



Brussels, 14 November 2025  
(OR. en)

15183/25

CULT 117

**NOTE**

---

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB for the meeting of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council on 27 and 28 November 2025: European Capital of Culture Oulu 2026: Young creativity, northern lifestyle, cross-sectorial innovations and beautiful nature - <i>Information from Finland</i>

---

**The European Capital of Culture Oulu2026 - Young creativity, northern lifestyle, cross-sectorial innovations and beautiful nature**

*Information from Finland*

The city of Oulu is about to embark on a year-long celebration of art and culture as the European Capital of Culture 2026. Oulu will host this special year in collaboration with 39 northern municipalities. Visiting Oulu and its surrounding areas offers a unique opportunity to discover the creativity, innovation, cultural heritage, nature and lifestyle of northern Finland.

Oulu is full of youthful energy, with an average age below 40. The city is home to 215,000 residents, 11% of whom are students. The Culture Programme has been designed to appeal to this young audience and to elevate the city's vibrant spirit even further. This energy will be on full display on New Year's Eve, when all of Finland as well as audiences from across Europe come together for the Oulu2026 Show at Oulu Hall. The event will be broadcast by the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE). Please note that the countdown will take place one hour ahead of Central European Time (CET).

The entire city centre will transform into the stage for the Opening Festival between 16 and 18 January. The programme will feature visual art installations, music, theatre, performances and exhibitions – many of them outdoors. The main stage will be constructed entirely from snow and ice.

The Culture Programme is built around three themes. **Brave Hinterland**, the winter theme, celebrates northern phenomena and Arctic culture, including Sámi traditions, electronic music festivals performed on ice, and regional opening events.

This will be followed by **Wild City**, the summer theme, which brings together festivals and community celebrations that blend nature with urban culture. The **Arctic Food Lab** will present exciting culinary experiences based on pure, natural ingredients.

Cool Contrasts, the autumn theme, explores the interplay of light and darkness, offering striking combinations of art and technology alongside the mystery of the North. A variety of events will showcase international light art and interactive installations that reflect the relationship between nature, people and technology.

The Oulu Cultural Foundation warmly invites all Europeans to discover and enjoy the Oulu2026 Culture Programme.

---