



KATI TORP
Artistic Director
of Tartu 2024



TARTU 2024: **Culture as a Tool to Reshape the Image**

Tartu in Estonia is one of the European Capitals of Culture 2024. The 100,000 inhabitants-city offers a rich history and a well-known university. BUSINESS & DIPLOMACY had the opportunity to meet *Kati Torp*, Artistic Director of Tartu 2024, in Berlin to talk about the Capital of Culture.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOTIVATION TO APPLY FOR BEING A CAPITAL OF CULTURE?

When cities or regions decide to apply, it is mostly to turn around the image of a town or region. Culture is a tool. Tartu has never been an industrial city. It is a fine European town with a university and a very good hospital. Tartu also serves as the capital for the south of Estonia. The idea is to reshape the image of the south of Estonia.

WHICH ARGUMENTS CREATED THE DECISION IN FAVOUR OF TARTU?

The municipality of Tartu made it very clear to secure all sorts of resources that are needed to organize the event. We had huge support from the Southern Estonian municipalities who are also contributing financially. The decision intends to do it for the region that offers a very diverse culture with five languages of indigenous minorities in South Estonia. There is a campaign to have education

in those local languages. The second reason is a strong European dimension between Estonia and the EU and the rest of Europe that we can make more tangible.

WHAT IS THE CONCEPT BEHIND TARTU 2024?

It is the Art of Survival. It refers to those skills, knowledge and values that we have and to those that we need to gain or develop further in order to lead a good life. This creative concept was developed

in 2018 and 2019. It includes responses to climate challenges and also to questions about the future of the different communities and minorities, how they will survive and keep their cultures alive. Additionally, we all know what happened after the Covid outbreak, a sort of survival in medical terms. Then, Russia attacked Ukraine. That added another level on top of the issues that were already there

IS THERE ANYTHING LIKE A COMMERCIAL TARGET BEYOND THE CULTURAL CAMPAIGN ATTRACTING MORE TOURISM, NEW INVESTMENTS?

Definitely. The local municipalities are investing a lot into this project. There is of course an economical outcome expected. Tourism is also crucial. We have five target countries: Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Germany and the UK. However, of course, we are open to everyone globally. We do campaigns and we have local partners who help us do that.

BESIDE COUNTRIES, DOES TARTU ALSO AIM AT STRATEGIC TARGET GROUPS LIKE YOUNG PEOPLE, OLDER PEOPLE OR PEOPLE OF A CERTAIN EDUCATION?

Yes. We package our program differently for each group. For example, we have a project called The Newborn Gallery. It is the first visual art experience designed for babies. The baby goes into and it is its immersive visual art experience. Then we have projects for elderly that are all about transgenerational sort of activities.

WHERE DOES CULTURE STAND WITH REGARD TO THE FACT A WAR IS TAKING PLACE NEARBY? DID THIS CHANGE ANYTHING WITH REGARD TO YOUR PLANS?

We stand in solidarity with Ukraine. When the war began, Estonia called off all sorts of connections and activities between Estonia and Russia, including cultural affairs. Before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there had been turbulent times as well during which diplomatic activities were called off, except for culture. This situation is new for us: all cultural projects with connections to Russia have been cancelled. Now, there is also no tourism from Russia.

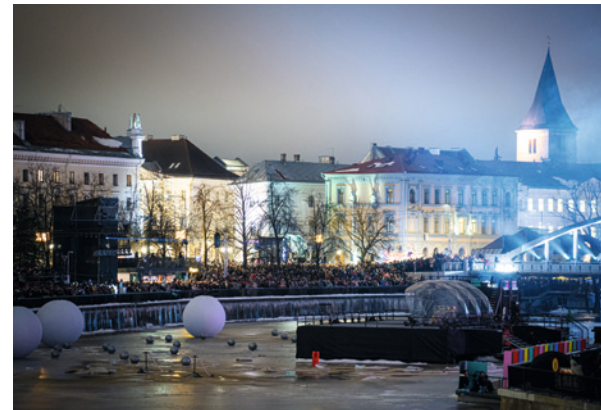
WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF RUSSIAN ORIGIN WHO LIVE IN ESTONIA?

You refer to Russian-speaking Estonians, most of them have Estonian passports. The Russian-speaking minority is even larger now because many Ukrainians speak Russian as their first language as well. There is no big shift in the local situation: we have some media outlets and public broadcasting programs still in Russian. We have artists coming from Russian-speaking families in our program. When it comes to the situation between Estonians and the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia, I have not noticed any big changes. A majority of the Russian-speaking people in Estonia openly support Ukraine, and follow Estonian/Western news.

WHAT ARE THE NUMBER ONE EVENTS THAT YOU WOULD RECOMMEND TO SEE?

Openings are usually very big events. Ours occurred in winter on January 26th. You could experience the Estonian climate conditions. I definitely invite you for the summer celebration on 3rd of August. That is the best time to travel to Estonia, but there are events taking place around the year, so the potential visit could take place anytime.

More information:
www.tartu2024.ee



Tartu 2024: Opening party January 26th
Tartu University | Inspiring: Tartu 2024

Buch-Tipp!

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