

# 2019 European Capitals of Culture: Plovdiv and Matera

European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, said: *“The programmes for Plovdiv and Matera show how these cities envisage both their own future and that of Europe, whilst celebrating their extraordinary centuries-old heritage. The European Capital of Culture initiative brings people together and highlights the role of culture in building a European identity. Both cities will help ensure a long-term impact of last year’s successful European Year of Cultural Heritage, which has demonstrated how culture can transform our cities and regions for the better. I wish Plovdiv and Matera every success in the coming year.”*

Plovdiv is the first ever Bulgarian city to be chosen as European Capital of Culture. With a full programme under the motto **“Together”**, 2019 will bring new opportunities to the region and international visibility for the city. More than 300 projects have been organised in Plovdiv, as well as the South Central Region of Bulgaria, and the cities of Varna, Sofia and Veliko Tarnovo, including festivals and community-based projects, structured around themes linked to the characteristic features of Plovdiv, its history, cultural heritage, as well as the challenges facing the city. From discovering the Cyrillic alphabet through various exhibitions, to joint theatre productions with the Western Balkans and the Roma and Turkish communities, visitors will have an array of activities to participate in. The opening celebrations will take place from 11 – 13 January, with a series of indoor and outdoor events, including a music, light and dance performance on the evening of 12 January. Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Mariya **Gabriel** will attend the official opening ceremony on 12 January.

The programme for Matera has been organised under the motto **“Open Future”**, and will have a special focus on social and cultural inclusion and collaborative innovation. Highlights include *“Ars Excavandi”*, a contemporary look at the history and culture of subterranean architecture; *“Re-reading Renaissance”*, a journey through the artistic past of Basilicata and Apulia; and *“Poetry of primes”*, an exhibition on the central role of mathematics in the work of artists throughout the ages. Matera will also stage the first open-air performance of the opera *Cavalleria Rusticana* in co-operation with Teatro San Carlo, as well as 27 projects developed with local creative communities and partners from Europe. The opening celebrations will take place on 19 and 20 January and will gather 2,000 musicians from all the villages of the Basilicata region and many other parts of Europe. Commissioner **Navracsics** will attend the official opening ceremony on 19 January.

## Background

Melina Mercouri, the then Greek Minister of Culture, took the initiative to start the European Capital of Culture in 1985. It has since become one of the most high-profile cultural initiatives in Europe. The cities are selected on

the basis of a cultural programme that must have a strong European dimension, promote the participation and active involvement of the city's inhabitants and contribute to the long-term development of the city and its surrounding region.

Holding the title of European Capital of Culture is also an excellent opportunity for the cities to change their image, put themselves on the world map, attract more tourists and rethink their development through culture. The title has a long-term impact, not only on culture but also in social and economic terms, both for the city and the region.

In 2018, Valletta in Malta and Leeuwarden in The Netherlands were European Capitals of Culture. Following Plovdiv and Matera in 2019, the future European Capitals of Culture will be Rijeka (Croatia) and Galway (Ireland) in 2020, Timisoara (Romania), Elefsina (Greece) and Novi Sad (Serbia, candidate country) in 2021, Esch (Luxembourg) and Kaunas (Lithuania) in 2022, and Veszprém (recommended) in Hungary in 2023.

For More Information

[Plovdiv2019](#) – European Capital of Culture

[#Plovdiv2019](#)

[Matera 2019](#) – European Capital of Culture

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European Capitals of Culture [factsheet](#)

European Capitals of Culture – Thirty years of achievements [brochure](#)

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## [Daily News 03 /01/2019](#)

### **2019 European Capitals of Culture: Plovdiv and Matera**

As of 1 January 2019, [Plovdiv](#) (Bulgaria) and [Matera](#) (Italy) will hold the title of European Capital of Culture for one year. Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, said: *“The programmes for Plovdiv and Matera show how these cities envisage both their own future and that of Europe, whilst celebrating their extraordinary centuries-old heritage. The European Capital of Culture initiative brings people together and highlights the role of culture in building a European identity. Both cities will help ensure a long-term impact of last year’s successful European Year of Cultural Heritage, which has demonstrated how culture can transform our cities and regions for the better. I wish Plovdiv and Matera every success in the coming year.”* Plovdiv is the first ever Bulgarian city to be chosen as European Capital of Culture. With a full programme under the motto

“Together”, 2019 will bring new opportunities to the region and international visibility for the city. Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society will attend the official opening ceremony on 12 January. The programme for Matera has been organised under the motto “Open Future”, and will have a special focus on social and cultural inclusion and collaborative innovation. Commissioner **Navracsics** will attend the official opening ceremony on 19 January. The full press release is online [here](#). A [factsheet](#) and a [brochure](#) on the European Capitals of Culture are available online. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

### **President Juncker sends his condolences to Denmark Prime Minister after train accident**

Commission President Jean-Claude **Juncker** sent yesterday his condolences via a letter to Denmark Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen after eight persons died and 16 were wounded in a train accident on the bridge between Zealand and Funen. President **Juncker** said: *“On behalf of the European Commission, I would like to express my sincere condolences to the families and friends of the victims and the Danish people. Lives were sadly cut short at the moment when the passengers were travelling back from the most festive season of the year. I commend your rescue services for their work, and wish for a speedy recovery of the injured passengers.”* (For more information: Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382)

### **The Juncker Plan supports the rural economy in Spain**

On 27 December 2018, the Investment Plan for Europe – the Juncker Plan – backed part of a €610 million European Investment Bank (EIB) Group guarantee to Spanish bank Cajamar. The guarantee provides better access to finance for small businesses and entrepreneurs in Spain’s rural areas and enables more investments in agri-food projects. Some 15,000 rural businesses are set to benefit from this agreement. Commissioner Phil **Hogan**, responsible for Agriculture and Rural Development, said: *“With €46 billion of additional investment mobilised in Spain, the Juncker Plan is already a success story in the country. This new agreement will bring EU support to small and medium businesses and entrepreneurs in rural areas, where a helping hand is much needed. The rural economy is a green goldmine and I’m glad that the Juncker Plan helps fulfil its potential.”* A press release is available [here](#). As of December 2018, the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) at the heart of the Juncker Plan had already mobilised €371.2 billion of investment across Europe, including €46 billion in Spain. (For more information: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

### **Concentrations: la Commission autorise l’acquisition du contrôle en commun de CIT par Bolloré et APMT**

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l’acquisition du contrôle en commun de Côte d’Ivoire Terminal

("CIT"), basée en Côte d'Ivoire, par Bolloré Africa Logistics, appartenant au groupe Bolloré, toutes deux basées en France, et APM Terminals BV ("APMT"), basée aux Pays-Bas, une filiale en propriété exclusive d'A.P. Møller-Mærsk A/S, basée au Danemark. CIT est actuellement sous le contrôle exclusif d'APMT. CIT est active dans la construction et l'exploitation d'un nouveau terminal à conteneurs en eau profonde dans le port d'Abidjan, en Côte d'Ivoire, destiné à accueillir des navires de haute mer de grande taille et un centre d'acheminement. Bolloré Africa Logistics fournit des services logistiques, notamment de transit, de dédouanement et d'entreposage, et de gestion et exploitation de terminaux portuaires et de chemins de fer. APMT exploite des terminaux à conteneurs. La Commission a conclu que l'opération envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problème de concurrence en raison de son impact limité sur le marché. L'opération a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée du contrôle des concentrations. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le site internet [concurrence](#) de la Commission, dans le [registre public](#) des affaires sous le numéro d'affaire [M.8747](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of COSTA Coffee by The Coca Cola Company**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Costa Coffee of the UK by The Coca Cola Company of the US. Costa Coffee operates coffee shops and hot beverage vending machines mainly in the UK, Ireland and Poland and sells packaged, roast and ground coffee and other ingredients. The Coca Cola Company owns and licensees various trademarks used to market non-alcoholic beverages, produces soft drink concentrate and syrups that it supplies to its bottlers and is responsible for the consumer marketing of beverages sold under its trademarks. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because the companies do not sell the same products and the links between their activities are limited. The operation was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.9122](#). (For more information: Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of joint control over Peggy Holdco by Macquarie and MML**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over Peggy Holdco of the UK by Macquarie Group ("Macquarie") of Australia and MML UK Partners ("MML") of the UK. Peggy Holdco owns ParkingEye, a carpark management company active in the UK. Macquarie is a global provider of banking, financing, advisor, investment and funds management services. MML is a private equity firm. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given its limited impact on the market. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.9225](#). (For more information: Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

## Mergers: Commission clears proposed establishment of two joint ventures by Autolaunch and Beijing Electric Vehicle

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the establishment of two joint ventures by Autolaunch Ltd. of Ireland and Beijing Electric Vehicle Co. Ltd. of China. The joint ventures will be active on the market for engineering services and contract manufacturing of blade electric passenger vehicles. Autolaunch is a 100% owned subsidiary of Cosma Tooling Ireland Unlimited, which is directly held by Magna International Inc., a global automotive supplier active in the areas of manufacturing operations, product development, engineering and sales. Autolaunch is mainly active in the production of tooling and related services. Beijing Electric Vehicle Co. is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Beijing Automotive Group Co. Ltd. and is mainly active in the fields of vehicle system integration and matching, production and development of vehicle control systems, electric drive systems and pure electric passenger systems. The Commission concluded that the proposed creation of the two joint ventures would raise no competition concerns, because the joint ventures have no actual or foreseen activities within the European Economic Area. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.9187](#). (For more information: Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

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For More Information

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European Capitals of Culture [factsheet](#)

European Capitals of Culture – Thirty years of achievements [brochure](#)

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## [Euro celebrates its 20th birthday](#)

The historic moment was a milestone on a journey driven by the ambition of ensuring stability and prosperity in Europe. Today, still young, the euro is already the currency of 340 million Europeans in 19 Member States. It has brought tangible benefits to European households, businesses and governments alike: stable prices, lower transaction costs, protected savings, more transparent and competitive markets, and increased trade. Some 60 countries around the world link their currencies to the euro in one way or another, and we can and are doing more to let the euro play its full role on the international scene. Other EU Member States are expected to join the euro area once the criteria are met.

To mark this anniversary, the five Presidents of the EU institutions and bodies most directly responsible for the euro, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Central Bank and the Eurogroup, commented on the 20 years of the single currency and on its future.

**Jean-Claude Juncker**, President of the European Commission, said: *“As one of the only signatories of the Maastricht Treaty still politically active today, I remember the hard-fought and momentous negotiations on the launch of the Economic and Monetary Union. More than anything, I recall a deep conviction that we were opening a new chapter in our joint history. A chapter that would shape Europe’s role in the world and the future of all its people. 20 years on, I am convinced that this was the most important signature I ever made. The euro has become a symbol of unity, sovereignty and stability. It has delivered prosperity and protection to our citizens and we must ensure that it continues to do so. This is why we are working hard to complete our Economic and Monetary Union and boost the euro’s international role further.”*

**Antonio Tajani**, President of the European Parliament, said: *“The euro is more popular today than ever: three out of four citizens believe it is good for our economy. In order for Europeans to benefit fully from the jobs, growth and solidarity that the single currency should bring, we must complete our Economic and Monetary union through genuine financial, fiscal and political Union. This will also allow Europe to better shield its citizens from potential future crises.”*

**Donald Tusk**, President of the European Council, said: *“The creation of the euro 20 years ago – alongside the liberation of Central and Eastern Europe and the reunification of Germany– was a pivotal moment in European history. Our common currency has since matured into a powerful expression of the European Union as a political and economic force in the world. Despite crises, the euro has shown itself resilient, and the eight members which joined the original 11 have enjoyed its benefits. As the world keeps changing, we will keep upgrading and strengthening our Economic and Monetary Union.”*

**Mario Draghi**, President of the European Central Bank, said: *“The euro was a logical and necessary consequence of the single market. It makes it easier to travel, trade and transact within the euro area and beyond. After 20 years, there is now a generation who knows no other domestic currency. During that time, the ECB has delivered on its main task of maintaining price stability. But we also contribute to the well-being of euro area citizens by developing safe, innovative banknotes, promoting secure payment systems, supervising banks to ensure they are resilient and overseeing financial stability in the euro area.”*

**Mário Centeno**, President of the Eurogroup, said: *“The single currency has been one of the biggest European success stories: there can be no doubt about its importance and impact over the first two decades of its history. But its future is still being written, and that puts a historic responsibility on us. The euro and the close economic cooperation that it entails has evolved over time, overcoming challenges in its way. It has come a long way since the start, and it has seen important changes in the wake of the crisis to help us leave the hardship behind. But this work is not yet finished, it requires continuous reform efforts in good times as in bad times. There can be no doubts of our political will to strengthen the Economic and Monetary Union. We need to be prepared for what the future may hold – we owe that to our citizens.”*

## **Background**

The launch of the euro marked the culmination of a long journey that had begun long before. The global monetary turmoil of the 1970s and 1980s had exposed individual European countries and called for European solutions. Moreover, with the establishment of a single market, it would be easier to work and trade if Europeans would start to use a single currency. After decades of early discussions on how an Economic and Monetary Union could be achieved, in 1988 the Delors Committee was set up. Under the chairmanship of then Commission President Jacques Delors, it examined specific, gradual steps towards such a single currency. The agreement that political leaders subsequently signed in 1992 in Maastricht brought the single currency to life, building on the report of the Delors Committee and the ensuing negotiations. As such, the signing of the [Maastricht Treaty](#) became a symbolic moment in the move towards the euro. In 1994, the European Monetary Institute (EMI) started its preparatory work in Frankfurt for the [European Central Bank](#) (ECB) to assume its responsibility for monetary policy in the euro area. As a result, on 1 June 1998, the ECB became operational.

On 1 January 1999, the euro was launched, becoming the official currency of 11 Member States, with monetary policy responsibilities given to the European Central Bank and the Eurosystem. After three years of appearing on people's bank statements alongside national currencies, euro banknotes and coins arrived in 12 countries, which thereby participated in the largest currency changeover in history. The original members were Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain and Portugal. Greece joined in 2001. Since then, a further seven Member States have introduced the euro (Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Slovakia and Slovenia).

## **The second most used currency in the world**

The euro has come a long way from the first discussions in the late 1960s to being the currency of 340 million Europeans and used by a further 175 million worldwide. It is the second most important international currency, with around 60 countries in the world using it or linking their own currency to the euro. It is a safe store of value for international central banks, used for issuing debt worldwide and widely accepted for international payments.

Ten years after the financial crisis shook the world, the architecture of Europe's Economic and Monetary Union has been significantly reinforced but more work remains to be done. Building on the vision set out in the [Five Presidents' Report](#) of June 2015 and the Reflection Papers on the [Deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union](#) and the [Future of EU Finances](#) of spring 2017, the European Commission set out a [roadmap for deepening the Economic and Monetary Union](#). In December, EU Leaders also [agreed](#) to work towards strengthening the international role of the euro as part of this journey.

## **A single currency for the benefit of all Europeans**

[Public support](#) for the euro has been consistently high in the EU, especially in the countries already using the euro. A majority of 74% of respondents across the euro area said that they thought the euro was good for the EU; this is the same as the record high score set last year and confirms that popular support for the euro is at its highest since surveys began in 2002. A majority of 64% of respondents across the euro area also said that they thought the euro was good for their own country. 36% of Europeans identify the euro as one of the main symbols of the European Union, the second highest behind 'freedom' as a symbol. It has brought visible and very practical benefits to European households, businesses and governments alike: stable prices, lower transaction costs, more transparent and competitive markets, and increased trade. It makes travelling and living abroad easier, and savings protected.

## **For more information**

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[Find out more about what the EU is doing to strengthen the euro](#)

[Factsheet: Commission presents ways to further strengthen the euro's global](#)

[role](#)

[Factsheets: updates on deepening the Economic and Monetary Union ahead of the euro summit of 14 December 2018](#)

[Flash Eurobarometer: Support for the euro steady at all-time high levels](#)

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### Press contacts

#### [Preben Aamann](#)

European Council President Spokesperson

+32 2 281 51 50

+32 476 85 05 43

#### [Jüri Laas](#)

Press officer

+32 2 281 55 23

+32 470 95 75 61

#### [Maria Tomasik](#)

Press officer

+32 2 281 24 63

+32 470 88 23 83

The Euro is 20 years old and Member States are working to strengthen the Euro-area further.

**The euro, Europe's common currency, turns 20 on 1 January 2019. Exactly 20 years ago, on 1 January 1999, 11 EU countries launched a common currency, the euro, and introduced a shared monetary policy under the European Central Bank.**

The historic moment was a milestone on a journey driven by the ambition of ensuring stability and prosperity in Europe. Today, still young, the euro is already the currency of 340 million Europeans in 19 Member States. It has brought tangible benefits to European households, businesses and governments alike: stable prices, lower transaction costs, protected savings, more transparent and competitive markets, and increased trade. Some 60 countries around the world link their currencies to the euro in one way or another, and

we can and are doing more to let the euro play its full role on the international scene. Other EU Member States are expected to join the euro area once the criteria are met.

To mark this anniversary, the five Presidents of the EU institutions and bodies most directly responsible for the euro, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Central Bank and the Eurogroup, commented on the 20 years of the single currency and on its future.

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**Jean-Claude Juncker**, President of the European Commission, said: “As one of the only signatories of the Maastricht Treaty still politically active today, I remember the hard-fought and momentous negotiations on the launch of the Economic and Monetary Union. More than anything, I recall a deep conviction that we were opening a new chapter in our joint history. A chapter that would shape Europe’s role in the world and the future of all its people. 20 years on, I am convinced that this was the most important signature I ever made. The euro has become a symbol of unity, sovereignty and stability. It has delivered prosperity and protection to our citizens and we must ensure that it continues to do so. This is why we are working hard to complete our Economic and Monetary Union and boost the euro’s international role further.”

**Antonio Tajani**, President of the European Parliament, said: “The euro is more popular today than ever: three out of four citizens believe it is good for our economy. In order for Europeans to benefit fully from the jobs, growth and solidarity that the single currency should bring, we must complete our Economic and Monetary union through genuine financial, fiscal and political Union. This will also allow Europe to better shield its citizens from potential future crises.”

**Mario Draghi**, President of the European Central Bank, said: “The euro was a logical and necessary consequence of the single market. It makes it easier to travel, trade and transact within the euro area and beyond. After 20 years, there is now a generation who knows no other domestic currency. During that time, the ECB has delivered on its main task of maintaining price stability. But we also contribute to the well-being of euro area citizens by developing safe, innovative banknotes, promoting secure payment systems, supervising banks to ensure they are resilient and overseeing financial stability in the euro area.”

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