

Barcelos, PORTUGAL

House of Creativity

As a UNESCO Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art since 2017, Barcelos has just over 116,000 inhabitants with a strong connection between local residents and the craftsmanship community that has continued to pave the way for a sustainable creative sector.

The city of Barcelos has always been a creative hub due to its strong links to handicrafts with special emphasis on traditional earthenware and the famous Galo de Barcelos (Barcelos Rooster), which has become a true icon of national tourism. These and other products such as woodwork, ironwork, and embroidery were recognized worldwide by the Barcelos weekly fair, an event that was and still is deeply linked large-scale sale of local handicrafts.



Therefore, the municipality continues to invest in the development of crafts and folk art as its differentiating characteristics as well as in the preservation of traditions as structuring elements of local society and their perpetuation for future generations.

Being a UNESCO Creative City adds merit to the crafts and folk arts tradition developed in the municipality and represents an opportunity for sustainable development. Today, some of the major challenges facing the municipality concern new job opportunities for young people in this field, the resurgence of handicrafts, the production of traditional items like ceramics, woodwork, embroidery, and ironwork, and other areas such as contemporary arts, creative industries, tourism, and commerce.

Today's reality is the reflection of a culture that over the centuries has led to a high degree of specialization, diversity, and creativity of work. This has, in turn, contributed to nurturing activities that became real work organizations and centers for the promotion of arts. There is a specific knowledge and culture of know-how in this territory, embodied particularly in three endemic and certified products (pottery, clay figurines, and Crivo embroidery).

In Barcelos, craftwork is a transversal activity and a true foundation of the territory and its people. It symbolizes a collective way of life that is fundamental in the transgenerational bases of families. It has contributed decisively to the formation of the local social and cultural identity with a focus on the production of clay and embroidery that has marked the course of many generations. From childhood people were driven to the arts and crafts, once as means of subsistence but today as true living heritage and the genesis of the local cultural identity.

As a Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art, Barcelos aspires to revitalize the craftsmanship sector. The House of Creativity is a new infrastructure owned by the Municipality of Barcelos. It is located at Rua Fernando Magalhães, nº 106 in the heart of the city and was recently opened on May 3, 2023. It aims to build bridges with the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in promoting a creative culture in Barcelos and to establish good cooperation between cities that recognize creativity as a prominent factor in the economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects of urban

development.

The primary goal of this new space is to vitalize the various creative fields and raise awareness about today's importance of building a creative culture in the community. Municipal policies point to the importance of building dynamics with local stakeholders, other Portuguese creative cities, and other world UNESCO cities.

The mission of this space is to:

- Raise awareness in the community about the importance of diversity in cultural expressions, including the most traditional ones;
- Nurture creativity;
- Strengthen the role of creatives; and
- Promote exchange and interculturality.

The House of Creativity will also be:

- A space for creative experiments with traditional arts and crafts;
- A space for promoting and training the craft community; and
- A center for innovation in the digitalization of handicrafts.

It will also be a space to support and guide craft activity and encourage the emergence of new artists. Finally, this new structure for creativity aims, above all, to preserve and pass on knowledge to new generations so that the traditional arts survive extinction in an overly technical future, as experienced by handicrafts such as clay and embroidery as well as woodwork, ironwork, and wickerwork. But more than that, this space is already developing creativity in other fields, such as writing/literature, audiovisual, design, painting, and illustration, with courses designed for the community. At the same time, this space was designed to support existing artisans and bring them knowledge in areas, such as ICT tools, photography, taxes and accounting, and mastery of digital tools, in which they are less comfortable due to the nature of their main activities. This will allow them to adapt their businesses to today's reality in which digital is increasingly a business vehicle.

This is a space for the community and for fostering a culture of creativity in the community!



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