

**THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE, A LEVER FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT**

The European Capital of Culture initiative was launched in 1985 to highlight cultural richness and diversity in Europe, promoting the added value of culture as a driver of development.

The title of ‘European Capital of Culture’ is awarded to cities that testify to cultural richness and diversity in Europe. These cities are designated on the basis of the work programme they propose to implement during the year of selection: **a distinctive element is the ability to contribute to strengthening European citizenship and cultural ties among the peoples of Europe** by promoting mutual understanding and knowledge among citizens coming from different areas of the continent.

Over time the initiative has grown, becoming the opportunity to enhance a city’s international profile by increasing visibility and boosting tourism and cultural development locally.

**NOVA GORICA AND GORIZIA UNITED AS EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE 2025**

**In November 2019, Nova Gorica together with Gorizia submitted a joint application and a cultural programme (the ‘bid book’*)*, making cross-border collaboration not only its strength, but also the emblem of a one-of-a-kind region. After the delivery of the second bid book, on 18 December 2020 Nova Gorica and Gorizia were proclaimed European Capital of Culture 2025:** the first designation awarded to two cities from two different countries (Slovenia and Italy), which shared the drama of the ‘short century’ and found the strength to overcome borders and build a new future.

The official opening was scheduled for 8 February 2025, the National Day of Slovenian Culture, which commemorates the death of the Slovenian poet France Prešeren (8 February 1849). 8 February is a significant date in Italy as well, as it marks the anniversary of the birth of the Italian poet Giuseppe Ungaretti (8 February 1888).

‘GO! Borderless’ is the claim chosen for the European Capital of Culture 2025 to underline the cooperation between the two countries and the cross-border nature of the project, which challenges the conceptions of borders and nationalities, finding its added value in differences and mutual collaboration.

To implement the official programme of the European Capital of Culture, the Slovenian public institution (Javni zavod) GO! 2025 was founded. The infrastructural aspects are coordinated by EGTC GO, the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation founded in 2011 by the Municipalities of Nova Gorica, Gorizia and Šempeter-Vrtojba to address common challenges that can make the cross-border area more competitive and attractive. EGTC GO has jurisdiction over the region covered by the three cities and enables a cooperation based on which they plan and implement together, no longer thinking of three separate municipalities, but of a single, undivided cross-border city. The GO! 2025 institution is financed by the Slovenian Government, whereas the infrastructure works of the EGTC GO are financed with European funds and funds from the Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia.

**GO! 2025 aims to overcome physical and mental barriers between the two cities and in societies, proving that borderless living and cross-border governance can have an impact on mutual strengthening and growth**. Therefore, this is an opportunity to connect the potential of the two border cities and their area in an unprecedented tourist, cultural, economic, educational and infrastructural complex, attractive for investments and tourist flows even beyond 2025.

**MATTOTTI’S PAINTING: UNITY, HARMONY, BELONGING TO A COMMON SPACE**

Overcoming borders, sharing, influences and the importance of the culture that blends between two countries and powerfully blooms in music, dance, art and theatre: it is from the elaboration of these concepts that Lorenzo Mattotti has created the image chosen as the poster for ‘GO! 2025’ and ‘GO! 2025&Friends’. The purpose is to represent the message and objectives of the project, moving between the celebration of the cultural characteristics that Europeans share and the sense of belonging of European citizens to a common cultural space. Lorenzo Mattotti, one of the world's leading authors in the field of graphics, with numerous posters, covers and advertising campaigns under his belt, wanted to condense the essence of this important event in his painting. **The image represents a couple –** he is Italian and she is Slovenian or vice versa, their actual nationality does not matter **– dancing on a bridge surrounded by a thousand shades of green, above the Isonzo/Soča river, elements of union and connection between Gorizia and Nova Gorica.** In the beauty of nature, music and art in general, archetypes of a universal language, we find those elements of sharing without borders that contribute to breaking down every linguistic, physical and political barrier**.** There is the river, the bridge and the meeting between two people to represent two peoples, two cultures, two worlds. A simple image acts as the symbol of the harmony of sharing a journey that starts right from the border.

**GO! 2025, THOUSANDS OF EVENTS TO ENGAGE A VAST #BORDERLESS AREA**

**The European Capital of Culture 2025 will offer thousands of initiatives, concerts, theatre plays, films, dance performances and meetings: a constantly updated programme is available at** [**https://www.go2025.eu/**](https://www.go2025.eu/)**, divided between the official programme managed by the Slovenian Public Institution (Javni zavod) GO! 2025, SPF projects supported by EGTC GO, the GO! 2025&Friends programme and other projects funded by Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia and – last but not least – the events promoted by the two municipalities, Gorizia and Nova Gorica.** The programme of the European Capital of Culture 2025 will involve a large part of the bordering area in Friuli Venezia Giulia and Slovenia: in a sense, it will be a #borderless extension of the Capital of Culture, with the aim of involving the entire region and a good part of Slovenia, to make this area known and loved by tourists well beyond 2025. Holding two thousand years of history, this area is a real ‘time machine’ that leads to splendid historical sites from every era, crossing and recrossing the border: from Celtic influences to the vestiges of the Roman age in the splendid site of Aquileia, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. And there’s more: the marks of the passage of Huns, Turks, Lombards, up to the age of the Patriarchate, the Republic of Venice, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and further on to the dramatic events of the Great War, WWII, and the Cold War: each event leaves deep traces in this border land.

**GO!2025&FRIENDS, BORDERLESS EVENTS NOT ONLY IN GORIZIA**

Alongside the official ‘GO! 2025’ programme, the schedule of ‘GO! 2025&Friends’ will add a series of **events including exhibitions, concerts by international artists and other initiatives to involve not only Gorizia, but also other locations and places in the region throughout 2025**. These events will host names of national and international calibre to enhance the cultural and musical proposal conceived on the occasion of the European Capital of Culture: the aim is to involve visitors who will come to discover the two cities of Gorizia and Nova Gorica, in a journey that embraces the whole of Friuli Venezia Giulia. Boasting its own logo and graphics, representing a continuum with the official agenda, ‘GO! 2025&Friends’ will thus schedule concerts of various kinds in various locations in the region – outside Gorizia – and a number of art exhibitions, in a sort of borderless extension of the Capital of Culture. The goal is to increase the entire region’s participation and exploit the visibility of the initiative to enhance Friuli Venezia Giulia as a tourist destination.

**NOVA GORICA AND GORIZIA: BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT**

Mentioned for the first time in ancient sources dated 1001, in the Middle Ages Gorizia had its own County that reached as far as Tyrol and during the Habsburg Empire it was the city where the Bourbons of France were exiled. Nova Gorica is a modernist project conceived by architect Edvard Ravnikar, a student of Le Corbusier. Piazza Transalpina/Trg Evrope is the common point of the cities and will be the epicentre of the European Capital of Culture 2025: it will fuel reflection on history, current events, minority rights and the values of the European Community.

**In 1947, at the end of WWII, the thousand-year-old city of Gorizia was divided in two: half to Italy, which had lost the war, and the other half to Yugoslavia, which was among the victorious nations. Houses, streets, courtyards, stables, even a cemetery, a tomb. A river, a mountain, entire families. Everything was split in two by the Treaty of Paris.** The city of Nova Gorica was built in the aftermath of the official agreements and the border remained manned for a long time in the heart of the city. Decades of divisions and geopolitical changes followed: barbed wires, armed guards, permits and smuggling, opposition. But there was also the will to overcome hatred and resentment, pacify souls and heal the deep scars left by the war. Those years culminated in 1991 with the declaration of independence of Slovenia from Yugoslavia and in 2004 with the ‘fall' of the border and the admission of Slovenia into the European Union. A new meeting between neighbouring populations occurred in 2007 with the entry of Slovenia into the Schengen Area, conceived as a celebration in Piazza Transalpina - Trg Evrope: located exactly in the centre of the border between Nova Gorica and Gorizia, that was the ideal ‘set’ to prefigure new scenarios of peace and coexistence, promoting a common identity as a legacy for future generations. This is the very reason why Nova Gorica and Gorizia have been designated European Capital of Culture for 2025.

**GORIZIA**

A border city in the heart of Europe, with one foot in Italy and one in Slovenia, a place far from the more traditional tourist routes. Until a few years ago, Piazza Transalpina was the symbol of a border city and the wall that crossed it divided the two souls of the city: today it is not only a topography of an indelible memory, but also the symbol of a renewed unity. From the castle of Gorizia the view opens onto the gentle hills of Collio, a land producing wines known throughout the world.

**NOVA GORICA**

Known as ‘the city of roses’ *(mesto vrtnic),* it was founded after WWII. It is located right on the border with Italy and is in fact inextricably linked to the nearby city of Gorizia – one could say that the two cities flow into each other. The city was built according to the urban planning project of architect Edvard Ravnikar and is marked on its outskirts by the Soča river with the famous Solkan stone bridge – the bridge with the longest stone arch in the world. The city and its surroundings offer a diverse and interesting natural and cultural heritage: from Kromberk Castle to Rihemberk Castle, from the Basilica on Sveta Gora (Holy Mountain) to the Peace Park on Mount Sabotin, from the Panovec Forest to many other natural and cultural attractions.