

## **Mayors of metropolitan cities together for the cultural sector**

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**The mayors of: Gdansk, Katowice, Krakow, Lublin, Lodz, Poznan, Szczecin, Warsaw and Wroclaw again meet under the banner of the Cities Coalition for Culture.**

In a letter sent to Piotr Gliniski, the deputy prime minister and minister of culture and national heritage, to the attention of Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and the Union of Polish Metropolises and the Association of Polish Cities, they urge that, when further plans to save the economy and the re-opening of other sectors is announced, the cultural sector, institutions, organizations and creators should not be forgotten about.

Cities immediately responded to the pandemic situation and the crisis in which various environments were then. Aid and support solutions were implemented for the cultural sector, institutions, NGO's and individual creators. Cities quickly recognized the incompatibility of many laws and acts relating to the cultural sector for quick and effective responses. In this way, the initiative to return to sharing legal and organizational solutions and the exchange of knowledge among the cities involved in the process of applying for the title of European Capital of Culture 2016 appeared.

The letter of mayors was developed with a sense of deep concern for the future of the cultural sector among those responsible for the cultural policy of the local governments.

- We are writing this letter with a deep sense of concern, among those responsible for cultural policy in our cities. We are entering a time of exchange, sharing and solidarity, which is why we have returned to the Coalition of Cities for Culture that unites us around this responsibility. The coalition was established during the European Capital of Culture Wroclaw 2016. Today, in the expanded group, in cooperation with Gdansk, Katowice, Krakow, Lublin, Lodz, Poznan, Szczecin, Warsaw and Wroclaw, we wish to jointly propose and introduce solutions and tools supporting culture. We share ideas on how to help it, how to create a rational cultural policy during the crisis here and now, but also in relation to its consequences. We also wish to be in constant dialogue with the government, because without explicit government support our local culture support programs will not be effective - emphasize the mayors of nine Polish cities in the joint letter.

The City Coalition was established in 2016, when the cities applying for this title cooperated for first time in the history of the European Capital of Culture. Wroclaw has invited partners from all over the country to participate in the program, including Krakow - as the European City of Culture of the Millennium of 2000.

In the current context, the City Coalition is again becoming a platform for the exchange of experiences of Polish local governments and cultural institutions, an important space of solidarity and cooperation. The discussion about local government responsibility for Polish culture, culture staff and the condition of the sector, whose importance for the socio-economic development of cities, is indisputable. The aim of the Coalition is to regularly submit initiatives, propose formal tools and solutions, exchange knowledge and communicate jointly. The Coalition is not only to respond to the current situation of the cultural sector in cities, but also to design long-term and systemic solutions for culture in local governments.



An open letter issued on April 30 announces systematic actions in dialogue and to take the differences between local governments into account. In their first letter the mayors already indicated as many as eight important solutions that could contribute to the systemic strengthening of local government activities to maintain the condition of the culture sector, institutions and leisure enterprises. There were, among others, postulates to increase the share of local governments in PIT tax revenues and the allocation of funds obtained in this way for programs supporting culture and the leisure sector, including aid programs under the Polish Development Fund for self-government cultural institutions in the category of small and medium enterprises or - similarly to the solutions prepared for the tourism sector - the introduction of "culture vouchers" for the purchase of services and cultural goods to stimulate demand in this sector (e.g. for the purchase of books, tickets to cinemas, theaters, museums, festivals). The mayors have also raised the project, unfinished for years, to create preferences and the possibility of partial tax exemptions / deductions for enterprises deciding to support cultural activities.

- For Krakow, cultural life is of fundamental importance. It is part of the city's success, both economic and image-related, as well as related to building social capital. Our city is at the forefront of European leaders, granting culture a large part of their budget. However, the crisis caused by the pandemic means that we need system solutions and additional rights, which I already wrote about to the Minister of Culture several weeks ago. I enjoy the closer cooperation of cities in the field of culture. As local governments, we have our own specifics, but we are connected by the concern for the survival of cultural institutions, festivals, centers and cultural centers built over the years. Their survival today also depends on new legal tools and treating the cultural sector as a key in reviving the economy of our cities, driving tourism, and finally in rebuilding the social bonds and optimism of our residents. They will be key values when recovering from the expected recession. Many Polish cities can see this need, hence the joint appeal. The current situation shows us how important cooperation is, how much we have to invest in mechanisms supporting network responsibility for the fate of the entire cultural sector - emphasizes Jacek Majchrowski, the Mayor of Krakow.

Let us remind you that from the beginning of the epidemic, Krakow has been trying to minimize the negative effects of the current situation on the cultural life of the city. The city is implementing the "**Resistant Culture**" program - a package of tools supporting Krakow culture and the creative industries sector. In March, the Mayor of Krakow turned to the Minister of Culture and National Heritage with an appeal to create tools enabling local governments to provide real support for the cultural sector. The owners of tenement houses where cultural activities are carried out were asked by the Mayor to show solidarity with tenants, bookstores, cinemas and non-institutional theaters.

The city also carried out the "Krakow Culture during the COVID-19 epidemic" study diagnosing the situation of the cultural and creative industries - the most important needs and urgent challenges of the sector related to the epidemic, indicating the difficult situation of many organizers and creators. Culture is an important element of the "Be a tourist in your city - visit Krakow" campaign, based on building a new, sustainable vision of tourism, in which the inhabitants, entering the role of tourists, rediscover their city and its cultural richness.