

# KAUNAS UNESCO City of Design

Monitoring  
Report  
2015-2019



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Designated  
UNESCO Creative City  
in 2015

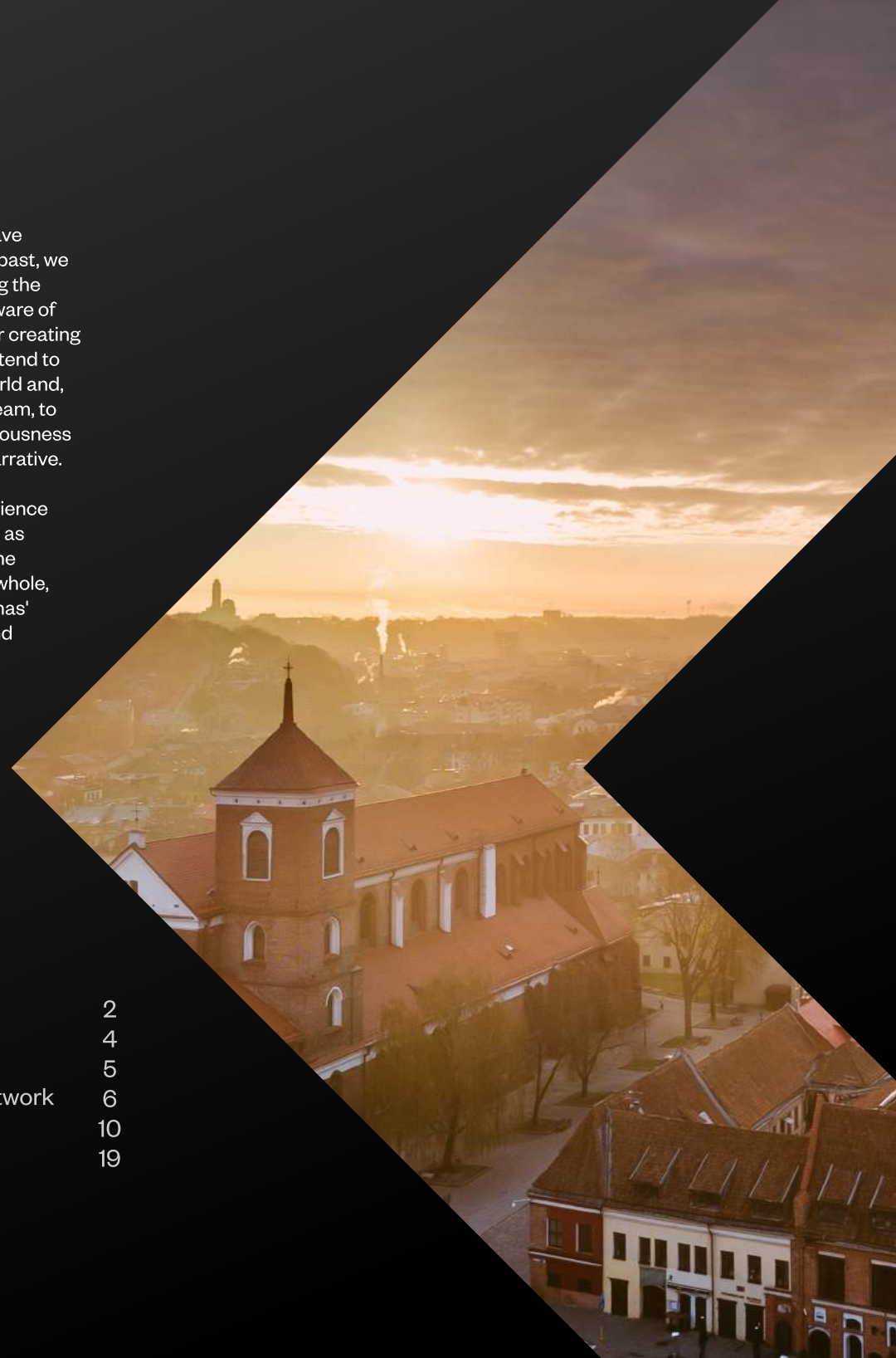
The past 5 years have been particularly important to Kaunas' culture – Kaunas has joined the UNESCO *Creative Cities* Network, has been awarded the European Heritage Label, started its' way to the UNESCO World Heritage list, has been well evaluated by the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and, finally, gained the right to organize the programme for the European Capital of Culture 2022. For a rather small city like Kaunas, it is not only a great honour, but also a huge responsibility – not merely for the past achievements of the Golden Age that had raised Kaunas to the European level, but also for the future that requires not easily and quickly reachable agreement among the whole community of the city.

Organized specifically for the year 2022, but of greater consequence for subsequent years, the programme of the European Capital of Culture has linked entire Kaunas' culture and creativity and has covered all international programmes in the cultural field, including activities related to the UNESCO *Creative Cities*. The preparatory stage in Kaunas has been marked by intensive analyses and learning, discussions with the community of the city, public meetings with artists, city government, minorities, university and high school students, clergy, elderly people and mass media, and we have come a long way seeking unity and joining forces. It has been a stage of reconsidering our cultural strategy, auditing various programmes and activities, looking for synergy among our commitments to various organizations (UNESCO, the European Commission, etc.) and clearly defining our goals.

At present, we are more numerous, we have reached deeper acknowledgment of our past, we have a strong *Kaunas 2022* team covering the entire Kaunas' creative field, and being aware of that, we feel responsible and prepared for creating the future for Kaunas. With this aim, we intend to employ experience from the inherited world and, together with the present *Kaunas 2022* team, to transform it into productive future consciousness by creating a new Kaunas' Golden Age narrative.

In this stage of work, global cultural experience and creative collaboration are vital for us, as nothing but culture can merge the past, the present and the future into a meaningful whole, and only creativity will help us to link Kaunas' design heritage, universal accessibility and innovation-based solutions.

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Kaunas is proud to be a City of Design in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. This is a huge opportunity for a young, eager and rapidly changing city to grow together with international partners from all over the world, gain and share experience.

Recent years have been the years of our discovery, familiarisation and recognition. It is a low start for major initiatives. This is a time when we are renewing our identity as a design city, trying to expand the boundaries of design perception and action, from forms to content - from the purely material environment to improving the quality of processes and services, linking the design heritage with ideas of accessibility, inclusive and sustainable design. We see a huge yet not fully used opportunity to connect all of this with an eager, innovative, potential city, combining scientific and creative forces for common purposes.

In 2022 Kaunas will become the European Capital of Culture. Designing Happiness is an inspiring and significant component of this project. Already, this project is acting as one of the major catalysts for creativity in the city. From now on, Kaunas 2022 becomes the main face of Kaunas City of Design in the activities of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. Shared goals, an active creative team, and united capabilities make for a breakthrough, by moving from ambitious plans to tangible actions.

We believe that 2022 will be a year of recognition for our international UNESCO partnership and that Kaunas will become an important place and a destination in a creative journey on the world map of culture and design.

Mayor of Kaunas  
Visvaldas Matijošaitis





Kaunas joined the UNESCO *Creative Cities* Network in 2015. As a City of Design, it largely bases its' identity on the design heritage – impressively plentiful and masterly architecture and design of interwar modernism.

Modernism architecture and design is naturally one of the focal topics in Kaunas' programme for the European Capital of Culture 2022. In charge of the UNESCO *Creative Cities*-related activities since 2019, the organization *Kaunas 2022* has launched a programme “Modernism for the Future” that strives to unite a community of modernism fans and to inspire contemporary artists, designers and modernism interpreters worldwide. Initiated in 2018, an international conference “Modernism for the Future” encourages creative and constructive dialogue across different fields and among various creative professionals. In 2019, Kaunas hosted the international Modern Cities Forum that aims at establishing a network of UNESCO modernism heritage cities.

The design programme of *Kaunas 2022* “Designing Happiness” mostly focuses on universal design, accessibility issues and the idea of design for all, striving to adapt creative works and environment to human diversity.

Initiated in 2019 and upcoming in 2020, an international design festival mainly explores the topic of accessibility (along with design heritage and design innovations). Among other subjects, the newly started landscape design festival pays particular attention to urban development and public green spaces that are also significant to the quality of human life.

Seeking to stimulate creativity in the society, to encourage communities and to embed design in the daily life of the city, Kaunas implements various programmes, starting with *Kaunas 2022* programmes of community-based art “Fluxus Yard” or community labs “Fluxus labs!” and ending with municipal programmes “Initiatives for Kaunas”, that invites to contribute to creative problem-solving in the city, and “Kaunas Highlights” for creation and installation of design objects and works of art in public spaces.

Fostering creative economy, Kaunas advances local manufacturing and service sectors by promoting cultivating and manufacturing of local products, as well as presenting them through the programme “From China į kaimą”, and by offering a customized service development package “Culture Concierge”, “Culture Cab” and “Bed and Culture”. A special programme of Kaunas City municipal institution *KaunasIN* focuses on acceleration of startups and on networking of people interested in starting business.

Among other events, the annual European Capital of Culture Forum that encourages synergy with other sectors and partners representing various creative fields presents a perfect opportunity to share knowledge, get inspiration and build collaborative networks.

As a City of Design and the European Capital of Culture 2022, Kaunas organizes many events and implements numerous programmes that attract a large number of partners from all over the world, including members of the UNESCO *Creative Cities* Network. With even more planned and upcoming events, Kaunas will strive to take full advantage of the designation and to truly contribute to the implementation of the goals of the UNESCO *Creative Cities* Network.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of the city: Kaunas

Country: Lithuania

Creative field of designation: City of Design

Date of designation: 2015

Date of submission of the current report: 2019

Entity responsible for the report: Kaunas City Municipality

Entity responsible for preparing the report:  
*VŠĮ Kaunas 2022* [Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022]

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#### CONTRIBUTION TO THE NETWORK'S GLOBAL MANAGEMENT

Number of UCCN annual meetings attended in the last four years:

September 13-16, 2016 – UNESCO *Creative Cities* annual meeting, Östersund (Sweden).

April 11-15, 2019 – UNESCO *Creative Cities* annual meeting, Fabriano / Ascoli Piceno (Italy).

September 21-23, 2019 – UNESCO *Cities of Design Convening*, Detroit (USA).

Hosting of a UCCN annual meeting and dates:  
None

Hosting of a working or coordination meeting addressed to one or more specific UCCN creative field representatives:

Kaunas has not yet been hosting an annual meeting of the UNESCO *Creative Cities* or an international conference with UCCN members.

Hosting of an international conference or meeting on specific issues salient to the Creative Cities with a large participation of members of the Network:

Over the past several years, *VŠĮ Kaunas 2022* and Kaunas City Municipality organized several conferences that are important to partners and creative cities. Held in 2018 and 2019, the European Capital of Culture Forum is an annual event initiated by the team of *Kaunas 2022*, where leaders representing various creative fields from all around Europe come together for gaining and sharing knowledge, getting inspiration, networking and discussing the opportunities for cooperation. One of the main objectives of this initiative is to encourage the culture of collaboration with other sectors, such as business, science or politics.

In 2018, on the initiative of *Kaunas 2022*, an international conference “Modernism for the Future” was launched. Encouraging creative and constructive dialogue across different fields and among various professionals, the two-day event provided an opportunity not only to get acquainted with theoretical papers, but also to share case studies and best practices that are important for Kaunas' and international architecture and design creative field.

In 2019, Kaunas hosted the Modern Cities Forum. This international long-term event aims at establishing a network of UNESCO modernism heritage cities and at developing cooperation to deal with such urgent issues as acknowledgement of modernism heritage, financial incentives, urban development needs and involving communities.



Financial and/or in-kind support provided to UNESCO's Secretariat in order to ensure the management, communication and visibility of the UCCN:

From 2015 to 2019, regular communication tasks in Kaunas City Municipal Administration were performed by a responsible agent in charge of continuously preparing, managing and translating both to Lithuanian and English information relevant to the UNESCO Cities of Design network. The municipal administration bears the cost of continuous activities of the responsible agent amounting to nearly 30 000 EUR during four years. A yearly fee of 700 EUR is paid for administrating Kaunas' account in the website <https://www.designcities.net/city/kaunas/>.

Membership of the Steering group and period:  
From December 2015 to November 2019

Participation in the evaluation of applications:  
Kaunas has not yet participated in evaluation of applications of candidate cities.







MAJOR INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED AT THE LOCAL LEVEL TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE UCON in:

making creativity an essential component of urban development, notably through partnerships involving the public and private sectors and civil society

Kaunas City Municipality, together with *Kaunas 2022*, have launched two international programmes for fostering creativity and promoting design and architecture. One of them is “Designing Happiness”. This programme covers projects that help to strengthen the bonds between people and things, people and their environment, as well as human connections. The programme mainly focuses on creating universal design, on implementing the idea of design for all, and on practically adapting creative works to human diversity and people's specific needs.

The aim of the second programme “Modernism for the Future” is for the interwar period, as well as its physical heritage (modernist architecture, design, interiors), to become a source of memory, identity, dialogue and creativity. Through creative workshops, excursions, meetings and other practical activities, this programme strives to unite an active and civic community of modernism fans and those who cherish it and to inspire contemporary artists and modernism interpreters worldwide.

Acknowledging the importance of decentralization and seeking to embed creativity in the society, Kaunas City and Kaunas District Municipalities, together with *Kaunas 2022*, give special attention to city quarters and the district. *Kaunas 2022* implements the programme of community labs “Fluxus labs!”, the programme involving various cultural institutions, communities, organizations and businesses of Kaunas district “Contemporary Elderships” and the programme to create professional art in public and private spaces “Fluxus Yard”. These activities are crowned by the Fluxus festival, a growing major annual event of *Kaunas 2022*.

Kaunas City Municipality maintains two other programmes successfully promoting incorporation of creativity in development of the city. Initiated by Kaunas City Municipality, the programme “Initiatives for Kaunas” invites non-governmental organizations and urban communities to contribute to solving Kaunas' problems by proposing initiatives and submitting applications. Through this programme, the city finances projects that address relevant challenges and are clearly result-orientated. Started in 2017, “Kaunas Highlights” is a programme for creation and installation of design objects and works of art in public spaces that has involved society in creative development of Kaunas' public spaces.

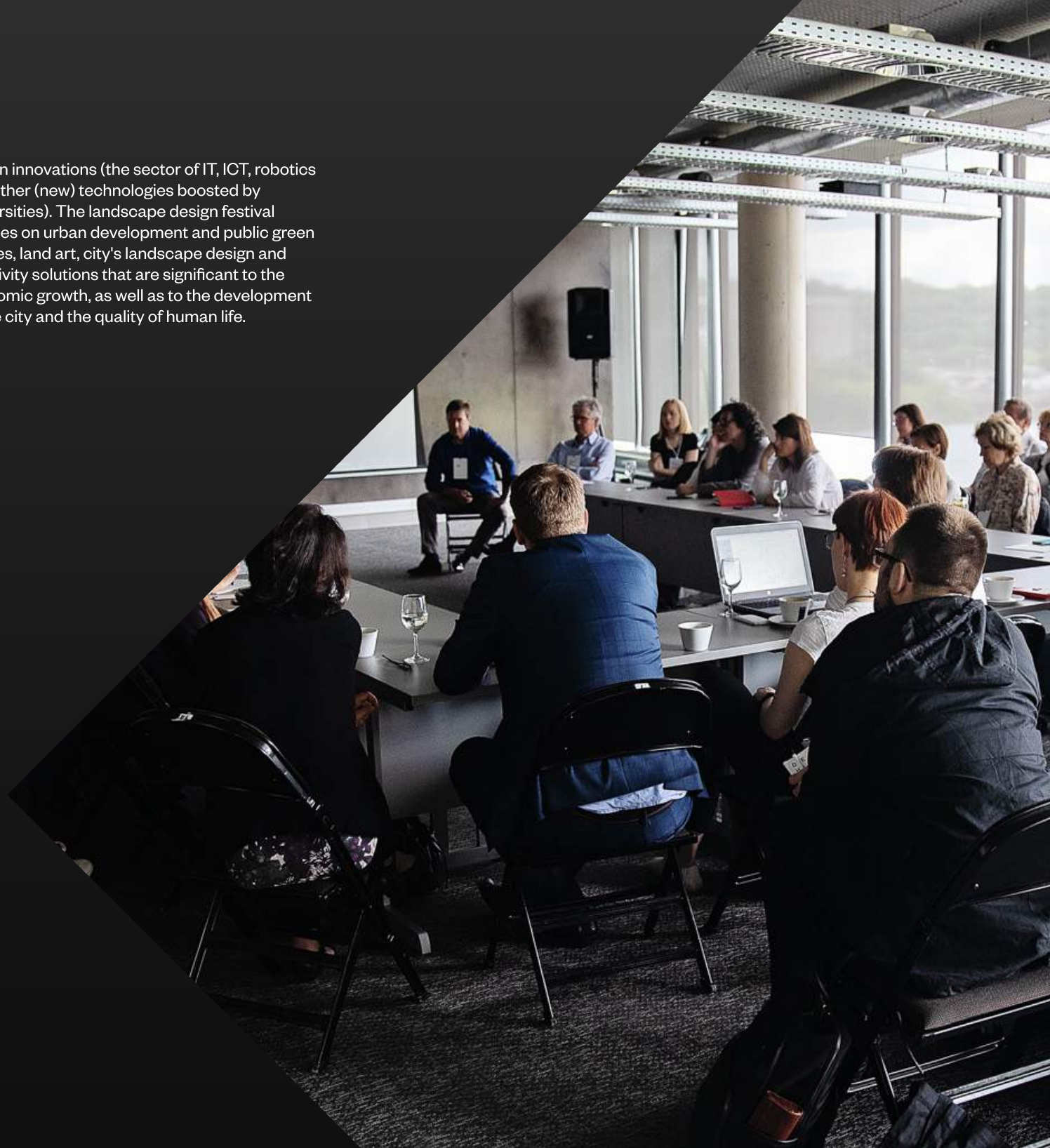
strengthening the creation, production, distribution and enjoyment of cultural goods and services and fostering the creative economy

Kaunas City Municipality, together with *Kaunas 2022* and Kaunas District Municipality, have channelled creativity to promoting new good taste and way of acting, to developing authentic design and to improving creative ethics and aesthetics. "Designing Happiness" advances local manufacturing and service sectors by promoting cultivating and manufacturing of local products, as well as their aesthetic presentation through the programme "From China į kaimą", and by offering a new package of customized service development "Culture Concierge", "Culture Cab" and "Bed and Culture".

Kaunas city culture part-financing programme, since 2016 called "Initiatives for Kaunas", continues to function successfully. Through this programme, representatives of cultural industries and cultural operators are provided partial financial support according to established criteria. This programme promotes diversity of cultural expression, cross-domain and cross-cultural projects, collaboration with other economic sectors.

In 2019, *Kaunas 2022* launched two new festivals oriented at accessibility design and landscape design. The international design festival is based on the model that reveals Kaunas' design potential and specific areas: design heritage (interwar modernism architecture, interiors, environment artefacts, historic vehicles, aviation, marks of soviet heritage, authentic material environments, etc.), accessibility design (solutions, promotion and development of products, services and physical environment accessible to everyone) and

design innovations (the sector of IT, ICT, robotics and other (new) technologies boosted by universities). The landscape design festival focuses on urban development and public green spaces, land art, city's landscape design and creativity solutions that are significant to the economic growth, as well as to the development of the city and the quality of human life.



improving access to and participation in cultural life as well as the enjoyment of cultural goods and services, notably for marginalized or vulnerable groups and individuals, including women and youth

“Designing Happiness”, *Kaunas 2022* programme for Kaunas city and Kaunas district, is based on the ideas of *design for all* and the aim to adapt environment to the great variety of people. Usually an intervention in the environment, products and services in order to ensure full participation in various social activities is only seen as a special need of people with disability, but *Kaunas 2022* strives to expand the limits of comprehension and to address all social groups that must overcome barriers, irrespective of their abilities, needs, origin, age or gender.

On the 20th of March 2018, *Kaunas 2022* initiated celebration of the International Day of Happiness in Kaunas. Besides *Kaunas 2022* team, numerous partners, friends and communities of the city got involved. In 2019, the celebration of the Day of Happiness was dedicated to accessibility – to draw attention to the fact that urban cultural life and even public spaces are often accessible only to a young and healthy person, but are hardly accessible or completely inaccessible to a big part of the society. Celebrated for the second time in 2019, the celebration encompassed 160 events with over 130 organizations and 35 000 participants.

Moreover, since 2018, Kaunas City Municipality allocates resources from the programme for heritage protection not only to ensure maintenance, protection and revitalization of cultural assets, but also to adapt them to the needs of people with disability.





developing hubs of creativity and innovation and broadening opportunities for creators and professionals in the cultural sector

Although during four years, no new creative industries or innovation hub has opened in Kaunas, *Kaunas 2022* Design programme is constantly inciting emergence of new culture and creativity incubation forms and spaces suitable for launching creative activities in the city and its' surroundings, also invites to join various movements for innovation and social business. *Kaunas 2022* continuously checks for empty spaces and buildings in the city and maps them with the goal of putting them in action in the nearest future and thus reinforcing the sector of design and other cultural and creative industries.

Kaunas City municipal institution *Kaunas/IN* has renewed the programme for startups that had been running during several years; since 2018, it focuses on acceleration of startups and on networking of people interested in starting business. Selected startups are intensively accelerated by professionals of relevant fields that have accumulated a lot of experience in developing and implementing ideas. Two-month long intensive acceleration course allows companies to optimize internal processes, test their product or service in the market and prepare for the next stage of a startup – attracting investment. Networking services allow to provide participants of the programme with useful and relevant information on launching and operating one's business by organizing various trainings, workshops, idea-presentation and experience-sharing events, open data competitions, etc.



integrating culture and creativity into local development strategies and plans

In 2015, Kaunas City Municipality approved the Strategic Development Plan up to 2022, which pays special attention to creativity and formulates a vision up to 2022: “Kaunas turned into a sustainable and civic-minded city leading in advanced business and innovation, a centre of modern and involving culture, home to learning and happy people”.

In 2017, based on the Strategic Development Plan, Kaunas City Cultural Strategy up to 2027 was approved. It expresses a vision: “Kaunas – city of inclusive culture, contemporary art and innovative design”. This document of utmost importance covers the cultural vision, goals, objectives and guidelines that Kaunas intends to follow for the decade and that have been drafted in agreement among representatives of Kaunas' cultural field, politicians and municipal administration. Among other far-reaching goals, the Cultural Strategy aims at consolidating the position of Kaunas as a City of Design by shaping well-targeted politics for promotion of design in the city, oriented at design culture and design-based thinking at all levels, including creative work, production, business, politics and education”.

This vision is implemented with the help of the above-mentioned specific Kaunas City Municipality and Kaunas 2022 part-financing programmes for culture: in order to foster the common culture of residents, part-financing is allocated to ensuring continuity of ethnic traditions and strengthening multicultural dialogue, creating new cultural services involving the community and young people of the city, increasing cultural inclusion and improving accessibility of cultural services, professional art and culture to the society, etc.

improving awareness-raising on the UCCN and the role of culture and creativity in sustainable urban development and supporting research and analysis in this particular field

To strengthen the cultural sector in Kaunas City, in 2014, Kaunas City Municipality commissioned Kaunas City cultural development feasibility study, including detailed annexes on components of the sector and a SWOT analysis, which was completed in May, 2015. Recommendations provided in the document were incorporated in the Strategic Development Plan of Kaunas City Municipality up to 2022 that was being drafted at that time. Approved in 2017, Kaunas City Cultural Strategy up to 2027 serves as a basis for successfully increasing inclusion of the citizens in cultural life.

In 2018, UCGL organized creative workshops based on the *Agenda 21* for Culture methodological tool *Culture 21 Actions*. The workshops, involving 20 municipal employees and 24 Kaunas' cultural sector representatives, resulted in conclusions of the researchers and a diagram of Kaunas' cultural horizontality and integrity in the context of other cities.

Aiming to expand audiences and increase cooperation among cultural and art organizations, in 2019, Kaunas City municipal institution Kaunas Artists' House started developing a platform for cultural monitoring and analysis. The collected statistical information will make it easier for each organization to monitor and analyse its' activities, attract more event visitors and discover new opportunities for collaboration with other organizations.











#### MAJOR INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED THROUGH INTER-CITY COOPERATION TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE UCCN

During the past 4 years, Kaunas City Municipality organized several important open contests that attracted creators from the UNESCO *Creative Cities* Network and other cities.

In 2016, an international design contest for national science and innovation centre “Science Island” attracted 144 teams from 44 countries. The winner of the contest was Australia and Spain based company “SMAR Architecture Studio” with an exceptional design. The concept of the exposition is being developed by a very experienced Polish company “Multimedia Art & Education”.

In 2017, Kaunas City Municipality launched an international design contest for M. K. Ciurlionis concert hall. From 119 suggestions from all over the world, a project by “Paleko Archstudija” was chosen.

In 2014, by the decision of Kaunas City Municipality, Kaunas entered the competition for the designation as the European Capital of Culture 2022. Competing with Klaipeda and 6 other Lithuanian cities, Kaunas was chosen as a winner. That is one of the greatest and most significant appraisals of Kaunas City culture in the global context, attracting to the activities of various programmes a large number of partners from all over the world, including members of the UNESCO *Creative Cities* Network.

## PROPOSED ACTION PLAN FOR THE FORTHCOMING MID-TERM PERIOD OF FOUR YEARS


Presentation of initiatives, programmes and projects aimed at achieving the objectives of the Network locally

Developing Kaunas' design and creative Kaunas database, mapping the design ecosystem, conducting design field research and monitoring. Drawing on the collected data, Kaunas City Design Strategy as a part of Kaunas City Cultural Strategy would be produced with the aim of qualitative integration of design into the urbanistic, economic, education and innovation sectors of the city.

Communicating the message about the UNESCO City of Design Kaunas to the local community: updating the design of the logo, building communication platforms, preparing information packages, publishing representative publications and producing representative audiovisual works on the City of Design Kaunas.

Supporting and promoting local design products, services and design talents, facilitating the search for foreign partners and markets: developing the programmes "From China į kaimą", "Culture Concierge", "Culture Cab" and "Bed and Culture". Kaunas City Municipality will maintain its programmes "Kaunas Highlights" and "Initiatives for Kaunas". Along with design, such products and services would cover gastronomy, crafts and folk art and in some aspects other categories of the UNESCO *Creative Cities* Network.





Presentation of initiatives, programmes and projects aimed at achieving the objectives of the Network on an international level, particularly those involving other member cities in the Network

Launching and progressing international interdisciplinary Kaunas design festival up to and after 2022, focusing on international design products and services in the domains of accessibility, inclusion, social design and innovation.

Organizing the UNESCO *Cities of Design* subnetwork meeting in Kaunas, in 2022. We would also start working towards possibly hosting the XVII UNESCO *Creative Cities* Annual Conference in 2023.

Organizing one or two events yearly with members of the UNESCO *Cities of Design* subnetwork (communication and collaboration started with Dundee (United Kingdom; on the World Youth Festival in Dundee 2022), Kortrijk (Belgium) and Curitiba (Brazil)).

Estimated annual budget for implementing the proposed action plan

As it was until now, Kaunas City Municipality will allocate on average 5 percent (approximately 1.6 million EUR) of the yearly budget to the cultural and creative domain. Additionally, around 0.5 million EUR per year will be granted to the public spaces creative programme “Kaunas Highlights”. Implementing the programme of the European Capital of Culture, *Kaunas 2022*, that has been committed since 2019 to develop the UNESCO *Creative Cities* activities, will allocate 2.7 million EUR up to 2022 through design oriented Design and Modernism platforms.

Additional support is planned from part-financing programmes of the Lithuanian Council for Culture, EU programme *Creative Europe*, private sponsors. In the next 4 years, over 0.5 million EUR are expected to be attracted from other sources to activities of the City of Design.

1.6 million EUR yearly – municipal financing for cultural institutions and activities  
 0.5 million EUR yearly – “Kaunas Highlights” and  
 0.35 million EUR yearly – “Initiatives for Kaunas”  
 2.7 million EUR in 3 years – *Kaunas 2022*  
 0.5 million EUR in 4 years – other sources  
 (Lithuanian Council for Culture, Creative Europe, etc.)

Plan for communication and awareness

The UNESCO *Creative Cities* designation is currently underexploited in Kaunas; it is familiar only to a small number of cultural sector professionals and is little known in the society. As a moderator of the activities in the network, *Kaunas 2022* has envisaged numerous measures. Firstly, we will raise awareness of the UNESCO *Creative Cities* Network and clearly define the role of Kaunas and the significance of the network to Kaunas. We will strive to increase the interest of the audience and their need to search for information about the UNESCO *Creative Cities* Network and their willingness to participate in events, to become a part of the action. In order to sustain constant interest of the society, along with regular activities, culmination events (a festival, a meeting, important conferences) will be regularly held.

*Kaunas 2022* has long-term goals, surpassing the implementation of the programme for 2022. Legacy, continuity and catalysing activities are essential for Kaunas; therefore, participating in the UNESCO *Creative Cities* Network and related communication will not be limited to *Kaunas 2022* programmes and will be mostly maintained separate, independent and continuous.

International communication is divided into two functional stages: firstly, the search for international partners and enhancing their collaboration with organisations representing Kaunas and Lithuania, and secondly, raising awareness of Kaunas' involvement in the UNESCO *Creative Cities* Network, spreading information about our activities abroad and launching open calls.

For each event held in Kaunas as in a City of Design, communication packages of different intensity are foreseen; their implementation and budget will depend on available *Kaunas 2022* communication resources and hired third party creative agencies.



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