

JEWEL Art Residency: Memory & Heritage

Žagarės žydų paveldo meno rezidencija

OPEN CALL

Žagarė Cultural Center is announcing an open call for participation in an international art residency for artists of various genres from Lithuania and Latvia. The international art residency in Žagarė is being implemented as part of the 2021–2027 Interreg VI-A Latvia-Lithuania Programme LL-00200 JEWEL. The residency invites artists of various genres from Lithuania and Latvia to create new works inspired by the Jewish cultural heritage, urban memory, and historical layers of Žagarė.

The aim of the residency is to create conditions for creativity, research, and intercultural dialogue, actualizing Jewish heritage through contemporary artistic means. It provides artists with time, space, and support not only for creating art, but also for exploring the local area, researching historical landmarks, establishing professional connections, and presenting their creative work to the public.

Žagarė is a border town with an identity shaped by diverse communities, cultures, and historical experiences. More than a century ago, a large Jewish community lived here, contributing significantly to the town's social, economic, and cultural life. Today, this heritage lives on in the town's architecture, urban structure, historic buildings, places of remembrance, and the very atmosphere of the town. In Žagarė, history is not merely a narrative of the past - it is felt in the spaces, streets, quiet zones, and surviving landmarks.

The residency aims to encourage the creation of new works of art inspired by the memory of Žagarė, Jewish cultural heritage, and the city's historical layers, bringing them to life in today's cultural context.

The residency is founded on openness, collaboration, creative freedom, and a respectful relationship with historical memory.

We invite artists to the residency to seek inspiration from this multi-layered heritage:

- to explore the history and collective memory of Žagarė,
- reflect on the visible and invisible signs of the city,
- creatively interpret cultural heritage, architecture, narratives, and silence,
- and seek contemporary artistic forms that help address memory, identity, loss, continuity, and coexistence.

Who is it for?

We invite 10 artists from Lithuania and Latvia (5 LT + 5 LV) working in various fields, including but not limited to:

- visual arts
- installation art

- interdisciplinary arts
- performance
- photography
- sound art
- textiles
- dance/body movement
- theater
- design and other creative forms

Important: both individual creators and artists who would like to collaborate with other participants during the residency are invited.

When?

May 4–17, 2026.

A 14-day residency (exact dates will be announced in the call for applications/agreed upon with the selected participants).

The residency includes:

- a preparatory phase,
- a research and exploration phase,
- an intensive creative work,
- and a final public presentation at the end of the residency.

Where?

Žagarė, Lithuania – a town in a border region with a unique historical and cultural context. Residency participants will be offered various creative spaces depending on the nature of their artistic practice:

- Žagarė Cultural Center hall
- exhibition hall
- dance/movement space
- outdoor spaces
- other spaces agreed upon during the project.

Residency theme/focus

The artistic starting point of the residency is the Jewish heritage of Žagarė, local history, memory, and contemporary interpretation.

During the residency, selected artists will:

- learn about the local context,
- participate in meetings with experts on Jewish culture and heritage,
- create new works of art (individually or collaboratively),
- present their completed works to the public at the end of the residency.

What do we expect from the artists?

The residency is primarily intended for the development and creation of new artistic work.

Artists are also expected to:

- a) participate in joint residency meetings/process discussions,
- b) take part in at least one public event (e.g., open studio/talk),
- c) present the created artwork (or creative outcome) at a public closing event at the end of the residency.

Financing and organisational conditions

The organiser provides selected residents with:

- artist stipend 800–1,000 EUR
- accommodation for the entire duration of the residency
- meals during the residency
- creative spaces for work
- organizational and technical support
- meetings with heritage experts/educators
- (depending on availability and agreed-upon needs) materials for creative work/workshops

Note: specific technical requirements and questions regarding materials will be discussed with the selected artists after the selection process.

What do we offer during the residency?

- Time to focus on creation (a 14-day structured residency)
- An interdisciplinary international group of creators (LT + LV)
- Insights from local heritage experts
- The opportunity to work in various locations in Žagarė
- A public presentation of final project in Žagarė
- Professional communication of the project and residency documentation

How to apply?

Please send applications via email to: direktore@zagareskulturoscentras.lt

Application deadline: April 20, 2026, by 11:59 PM (Lithuanian time)

We will contact selected participants personally.

The application must include

1. A brief biography/CV (up to 1 page)
2. Portfolio/samples of work (links to your work: website, PDF portfolio, Vimeo, YouTube, SoundCloud, etc.)
3. Motivational letter and initial residency concept (up to 1 A4 page), specifying:
 - what theme/direction you would like to explore,

- what creative outcome you plan to develop,
 - what spaces/conditions you would need (if applicable)
4. Technical requirements (if applicable: sound, projection, type of space, specific conditions)
 5. Contact information (first name, surname, country, phone number, email)

Selection criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- quality and originality of artistic practice
- relevance of the idea to the residency's theme
- motivation to participate in an international residency
- ability to work independently and/or collaboratively
- feasibility of the proposed project within the 14-day residency

Important information

- Only fully completed applications will be considered.
- The organizers may contact you for additional information if needed during the selection process.
- Selected participants will receive a detailed residency program, practical information, and the terms of participation.
- The organizers' decisions are final.

GUIDELINES FOR ARTISTS

1. What kind of creative engagement with heritage is encouraged?

We invite artists to draw inspiration from the Jewish heritage of Žagarė in the broadest sense:

- from historical narratives and collective memory,
- from architecture and urban spaces,
- from visible and invisible footprints,
- from the atmosphere of the place, silence, and signs of loss and survival,
- from the city's multicultural identity.

Important: We do not expect a documentary or illustrative retelling of history, but rather an authentic artistic interpretation grounded in research, sensitivity, and respect for the local context.

2. What can be explored during the residency?

Artists are invited to work on the following themes (these are not mandatory, but recommended):

- memory and oblivion;
- visibility/invisibility of heritage;

- layers of urban history;
- traces of Jewish life in the border region;
- coexistence and multiculturalism;
- loss, continuity, and themes of return;
- local identity and today's relationship with history;
- making cultural heritage relevant to a contemporary audience.

3. What kind of work is expected?

We welcome artistic projects across various genres and disciplines, such as:

- visual arts,
- photography,
- sound and sound art,
- video/film art,
- performance,
- installation,
- interdisciplinary projects,
- community-engaged art.

Most importantly, the concept of the work must be connected to the theme of the residency and the local context.

4. What do we expect from the artists' creative process?

Residency participants are expected to:

- dedicate time to exploring and researching the local area,
- reflect on the context of Žagarè in their creative practice,
- work ethically and sensitively with historical material and themes of memory,
- be open to dialogue with the organizers, other residents, and the community,
- present the creative outcome or a form of the process publicly at the end of the residency (exhibition, open studio, presentation, performance, or other format).

5. Ethical and creative guidelines

When working in the field of Jewish heritage, we invite you to adhere to the following principles:

- respect for historical memory and the experiences of communities;
- avoid simplistic, exoticizing, or stereotypical portrayals;
- base your work on research, contextual understanding, and responsible interpretation;
- recognize that certain themes (loss, trauma, historical turning points) require particular sensitivity;
- to ensure that the artwork creates a meaningful relationship with the location, rather than simply using it as a background.

6. What is the result of the residency?

The aim of the residency is to create new works of art or artistic processes that:

- are inspired by the Jewish heritage and collective memory of Žagarė,
- contribute to the relevance of this heritage in the contemporary cultural landscape,
- foster public interest, understanding, and dialogue,
- and strengthen collaboration between Lithuanian and Latvian artists in the context of the border region.