures for 2020-2021 are provisional and currently in progress due to the extraordinary outburst of Covid-19 and the fact that we do not have the final data from the National Institute of Statistics. We should point out that, in 2020, the reduction in operational expenditure in comparison to 2019 comes from the fact that foreseen capital investments did not occur due

to the pandemic. In capital expenditures, an equal amount is mentioned in 2020 and 2021, since both final balances are still in progress. However, a portion of the 2020 budget was allocated to the Corporate Emergency Fund to respond to the difficulties generated by Covid-19 to encourage economic recovery in the cultural sector. The Municipality of Ponta Delgada has been following a strategy of increasing investment in culture-related activities. The prospect is to increase the investment continuously. The Government of the Azores, and the other Azorean municipalities, also allocate funds from their budget to the cultural sector, and in the case of the Azorean executive the amount, in 2019, corresponded to €17.725.195 for operational and capital expenditure in the area of culture.

Q21 Plans for using the city's cultural budget to finance Azores 2027.

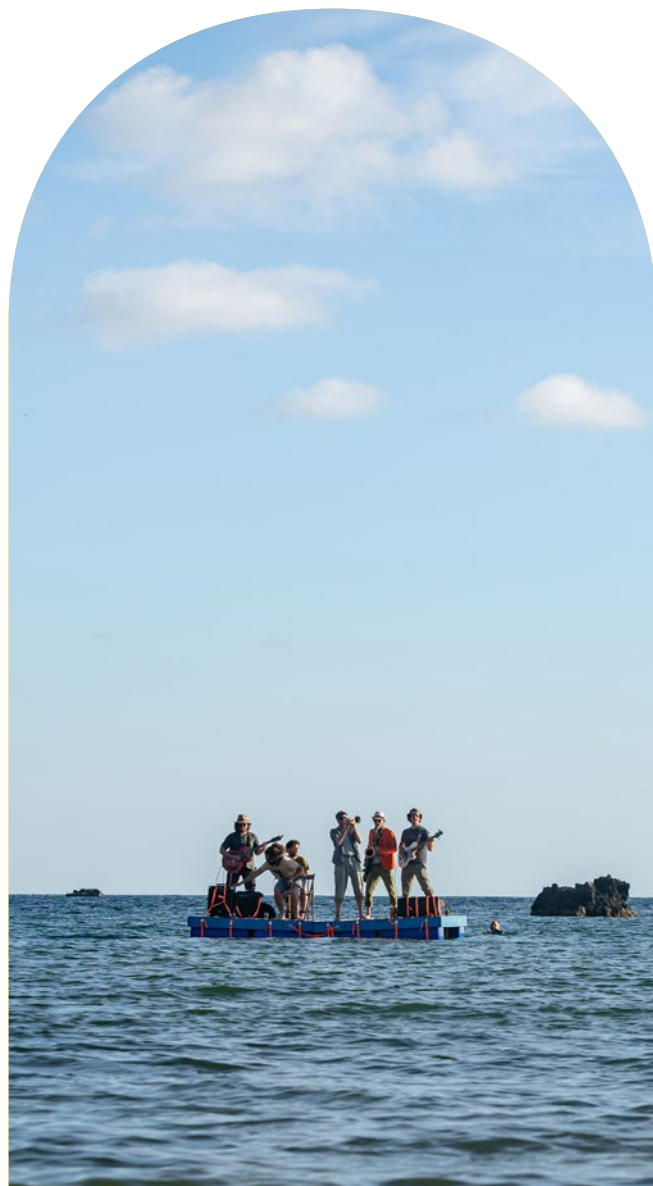
There will be no resources from the budget for culture in the Municipality allocated to fund Azores 2027. However, we will maximise our know-how in collaboration with the cultural sector through existing contacts and possible synergies so that the ECoC year can benefit from the city's

programme and vice-versa. At this stage, we already have a Mission Team—Artistic Direction, Communication, Audience Development and Executive Production—working in the Azores 2027 headquarters in downtown Ponta Delgada, independently from the cultural activity of the Municipality.

Q22 The city's annual budget allocated towards culture after the ECoC year.

After obtaining the title of ECoC, the **Ponta Delgada Municipality** will strive to ensure that the budget allocated to **culture** in the year 2028 corresponds to **9% of its global annual budget**. The investment in culture will represent an absolute value of **€3.800.000**, with the aim of increasing and maintaining the considerable and sustainable effects

on the economic and cultural dynamics of the region. Furthermore, the city now has a **Cultural Strategy** as the basis for political decision-making in the coming years, in which Azores 2027 will have a lasting socio-economic impact.



Maravilha – Music and Performance Festival, Faial Island, 2021

Q23 Operating budget for the title year.

Income to cover operating expenses: General operating budget.

We prepared a total operating budget of **€44.6 million**, which will be mainly financed by the public sector and by the private sector, as well. Income from the private sector includes planned sponsorship, funding from private foundations and cultural institutes and donations from the Azorean/Portuguese Diaspora. Moreover, we count on ticketing and merchandising to be additional sources of income. This budget will cover the preparation phase, title year, monitoring and evaluation and provisional investment in legacy activities.

Financial Income Operational	Total	%
Financial Income Operational - from the Public Sector	€41 016 012	91,93%
Ticketing / Merchandising	€1 350 000	3,03%
Financial Income Operational - from the Private Sector	€2 250 000	5,04%
TOTAL	€44 616 012	100,00%

Q24 Public sector revenue: Breakdown of revenue receivable from the public sector to cover operating expenses.

Operational Financial Income	Total	%
National Government	€25 000 000	56,0%
Government of the Azores	€2 900 000	6,5%
Municipality of Ponta Delgada	€1 816 012	4,1%
Melina Mercouri Prize	€1 500 000	3,4%
The Secretary of State for Tourism	€8 000 000	17,9%
AMRAA	€400 000	0,9%
EU (European Funds)	€1 400 000	3,1%
From the public sector	€41 016 012	91,9%
Ticketing / Merchandising	€1 350 000	3,0%
From the private sector (Sponsoring)	€2 250 000	5,1%
TOTAL Operational Financial Income	€44 616 012	100,0%

The estimated operating income fully covers the estimated operating expenses for €44.616.012. The majority of required revenues come from the public sector, reaching 92% of the total value of operating revenues. The Portuguese **National Government**, through the Ministry of Culture, has already made a formal commitment to financially support the city that will receive the title with €25 million. The **Government of the Azores** intends to invest €2.9 million, covering 6,5% of operating revenues. The **Municipality of Ponta Delgada** contributes €1.816.012, which equals 4,1% of the overall budget, a significant financial effort for the city. If Azores 2027 meets the requirements, we will receive the **Melina Mercouri Prize** at the end of 2026—a €1.5 million investment in the legacy programme in place to launch from 2028 onwards. **The Secretary of State for Tourism** is still negotiating with the candidate cities how much financial and operational support will be given. Therefore, all candidate cities agreed that the considered €8 million in the table below are a guideline based on the investment allocated

by this organisation to the previous ECoC in Portugal. The budget will be adjusted as soon as a formal compromise is established. Other **European funds** have a revenue value of €1.4 million, and we hope this contribution may become even more relevant. With the support of the Creative Europe programme in Portugal and local competent authorities in EU funds, we will organise information and capacity-building events and create an advisory structure to encourage our local Creative and Cultural Sector to develop projects with cooperation partners and EU co-funding. **The Association of Municipalities of the Autonomous Region of the Azores (AMRAA)** will provide €400.000 from 2022 to 2028. As an outermost region and a territory of low population density with lots of obstacles to cultural fruition, we require that most events are free or at a low price, so that access to culture and artistic goods and activities are facilitated, making an approximate €1.350.000 income from Merchandising and Ticketing revenue.

Q25 Have public financial authorities already voted or committed financially to cover operating expenses?

There is a broad political commitment to our ECoC proposal. **The Government of the Azores**, co-promoting this project, and **all the other 18 municipalities in the Azores**, signed a partnership agreement supporting this bid on June 29 2021, in Graciosa Island. The Government of the Azores commitment resulted in a formal document of financial support to cover operating expenses in a total of €2.9 million. The proposal to submit the ECoC candidacy was presented by **the Municipality of Ponta Delgada**, both in the council meeting and the Municipal Assembly on May 5 and 27, 2021, respectively, and voted unanimously. The Municipality

of Ponta Delgada, as the seat of Azores 2027, then made a financial commitment of a total amount of €1.8 million. **The Association of Municipalities of the Azores (AMRAA)** has likewise formalised its intention to co-finance operating expenses totalling €400.000. The Portuguese **National Government**, through the Ministry of Culture, announced in November 2020 a contribution of €25 million to support the operating costs of Portugal's ECoC 2027. We will continue in intense dialogue with the various entities, and we are confident that we will receive commitments of funding and contributions on time.

"LAWAL – Covered by Sky", by Gustavo Ciriaco, Gonçalo Lopes and Javiera Péon-Veiga, Walk&Talk 2021



Q26 Private sector revenue: Strategy for raising funds to ask for support from private sponsors. Plan to involve sponsors in the event.

Azores 2027 strategy for raising funds and support from the private sector will include strategic sponsoring and partnerships with a financial impact on the budget.

Transparency, efficiency, innovation and social responsibility are guidelines to call the private sector a partner. We will develop a code of ethics of strategic sponsoring and partnerships with brands with a clear social, ecological, sustainable, community-driven, and local development responsibility. Several collaborations will generate revenue diversification, which is structural to the project. We will divide them into main sponsors that will keep close tabs on the whole project and other partners who will be crucial for the activation of specifically targeted projects. We will involve widely recognised foundations, foreign cultural institutes and embassies, national brands and donors that legitimise flagship projects, and our diaspora, which has a solid history of cultural philanthropy in the Azores. Local private businesses will host artists and become stages, galleries, and artist-in-residence programmes. Art will intersect with business in hotels, rural tourism properties, forest parks, factories, pineapple greenhouses and tea plantations. Mutually beneficial partnerships bring communication to the business sector and will generate new artistic possibilities, new venues and ways of cooperating that will shape our ECoC's project. That is why we plan

to involve sponsors in the event and cross missions, share values, and amplify the narratives of each action and entity through **1. Communication** (media content development, public relations) and **2. Brand activation** (experience and immersion-based product placement and physical presence in the spaces of development of activities). This plan will reach local, national, and international targets, exposing both the activities and the interests of the private sector to new audiences, strengthening the positioning of the brand and event and their social and cultural responsibility. Vast, wise, and wild creativity and one-on-one conversations will result in a clear articulation that guarantees and preserves artistic freedom and the amplification of brands. It is a plan that ensures ethics, mutual visibility, and ownership. We must stress that in-kind donations, facilities, services, time and human resources will play a significant role. Gastronomy, sea, land and air transport, accommodation, communication platforms, venues, technical teams, among others, will cooperate with us, entrusting Azores 2027 with the people and the services they perform, enhancing a sense of shared responsibility and participation in a joint mission. It is a synergistic *modus operandi* that guarantees a low dependency rate for all its supporters, and highlights collaboration to financial sustainability.

Q27 Operating expenses: Breakdown of operating expenses.

Operational expenses	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Total	%
Programme Expenditure	-	€88 500	€442 500	€737 500	€885 000	€6 991 500	€17 995 000	€2 360 000	€29 500 000	66,10%
Wages and Salaries	€87 320	€258 462	€506 044	€560 582	€669 660	€871 655	€1 198 888	€405 689	€4 558 299	10,20%
Organization Expenses	€256 653	€258 470	€306 370	€306 370	€306 370	€342 370	€720 740	€360 370	€2 857 713	6,40%
Promotion and Marketing	-	€60 000	€120 000	€167 005	€420 000	€1 940 000	€3 052 995	€240 000	€6 000 000	13,50%
Others	-	€68 000	€102 000	€102 000	€102 000	€119 000	€1 105 000	€102 000	€1 700 000	3,80%
TOTAL Operational expenses	€343 973	€733 432	€1 476 914	€1 873 457	€2 383 030	€10 264 525	€24 072 622	€3 468 059	€44 616 012	100,00%

This project has been carried out since 2021, closing in 2028, with a total estimated operating expenditure of €44.6 million for the entire duration of the project. The budget allocated for the programme's expenditure amounts to €29.5 million, which is 66,1% of the overall budget, demonstrating a clear commitment to **the artistic and cultural programme**. The years 2026 and 2027 concentrate most operating expenses set to finance projects and events, plus preparatory actions, especially concerning implementation and production. In **Promotion and Marketing**, there is an estimated investment of €6 million, with a weight of 13,4% on all operating expenses. The main promotion effort will take place in 2026, for the national and international promotion of destination and ECoC, and 2027, for the various local, regional, national and international activities of the programme—with a

relative weight of these expenses above 77%. **Organisation expenses*** have a total value of €2.857.713 matching a percentage of 6,4%. **Wages and salaries** amount to €4.558.299, which corresponds to 10,2% of the total value of all operating costs, demonstrating a balance between the skills needed to carry out the project and the economic context of the region. In **Others**, the amount of €1.7 million, which corresponds to 3,8% of all operating expenses, is a value destined to extra and unforeseen expenses, a vital safeguard value in projects of this magnitude and complexity.

*Organisation expenses include outsourcing; energy; fuel; water; tools & maintenance equipment; books and other technical documentation; stationery; representation expenses; IT & communications; insurances; logistics; contracted services—accounting, legal support, consulting, maintenance, cleaning, security, specialised services, renting and others.

Capital expenditure budget

Q28 Breakdown of revenue receivable by the public sector to cover capital expenditures in connection with the year of the title.

The capital investment is directed, on the one hand, for the construction of some infrastructure that will support the dynamisation of the cultural sector and, on the other hand, for conservation, improvement and expansion of already

existing cultural infra-structures. We estimate to fulfil an investment in capital expenditure of **€8.452.399** which will be supported and distributed as follows:

Entity	Amount	Percentage
The Government of the Azores	€2 928 759,60	34,65%
Ponta Delgada Municipality	€1 623 106,90	19,20%
Other Municipalities	€733 333,00	8,68%
EU	€3 167 199,50	37,47%
TOTAL	€8 452 399,00	100%

[Please find further info on **VII – Capacity to Deliver**.]

Q29 Have public financial authorities already voted or expressed their commitment to cover capital expenditures?

The public financial authorities demonstrated their support and commitment regarding capital expenditures, namely the **Government of the Azores, Ponta Delgada Municipality** and **other Municipalities of the Azores**. We are in continuous dialogue with the various entities, and we are confident that the projects will receive funding. **Ponta Delgada Municipality's** decision to present this

candidacy was voted in favour unanimously, both at the Council meeting and the Municipal Assembly on May 5 and 27, 2021, respectively. The unanimous approval of the candidacy implies the political and financial support of the Municipality, namely concerning capital expenditures. The **Government of the Azores** upheld their commitment to cover capital expenditures as part of its investment plan for the coming years.

Q30 Strategy for raising funds from EU programmes/ funds to cover capital expenditure.

The Azores, resulting from their specific characteristics defined in Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), integrates the Outermost Regions (OR)—benefiting, throughout the years, from significant European funds. Our Municipality and the Government of the Azores have been able to mobilise several European funds throughout the years. These funds improve the quality of life of citizens based on different levels: infrastructure, professional qualification of citizens, fighting poverty, supporting the economic sector. Our strategy is also to create the conditions for the Municipality of Ponta Delgada and the Government of the Azores to raise funds through **regional operational programmes** and prepare projects

for funding from other European programmes, such as **Horizon Europe, INTERREG III B (Azores-Madeira-Canary Islands)**, and **INTERREG EUROPE**.

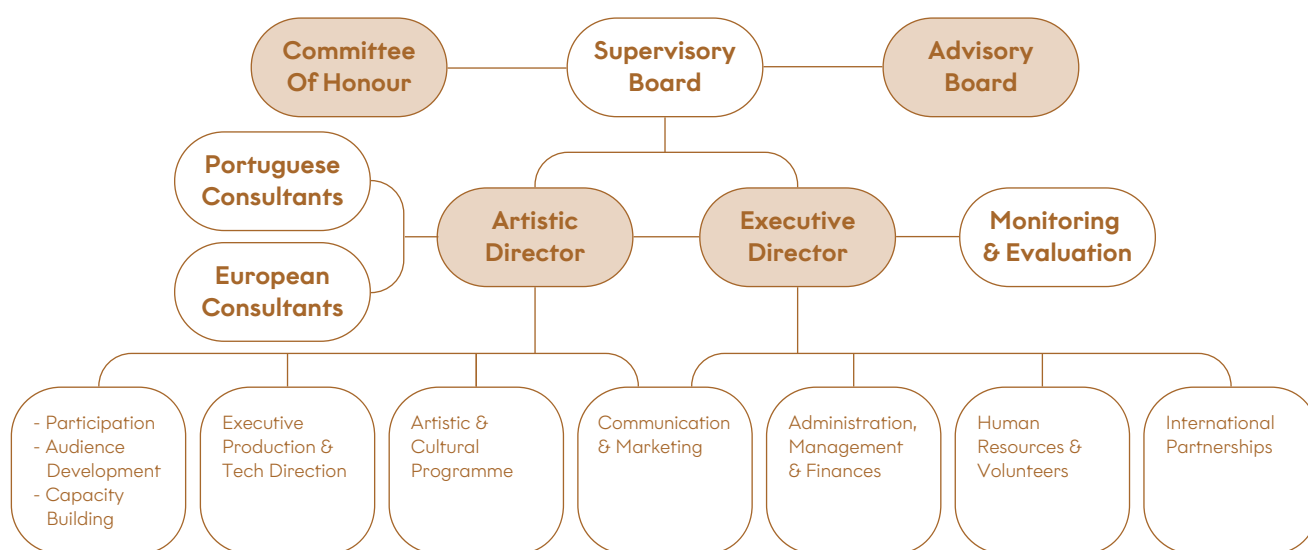
Based on an ongoing dialogue with the Regional Directorate for Planning and Structural Funds, we will develop and submit projects for funding to the upcoming **Community Support Framework (2021-2027)**. We will also encourage our partners to do the same and maximise funding opportunities through the different axes of support by EU funds. We will also endeavour to submit applications for Portugal's **Recovery and Resilience Plan**, as the Region has a financial package of over €500 million, with a significant portion of this amount going to capital investment.

Q31 Amounts that will be spent on new cultural infrastructure, to be used in the title year.

Investment	Cost	Year of completion
Renovation and improvement: Conservatório Regional of Ponta Delgada, Coliseu Micaelense (Coliseum) and Teatro Micaelense (Theatre)	€2 761 399 EU Funds and Government of the Azores	2025
Works for the conservation and expansion of the Carlos Machado Museum	€681 000 Government of the Azores	2024
Artist's House	€600 000 Municipality of Ponta Delgada and EU Funds	2026
Conservation works of the Ponta Delgada Public Library and Regional Archive	€440 000 Government of the Azores	2025
Arquipélago – Contemporary Arts Centre conservation works	€400 000 Government of the Azores	2025
Rehabilitation works at Igreja da Graça – Academia das Artes	€330 000 Government of the Azores	2025
Forest of Fiction	€80 000 Municipality of Ponta Delgada and EU Funds	2024
Factory of Culture and Creative Industries (FCIC)	€60 000 Municipality of Ponta Delgada and EU Funds	2023

B. Organisational structure

Q32 Governance and execution structure intended for the implementation of the ECoC year.



To carry out Azores 2027, a **non-profit cultural association** will be created. This type of structure offers a wide range of possibilities for a non-bureaucratic integration of different parties. It is independent and performs outside the restrictive legal framework of public administration. We intend to establish the cultural association once Azores 2027 gains the title at the beginning of 2023.

The organisational structure of governance and execution will make for distinct responsibilities, efficient communication, team spirit and optimal use of skills. We will make sure the composition of different teams takes on the best practice of gender equality. We plan to grow the Azores 2027 team from nine full-time posts in 2023 to approximately thirty-five full-time positions in 2027. The cultural association will have a management team of two directors, which will work collaboratively and closely together with a core team to deliver the project. **The Executive Director (CEO)** will be responsible for the financial and administrative services, the technical implementation and general coordination of the overall team. The **CEO** will articulate with all political parties involved in the ECoC project, supervise the development of the works, keep track of monitoring and evaluation of the project, establish international partnerships, and coordinate the process of public and private sponsorship. The **CEO** will make all final decisions at the executive level, except for the artistic ones that fall directly on the **Artistic Director's** responsibility. **Communication and marketing** will be a shared responsibility with the **Artistic Director**. The **CEO** and **Artistic Director** will communicate regularly and directly with city and regional authorities. In addition, their work will benefit from the support of **Portuguese and European consultants**. The **Artistic Director** will be responsible for developing the artistic and cultural programme and coordinating the teams for **production and technical direction, participation, community and capacity building**. This position entails all artistic matters,

including selecting the curators' body and scheduling activities. The **Artistic Director** represents Azores 2027 on a regional, national, and international level.

The **Supervisory Board** comprises the highest representatives of Ponta Delgada's City Council, The Government of the Azores, The National Government (through the Ministry of Culture), The Tourism of Portugal, The Chamber of Commerce and Industries of Ponta Delgada, the Association of Municipalities of the Azores, a recognised European personality and a cultural stakeholder. This board is the most important decision-maker, nominating the CEO and the artistic director, taking and approving financial decisions, jointly ensuring the representation of Azores 2027 by making a good articulation between the various management bodies and following up the work plan. This organisational system will allow for the independent development of the cultural and artistic programme of Azores 2027. On the executive level, each administration will have set technical contact persons to facilitate collaboration. The **Advisory Board** consists of representatives of entities and personalities that can contribute to Azores 2027 through arts, tourism, education, architecture, religion, economy and its relationship with culture. These stakeholders contribute actively to the reflection and discussion of the mission of Azores 2027 to support the ongoing process and propose actions and projects that can strengthen the ECoC's project. This board does not take decisions. Instead, they facilitate communication with society and the cultural sector and amplify the work of Azores 2027. Their composition is diverse—children, teenagers, adults, seniors, men and women, natives and non-natives. The **Committee of Honour** is a group of individuals who, by their merit and public relevance, contribute to the regional, national and international affirmation of Azores 2027. They support, defend, and contribute to the success of Azores 2027—they are ambassadors of the project.

C. Contingency plan

Q33 Main strengths and weaknesses of the project. Plan to overcome identified weaknesses.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Solutions
<p>A rich Euro-Atlantic History & Culture designed by our relationship to our geography and landscape. The Azores is a concept for unity, and there's a strong desire to enhance it through cultural exchange.</p>	<p>The distances of an archipelago: we are aware of the challenges of mobility between islands, rural territories and urban centres, hindering the access of audiences to culture propositions.</p>	<p>Multiplicity will be our key for decentralisation, on-the-move solutions and access to all audiences and communities. Through projects such as Open Island, MAPAS, ARTakeover or Iceberg, we will go towards our audiences, instead of waiting for them to show up.</p>
<p>Heritage & Infrastructure, an absolute unique treasure in architectural, natural, land and underwater heritage, and the legacy of knowledge and popular expressions. Plus, we have a vast cultural infrastructure in all the territory. Our programme is a real articulator for a world of islands and turns it into an archipelago of superpositions, complementarities, collaboration and co-creation.</p>	<p>Little recognition of culture: Our historical and contemporary culture still needs to be valued through audience mediation and the relationship with artistic creation. There is too little investment, low recognition and strangeness of the value of contemporary culture and the work of new artists from government entities, the business fabric and civil society.</p>	<p>Our Human Academy, the strategy of displacing artistic and cultural practices to nature and the public space, and the Archipelago of Participation strand line that takes communities as protagonists of their own stories and artistic practices, will change those priorities, revise the importance of cultural investment and enhance our collective critical mass.</p>
<p>Azores 2027, as a European Archipelago of Culture, will be a pioneer as an outermost region making a collective effort to bid for the ECoC title, through a support network of all the region's municipalities and main cultural, economic, touristic and educational regional structures.</p>	<p>Parochialism: Today there is still a narrow and competitive outlook focused on each territory and artistic discipline. The other (stakeholder, neighbourhood, island, outsider) is sometimes seen as a threat and as a resource usurper. Little experience in cross-border cooperating bridges among us, the country and Europe.</p>	<p>Implement practices of co-creation, archipelagic thinking, capacity building for cultural stakeholders and mobility. More crossings between artistic disciplines, less borders between popular and contemporary culture, closer inter-sectoral and international cooperation. Develop the art residency project (9x9) and projects that gather (All Together Now), mix different audiences and create shared responsibility and participation (European Archipelago of Culture).</p>
<p>Strong Creatives & Arts Scene with an international background, critical spirit and capacity for mobilisation. Festivals and initiatives that value local traditions and resources, under environmental sustainability practices. This community wants to professionalise and develop their scope of opportunities on a transnational level.</p>	<p>Structural weakness (budget, financing): we are aware that our region and municipality have a low capacity for financial investment compared to the contribution of the National Government.</p>	<p>A governance structure with capacity to deliver, plus we will do a substantial work of capacity building in creative European grantmaking and networking, and we are sure to find means to widen the scope of our project. In phase 2, we are ready to continue to find ways to increase the contribution of national and international private and public entities.</p>
<p>Hospitality capacity & sustainability in hosting our tourists in humble, human and down to earth ways.</p>	<p>Negative ecological footprint, overuse of resources, loss of quality of services for tourists/visitors, gentrification, monoculture.</p>	<p>Increase the quality of hospitality and accessibilities, and widen international access from the main cities in Europe. Strengthen implementation of environmental preservation practices and propose projects to slow down and for visitors to stay longer and become temporary residents (L(i)aving me Softly) and projects that propose a move from monoculture to diversity (Body of the Land, Forest of Fiction).</p>
<p>Experience in hosting sports and cultural events, adapted to the scale of each island, and having specialised technical teams.</p>	<p>Exposure to weather uncertainty and several security crises—natural catastrophes, economic recessions and the current pandemic outburst.</p>	<p>Plan events with different scales of audiences, go rain or shine, use the digital realm (Waves of Culture) and make projects that can adapt according to the situation.</p>
<p>Unanimous political support of regional and municipal stakeholders towards the Azores 2027 ECoC bid.</p>	<p>Crossing political cycles during our bid. In 2021, there were elections, and there will be again in 2025. The support of the project might change as newly elected city council members enter.</p>	<p>Integrate the ECoC programme in the municipality's newly created cultural and development strategies, setting it as a priority project. Intensify our bottom-up strategy to strengthen the population support, and make sure to guarantee a constant and close dialogue with current political forces.</p>

D. Marketing and Communication

Q34 Outline of the intended marketing and communication strategy for the city in the ECoC year.

If you can not reach the hearts of others, how do you expect to get anywhere? This question was, once, posed by a Portuguese radio broadcaster. Now, it serves as the motto for the communication strategy of Azores 2027. We must first reach people's hearts. We want to stir their emotions, which are one of the prime components of our **Human Nature**. Hence our slogan, **Our Nature is Human**. We want to ensure information about the ECoC programme is available through the most appropriate channels, languages and formats to guarantee the broadest participation and attendance. We want to be as inclusive as possible. We will, therefore, pay particular attention to making communication accessible to people with different abilities, including people with hearing and visual impairments.

Communication goals

Informative: We want people—from different backgrounds—to easily perceive our programme.

Exciting: Our communication must be fresh and eye-catching. We want the public to become curious about our artistic programme.

Inclusive: We want to involve people from different latitudes not only as participants but also as co-creators, increasing their sense of belonging. We want to attract the regular participants of cultural events but, mostly, those who, for several reasons, are not so closely connected to cultural life.

Communication channels

- People
- Traditional media
- Digital communication platforms
- Social networks
- Partnerships/networks of cooperation
- Events

Target Audience

Domestic: The municipality of Ponta Delgada, the Azores and the entire Portuguese territory;

International: Europe, Great Britain, North and South America, Africa, Russia, the Azorean communities spread across the globe, and the rest of the world.

Humanising Communication

If the medium is the message, we want people to spread the word because they feel part of this extraordinary ECoC adventure, set on mobilising the entire archipelago. To this end, just as we did during the candidacy stage, we will activate the **Azores 2027 ambassadors**. We challenged one person from each island to be an Azores 2027 ambassador. The aim is to multiply these ambassadors over time and

promote the project by word of mouth and local media. We will also extend our network of ambassadors on a national and international scale and invite different people who can be the prime promoters due to their merit within their communities.

Open Door and All-Terrain Culture

During our bidding process, we did a lot of *Open Door* sessions, and during 2027 we want to keep it wide-open. We will set up an Azores 2027 information office in the centre of Ponta Delgada, from 8 am to 8 pm. We will have fixed information stands and a mobile office in other municipalities of São Miguel and on the other islands. In rural areas, we will use pick-up trucks to take the latest news from Azores 2027 and also to take some artists to perform in places far from urban centres to interact with several communities. We will also **Pop the Rocket** since traditional festivities and the arrival of nomadic shows get announced with the launch of fireworks. Azores 2027 wants to revive old traditions and use this particular form of communication to announce the arrival of the ECoC's events to small towns.

Traditional Media

The marketing and communication strategy will involve press, radio and television. We want to highlight that the regional radio and TV stations belong to RTP, the national public radio and TV broadcaster, which broadcasts in Portugal and abroad, and thus will be our media partners. We will establish partnerships with various international TV stations (such as ARTE), broadcast channels and press from several foreign and European countries and invite journalists to cover our ECoC's events. Additionally, we will benefit from the Azores several cultural events that get media attention and use their communication channels to reach their audiences and inform them about our cultural programme.

Digital Platforms Azores 2027

Waves of Culture will broadcast online some of our ECoC's main shows and create a channel that offers 3D and transmedia content to provide the option for people to participate in events remotely, learn more about Azorean culture and access various museums and cultural facilities through virtual visits. Here is our stage in the digital arena to create intersectional experiences between the onsite and the online and promote wider accessibility. It is a way to take Azores 2027 all over the world. In addition to the official Azores 2027 website, we will use social media outreach and the online platform **9 Neighbourhoods** created during the bidding process. Through this project, we want to share stories and ideas, and we want to keep on sharing our imaginations. The communication will be two-way: **we want to communicate, but we also want people to communicate with us**. We want to be story hunters because nobody can resist a good story. We intend to complement this participative website with a monthly newspaper, in partnership with daily local newspaper *Açoriano Oriental*.

Additionally, it will become a Forum of digital information and a participative journalism exchange academy with local and European youngsters who together will find ways to keep our journalism of proximity away from fake news and information manipulation. May we overcome together the threats of democracy and the digital revolution by being closer in communication and learning with our neighbours. We will work in partnership with **On the Move, Digital Meets Culture** and **Europeana**, three important European digital platforms to promote internationally the cultural projects and opportunities of Azores 2027.

We will also maintain one of the actions launched during the bidding process—**Human Nature**—to get to know those who visit us and unearth new stories related to culture. We will promote campaigns on **social media** that encourage a sense of humour, e.g. selfie competitions with different themes aimed at ECoC's visitors—the winners will get prizes (e.g. a basket of products from the Azores). **United in Diversity**: the motto of the EU suits the Azores, marked by territorial discontinuity, formed by nine islands that are as diverse as they are identical. The focus of our communication will show that there is much more that unites us than separates us. We will encourage the launching of a movement on **social media**—using the hashtags **#azores2027** and **#ournatureishuman**—to identify the cultural events happening on all islands. The aim is to celebrate the Azores and instil pride in the region's inhabitants, inviting them to participate in the ECoC.

From the Azores with Love

International audience

We will reach out to a broader audience through various promotional and editorial campaigns, cooperating with the Tourism of Portugal, the Ministry of Foreigner Affairs and its embassies, in addition to tourism enterprises, tour operators and travel agencies to plan special travel/cultural offers. From 2025 onwards, these partnerships will help develop internal and external promotion actions—online and offline—promoting competitions for communication ideas, ensuring our presence in several international fairs and working in cooperation with regional entities and local tourism promotion agencies. We also foresee that it will be possible to create incentives to attract new air routes—increasing accessibility to the country and archipelago—and use the Support Fund for Tourism and Film to attract audiovisual production teams to the Azores.

Cultural Tourism Pack

Through a partnership with the Azores Tourism Association, we intend to develop a campaign to publicise the cultural offer, which consists of tourist packages with free passes and discounts for some of the main ECoC's events.

Azores 2027 – Certified by Nature

The Azores export to various corners of the world dozens of products recognised for their excellence, bearing the quality seal *Marca Açores* (Azores Brand). In partnership with the Government of the Azores, the Azores 2027 logo becomes associated with these products. Through a QR code, their consumers access ECoC artistic content. We also intend to create Azores 2027 merchandising for sale at different points across the archipelago and on the mainland.

Mascots

Azores 2027 has three mascots: **a sperm whale**, a constant visitor of our waters, **a cory's shearwater**, the most emblematic seabird of the Macaronesia region, and the **Azores cattle dog (cão de fila)**, the famous dog from São Miguel Island. Schools will get invited to participate in a contest to name and draw our mascots. The Government of the Azores, whale watching companies and the Azores cattle dog club are invited for partnerships to create educational and cultural programmes on these animals.

Culture is a journey

Ports and **Airports** take on great importance in this region. They are privileged places to promote Azores 2027, not only by displaying posters and distributing programmes but also through site-specific communication actions and the participation of artists-in-transit who perform for passengers. A good example of that is the artistic project **Between Islands**. We intend to be partners with airline companies SATA AIR Açores, Azores Airlines, TAP, Ryanair, Lufthansa, Air France, Tui, Swiss Air and Iberia to promote Azores 2027 on their flights, reaching an audience of 15 international destinations. We also intend to partner with Atlânticoline, the Azorean maritime transport company, along with some cruise ships companies which dock in the Azores. We wish the Azorean flight and shipping companies to support the ECoC by printing the Azores 2027 brand on aircraft and boats. One of Azores 2027 artistic projects is **Iceberg**, a boat of the arts that takes culture to the nine islands. This boat will promote our cultural programme. One of the aspects that will be explored—the Azores being the most maritime region of Europe—is the VHF radio communication with the sailors crossing the Atlantic, with information about our programme and brief notes of the artistic project **Weather Forecast**.

We want to work closely with **all the nineteen Azorean municipalities** and the World Council of **Houses of the Azores** to promote the Azores 2027 initiative. Altogether, there are sixteen Houses spread around the world: three on the Portuguese mainland (Lisbon, North and Algarve), one in Madeira (Funchal), two in the USA (New England and California), three in Canada (Quebec, Ontario and Winnipeg), one in Bermuda, another in Uruguay, and five in Brazil (Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Santa Catarina, Rio Grande do Sul and Baía).

Ponta Delgada has **twinning agreements** with San Leandro, California; Fall River, Massachusetts; Newport, Rhode Island; Kauai, Hawaii; Praia, Cape Verde; Caué, Saint Thomas and Prince; Florianópolis, Brazil; Pleven, Bulgaria; and the Portuguese town of Belmonte, Castelo Branco. We want to take advantage of the existing cooperation to deepen ties between these territories and promote cultural exchanges within the scope of the ECoC.

Azores 2027 Off-site

In the run-up to the ECoC and during the year 2027, we want to **promote cultural programmes in mainland Portugal and Europe** that showcase Azorean arts and culture (music, contemporary dance, architecture, literature, film, visual arts and gastronomy). With artistic direction by **Teatro Micaelense**, this project—as a way of amplifying Azores 2027—involves national and international alliances.

Q35 Plan to emphasise that the ECoC is an action of the EU.

The Azores are in the middle of the Atlantic, at the triple junction between the North American, Eurasian and African plates. From the 18th century onwards, these Atlantic islands served as an *entrepôt* between Europe and North America. From here, hundreds of Azoreans left in search of *lost Californias of abundance*. For centuries, mainly due to emigration, we felt more American than European. When Portugal joined the European Union in 1986, the Azores began to benefit from funds to develop an autonomous region *at the tail end of Europe*. Today, the Azores are proud to be one of the outermost regions of the European Union. Thanks to the EU's investments, modern roads, ports and airports have been rebuilt—opening up these islands to the world. **Today, we know that Europe begins here.**

Representatives of the various European bodies and the governments of Lithuania and Greece—countries that will assume the EU presidency in 2027, will be invited to the **opening and closing ceremonies**, and all communication and marketing materials will feature the European Union flag. At the closing session of the ECoC 2027, we plan

to invite the cities from France, the Czech Republic and Macedonia that will host the ECoC 2028 in a symbolic handover ceremony, with several artistic moments to pass on the spirit of culture of Europe and the idea of ECoC.

The Azores 2027 programme presents artists from various European countries. Their coming will strengthen the connection to the European project and reinforce the idea that we are all “united in diversity”. Let us highlight the artistic project **10th Island** focusing not only on the history of the Azores and of our communities around the world but also the history of the EU. Under the scope of this project, and to mark Europe Day, we want to invite historians, cultural stakeholders, environmental activists, politicians, researchers and artists for an international conference on European identity, archipelagic thinking and the relationship between nature and culture, responsibility, sustainability and innovation. We will also invite the Portuguese Post to create a commemorative stamp collection to celebrate Azores 2027's adventure, partnering with several European artists.



Alto da Memória, city of Angra do Heroísmo, Terceira Island

VII. Capacity to Deliver

Q36 Evidence of broad and strong political support and sustained commitment from relevant local, regional and national public authorities.

The decision to bid for ECoC was presented and voted unanimously in favour by the **Ponta Delgada Municipality**, both in the council meeting and in the Municipal Assembly on May 5, 2021, and May 27, 2021, respectively. There is a broad political commitment surrounding our ECoC bid. As the leading structure, the **Ponta Delgada Municipality** built a bridge with the **Government of the Azores**, which co-promotes the project, and with all **the other eighteen Municipalities of the Azores**, which have signed a partnership agreement supporting this bid on June 29, 2021, in Graciosa Island. Several very relevant institutions have partnered with the **Municipality of Ponta Delgada** in support of this bid: **The Association of Civil Construction and Public Works Contractors of the Azores**, **Azores Tourism Association**, **Ponta Delgada Chamber of Commerce and Industry**, **The Economic and Social Council of the Azores** and the **University of the Azores**. In November 2020, the **Government of Portugal**—through the **Ministry of Culture**—announced financial support and monitoring to the city that gets the title. **Tourism of Portugal** and **The State Secretary of Tourism** have also declared an interest in supporting and discussing how to use their online and onsite platforms, agencies, and a network of actions, foreseeing a financial and in-kind contribution to the overall communication/marketing strategy.

Q37 Evidence that the city has, or will have, adequate and viable infrastructure to host the title.

a) How the ECoC will use and develop the city's cultural infrastructure.

Ponta Delgada has plenty of experience hosting large-scale sports and cultural events, having specialised technical teams, and offering an extensive list of cultural and event spaces. The venues mentioned in our cultural profile will be the infrastructure that will host our programme. We want Azores 2027 to value, strengthen and explore their potential and already existing dynamics, hence the works of conservation and rehabilitation in several structures and the public space. **The Artist's House** will strengthen the cultural infrastructure, giving new value to architectural heritage and creating a working space for large music ensembles. **Coliseu Micaelense** and **Teatro Micaelense** are in the very centre of the city and can host all sorts of indoor events—exhibitions, performances, concerts, conferences and film festivals. **Portas do Mar** [sea complex] offers an open-air Amphitheatre and an indoor multi-purpose pavilion, and **São Miguel Stadium** and **Jácome Correia Municipal Sports Complex** are good fits for events with thousands of people. **Carlos Machado Museum** dates from 1880, is currently under restoration and amplification, is a three-building museum of art, natural history and religious and ethnographic artefacts with exhibitions spaces for contemporary art. Two other museums complement our city, the **Hebrew Museum – Synagogue Sahar Hassamain** and the **Military Museum of the Azores**. The city offers a multitude of midsize cultural centres both downtown and in the several neighbourhoods suited for exhibitions, performances and workshops: **Municipal Centre of Culture**, **Natália Correia Centre**, **Fenais da Luz** and **Santo António Cultural Centres**, **Luís de Camões Auditorium**, **Academia das Artes**, **Estúdio 13 – Centre of Creative Industries**, **Ponta Delgada Public Library** and **Regional Archive**. The city has a circuit of independent art galleries and artist-run spaces: **Fonseca**

Macedo – Contemporary Art, vaga – space for art and knowledge, Brui, Miolo, Masmorra, Oficina – Art Gallery, to name a few. At its very centre, **O Quarteirão** is a creative quarter with galleries, workshops and creative industries projects which will gain a **Creative and Cultural Industries Factory**. Nearly every school in town has its theatre or auditorium, which will benefit from Azores 2027, including the very central **University of the Azores' Aula Magna** and **Domingos Rebelo High School**. Our programme will include some of the 100 religious facilities on the island. It will go out in streets, non-conventional and abandoned spaces, ports, boats, parks, gardens, in the coastline and out in nature, creating new and temporary stages, and the city, municipality and the region have indeed much potential to offer. In Ribeira Grande, **Arquipélago – Contemporary Arts Centre's** state-of-the-art facilities are suitable for exhibitions, artistic research and residencies; elsewhere in the island, we find several smaller theatres, museums, convents turned into cultural centres, exhibition spaces and multi-purpose facilities. Across the archipelago there are ten facilities destined for live performances, such as the **Cultural and Conference Centre of Angra do Heroísmo**, the island of **Graciosa's Cultural Centre** and the **Multiuse Cultural Centre of Corvo**. There is also a diversified and significant museum network around the regional territory comprising: the **Museum of Angra do Heroísmo**, the **Museum of Horta**, the **Museum of Santa Maria**, the **Museum of Graciosa**, the **Museum of Flores**, the **Museum of Pico**, amongst others.

b) Accessibility (regional, national and international transport)

There is a sense that the Azores is a long way away and is difficult to reach. We have come a long way in getting better at opening up to the world and making sure people get here from all corners of the world. In 2019, we hosted 1.8 million passengers. Covid-19 affected our numbers, yet our Government and Tourism Association are making an effort to turn things around by opening new routes, rebranding the Azores as a safe and sustainable destination and appealing to slower, greener and transformative tourism. The results are showing and promise a recovery.

Air Transportation: We are well-connected via plane to Lisbon and Porto and, from there, to the rest of Europe. In two hours only, Ponta Delgada International Airport is the main gateway to the Azores with direct connections to the other islands and several European and North American cities. After the liberalisation of the Azores airspace in 2014, we opened new routes with the entry of new companies, namely low-cost services, resulting in more favourable access prices, increasing the tourist flow exponentially. We have several daily flights operated by SATA, TAP and Ryanair. The archipelago also receives flights from companies such as Lufthansa, Tui, Swiss Air and Iberia: there are regular air connections from up to fifteen international destinations such as Belgium, Paris, Madrid, Gran Canaria, Cape Verde, Frankfurt, Finland, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, UK, Toronto, Bermuda, Boston and California. All nine islands of the Azores have airports connected through the regional airline SATA Air Açores. Santa Maria, Terceira, Faial and Pico receive daily flights from Lisbon. Since June 2021,

flying to another island costs a maximum of €60, a return ticket. Visitors from other horizons have a wide range of travel packages available to visit and travel to one or more islands. SATA Air Açores provides a routing service, free of charge for passengers travelling within the Azores, with origin or destination in mainland Portugal or Funchal. Thus, for incoming and outgoing flights to and from the Azores, passengers can book for free a ticket for an island that is not the one for entry, starting their journey back on an island other than the one leaving the Azores.

Sea Transportation: Ponta Delgada has a cruise pier, through which 150 ships from Europe and America pass and stop by annually. Over 34 cruise lines bring around 120,000 visitors arriving each year across the sea from the UK, US, Canada and Europe. Ponta Delgada is home to the main commercial port of the Azores and one of the largest marinas in the Azores, where, every year, dozens of yachts dock. There are, in total, seven marinas in the region and 118 companies renting boats and providing sea leisure services. The Triangle islands (Pico, São Jorge and Faial) have boat transport from morning to night all year round, and the trip duration goes from 25 minutes to 1h45. These connections intensify in the summer period. Horta's Marina is an international hub that hosts thousands of sailors from all around the world. Corvo and Flores are connected daily by boat.

Land Transportation: The offer in Ponta Delgada is quite diverse for independent visitors or an organised visit. The main form of transport is by car: the island of São Miguel has two fast lanes connecting the north and south coasts with modern access. From Ponta Delgada airport, there are taxis, shuttle buses and several rent-a-car services to the city centre. The city has a minibus network that connects all the central neighbourhoods. The city centre is also a point of departures and arrivals for three bus lines that link to other towns and villages on the island. The city and the island have a taxi network, accessible on-demand and in person, plus a wide range of rent-a-car services. Atlantic Bikes is an alternative to a less polluted and car-congested region: bike rental services function through an app, with daily and monthly plans. Ponta Delgada, Ribeira Grande and Lagoa currently have bike lanes; other municipalities are following the thread and creating sustainable transportation options. All the islands of the Azores offer modern roads, public transport systems and rent-a-car services. For the adventurers on foot, the Azores offers eighty-eight certified hiking trails in the nine islands.

c) Accommodation

Ponta Delgada is within reach of most of the 1,650 accommodation facilities on the island of São Miguel in 30 to 60 minutes. The accommodation capacity is 14,381 beds on the island of São Miguel and 26,500 beds across the nine islands of the Azores. As a result, guests can be well accommodated even in high season, as there are plenty of options available to suit all types of experiences and budgets: from the luxurious and exclusive five-star hotels, four-star hotels, thermal hotels, sea resorts, rural tourism to holiday apartments, glamping, cabins—the offer is truly diverse. For low budget travellers, the region provides several

youth hostels, boutique hostels and campsites on every island; the no-budget visitors can potentially find around 900 hosts for Couchsurfing. The region has undergone a significant increase in overnight stays, managing over three million overnight stays in 2019. These numbers include all lodging types, with 68,9% (over two million overnight stays) happening only on the island of São Miguel. The tourism industry generated over 10,500 tourism-related jobs, which accounts for more than 10,8% of the regional income, becoming an increasingly crucial economic factor in the archipelago. The tourism business sector faced a recession in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, Azoreans have not ceased to invest in new accommodations, the existing offer did not get lost, and tourists and visitors have kept their interest in this piece of paradise. As we write, in the middle of 2021, the Azores are scoring the highest tourism visiting rates in the country. The occupancy of the commercial accommodation facilities is at 57,9% in São

Miguel Island and 50% in the Azores. The bed capacity of the accommodation facilities should not reach its limit, even in the case of additional demand in 2027. **We will scale all artistic and cultural programme activities to the size of each island, in full compliance, sustainability and quality of experience for visitors and locals.**

Q38 Plans for cultural, urban and tourism infrastructure projects in connection with the action of the ECoC.

Investment	How it will serve the Community and the ECoC	Cost	Year of completion
Renovation and improvement of Conservatório Regional of Ponta Delgada, Coliseu Micaelense (Coliseum) and Teatro Micaelense (Theatre)	The Conservatório renovation will grant better conditions for music students and the improvement of Luis de Camões Auditorium as a venue for performances. The renovations in Coliseu Micaelense and Teatro Micaelense will grant the update of proper technical conditions for both venues.	€2 761 398,73 Government of the Azores and EU Funds	2025
Rehabilitation of the Municipal Market	This rehabilitation guarantees the maintenance of its traditional appearance and creates conditions for the State of Grace project, developing spaces for cultural practices.	€1 500 000 Municipality of Ponta Delgada	2024
Rehabilitation of Praça Gonçalo Velho and adjacent areas	This square will gain a new centrality and dynamics: enhancing its capacity to become a stage for outdoor cultural events, promote enhanced movement of people and favour greener mobility.	€500 000 Municipality of Ponta Delgada	2024
Intermunicipal Bike lane (Lagoa/ Ponta Delgada/ Ribeira Grande)	Ensures a connection between three municipalities through green transport alternatives.	€1 100 000 Municipalities of Ponta Delgada, Ribeira Grande, Lagoa	2024
Factory of Culture and Creative Industries (FCIC)	FCIC boosts O Quarteirão, Ponta Delgada's creative quarter, through the concession of spaces to artists and creative stakeholders in a co-working and co-creation regime.	€60 000 Municipality of Ponta Delgada	2025
Rehabilitation of Igreja da Graça – Academia das Artes	It is one of the prime centres of artistic creation, experimentation and presentation in the city. A former church closed for several years, it returns to being a space for music, exhibitions and cultural capacity building.	€330 000 Government of the Azores	2025
Conservation and expansion of the Carlos Machado Museum	Construction of rooms to preserve the natural, artistic and ethnographic collection, allowing for better accessibility and more exhibition and workshop spaces.	€681 000 Government of the Azores	2024
Conservation of Ponta Delgada Public Library and Regional Archive	Improve spaces, allowing for more articulation between interior and exterior. It is a central infrastructure to host events during the ECoC for meetings and workshops.	€440 000 Government of the Azores	2025
Conservation of Arquipélago – Contemporary Arts Centre	Strengthen our contemporary art infrastructure with spaces for artistic creation and fruition. It is a central space in our ECoC's project in linking with creation, experimentation and outreach.	€400 000 Government of the Azores	2025
Forest of Fiction	A wooded park strengthens the Urban Park of Ponta Delgada, transforming green pasture areas into a forest with a literary connection.	€80 000 Municipality of Ponta Delgada	2024

CREDITS

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