



Kapana Creative District



Old tradition reinvented: a giant step for participation and inclusion



PLOVDIV



338,153



Participatory
governance of cultural
heritage



Adaptive reuse of built
heritage



Challenge

Plovdiv is the oldest continuously inhabited European city. In its downtown area, much of the cultural heritage had become derelict, forgotten or abandoned, and the urban spaces and buildings were in need of revitalisation and intervention. Public space was dominated by car parking.



Solution

In 2019, Plovdiv was European Capital of Culture. One goal was rediscovering and revitalising the historic downtown neighbourhood Kapana to spark wider city centre revitalisation.

The neighbourhood became a 'playground' for creatives, using open calls from the city to support the growth of creative businesses and an attractive city centre.

In parallel, the municipality renovated and pedestrianised public areas. Cultural spaces, bars and cafes were developed for people to interact and to allow people to participate in the vibe of the creative district.



How ?

- 1 Through open annual calls, starting in 2014, the cultural and creative sector was invited to help create 'Kapana Creative District'. The calls invited creatives to negotiate with property owners to set up in neglected or abandoned spaces, with the city covering rent for one year. Later calls shifted funding from rent to supporting creative work so the creative industry could develop in real market conditions.
- 2 The annual open calls each have a different theme. The first was on setting up the district; the second also had a focus on events; the third on the urban environment; the fourth on French culture; and the fifth on youth culture, circus and street art.
- 3 Annual thematic open calls will continue to establish Kapana Creative District as a long-term initiative to foster the creative quarter's development. The future calls will continue to combine artists' settling in the Kapana quarter and the realisation of events and initiatives in urban environments.

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Budget/Financing

€ 3.6 million

- For projects from thematic calls (2014-2019): €100,000 financed by the municipality.
- For infrastructural projects in the public areas: €3.6 million (70% financed by the municipality, 30% by the national government).

Management

- Plovdiv Municipality (four people) and Plovdiv 2019 Foundation (15 people) in the framework of the European Capital of Culture bid and implementation.
- Strong support and partners implementing individual projects: cultural operators, many NGOs from the arts and cultural sector and single artists and students.



Transferability

- From the beginning, base the redevelopment process on public discussions and world-café with local citizens, businesses and representatives of local government. Dare to do open-for-all polls on infrastructural decisions.
- Build partnerships; involve people through visits and experiences that mix passive with active roles: Watch & perform, admire & create etc.
- Create friendly and comfortable spaces for leisure and cultural appreciation.
- Have a diverse jury judging each open call.
- Be open-minded and brave in supporting artistic experiments.



Impact

- A unique culture with galleries, studios, workshops, bars, cafes and restaurants has developed, where art meets business and creativity meet economic growth.
- Since 2014, 55 cultural activities have been supported, with hundreds of events year-round. In 2017 more than 500 active businesses were mapped in the neighbourhood.
- In 2019 Kapana Creative District received the award 'Guardian of Bulgarian Architectural Heritage'.
- Through the open-call approach, cultural operators acquired new skills and capacities, and built relations with the Plovdiv 2019 Foundation.



Links

Website: www.visitkapana.bg/en/

Video: <https://vimeo.com/192775121>

Open calls: <https://bit.ly/2NU1Gus>
12 project winners from 2019



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