



Cultural Heritage & Museums News

## Tartu 2024 Awarded €1.5 Million Melina Mercouri Prize for European Capital of Culture Program

# The Estonian city of Tartu has been awarded the Melina Mercouri Prize for its work as the 2024 European Capital of Culture. The €1.5 million award will provide additional support for Tartu's cultural program throughout the year.

Tartu 2024 Foundation, responsible for the city's European Capital of Culture program, has been awarded the Melina Mercouri Prize by the European Commission. The prize is worth 1.5 million euros and was awarded in recognition of the program's successful preparation and diversity.

Kuldar Leis, Director of Tartu 2024, stated that the expert committee was impressed with Tartu 2024's efforts to offer visitors a variety of events throughout the year. The program showcased the cultural heritage of southern Estonia in less-visited areas by combining the local with the international.

The European Capital of Culture opening ceremony will take place in Tartu on January 26th. The European Commissioner for Culture will present the award to Tartu 2024 during the ceremony. The funds will be used to improve the city's cultural events.

Urmas Klaas, Mayor of Tartu and Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Tartu 2024, believes that the award is a sign that the Capital of Culture's efforts have been recognized in Europe. [Klaas stated](#), "One of Tartu's strengths is our cooperation with the whole of Southern Estonia, bringing our unique culture to a wider audience. The Capital of Culture year will bring many international cultural figures from around the world, and there will be much to discover in 2024."

Kuldar Leis added that Tartu 2024 will distribute the Melina

Mercouri Prize throughout the year to Capital of Culture events with large audiences. The prize will support events such as the Car-Free Avenue summer party, the performance of Veljo Tormis' "Forgotten Peoples" by the Paris Philharmonic, a solo exhibition by Japanese artist Ryoji Ikeda at the Estonian National Museum, as well as bringing world-famous artists to Tartu and the closing event of the Capital of Culture year.

The award is named after Melina Mercouri, the Greek politician and actress who initiated the idea of European Capitals of Culture. Cities that hold the title of European Capital of Culture can apply for the prize if they fulfil their objectives and can prove it with reports. Tartu 2024's budget for organizing the European Capital of Culture, including the Melina Mercouri Prize, is 26 million euros for five years.

Altogether three cities hold the title in 2024 -- one from Austria, one from Estonia and one from a member state of the European Free Trade Association (Bodo in Norway).