

OPEN CALL

Light art installation for Leuven Town Hall

The City of Leuven, LOV2030 and Shift are seeking an artist (or artists' collective) to create a new, temporary light art installation on the scaffolding hoarding of Leuven's historic town hall, to be presented during Wintertijd. The work will be created through a participatory process involving the young people from Shift.

In brief

Commission	A one-off, temporary light art installation, projected onto the scaffolding hoarding of Leuven Town Hall
Presentation period	Wintertijd, from 8 December 2026 to 10 January 2027
Budget	€50,000, including VAT and production costs
Participation	Project with young people (aged 12–25) from Shift, a digital youth centre at the Schouwburg in Leuven
Application deadline	1 September 2026

Who is issuing this call?

This open call is the result of a collaboration between three partners:

- **City of Leuven** — Leuven's 15th-century Gothic town hall has been closed since autumn 2025 for extensive restoration. In 2029, it will reopen as *the Town Hall – European House for Democracy*: a shared meeting place for the people of Leuven and visitors, and one of the highlights of Leuven's year as European Capital of Culture 2030.
- **LOV2030 – Leuven & Beyond** — the title under which Leuven and the thirty municipalities of East Brabant were designated European Capital of Culture 2030 in 2025. Under the HumanNature concept, LOV2030 is using culture to build a warmer, more connected region, centred on the pillars of Human, Nature and Innovation.
- **Shift** — a digital and creative youth centre in Leuven's Schouwburg theatre, an initiative by Link in de Kabel in collaboration with 30CC. Young people aged between 12 and 25 can experiment there free of charge with digital media and technology — from 3D printing to VR and AI — with a strong focus on social inclusion and accessible introduction to art and culture.

Context

From the summer of 2026, the Gothic portico of Leuven Town Hall will be covered in scaffolding for major restoration works. A scaffolding hoarding featuring a realistic photographic print of the façade will be displayed on this scaffolding. *(See photo below)*

During Wintertijd, the city of Leuven plans to temporarily illuminate the town hall with a light art installation.

‘Wintertijd’ is the annual end-of-year period in Leuven, featuring, amongst other things, the Leuven Christmas Market, the illuminated Winter Garden in front of the town hall, a light art trail, concerts and the New Year’s reception to round off the festivities — an atmospheric winter experience for Leuven residents and visitors alike.

The light art installation must offer artistic value whilst remaining accessible. It must contribute to the warm, cosy atmosphere that the city exudes during this period. In this way, it will become an accessible, visually striking addition to the winter city experience.

As well as the end result, we attach equal importance to the process leading up to it: through Shift, we are actively involving young people in the development and realisation of the work.

This is a one-off, temporary commission, developed specifically for the town hall.

The commission

Artistic end product

We are looking for a light art installation that is strong in terms of both content and artistic merit, whilst also being visually appealing and accessible to a wide audience. The work may be based on a specific theme or historical context, but the emphasis lies on visual impact, atmosphere and experience.

A strong visual and spatial relationship with the town hall is essential:

- the artwork must engage in a dialogue with the architecture, the façade and/or the sculptural elements of the building;
- the town hall is an active medium and part of the artwork, not a neutral backdrop.

This relationship with the building may be interpreted in a wholly visual and abstract manner. Technical simplicity and feasibility are important, as is respect for the surroundings and the public space.

The work must be able to stand on its own. If interaction with the public fits within the artist’s artistic vision, this can be an added value — but it is not a requirement.

The process: working with the young people from Shift

With Shift, Leuven has a key player that enables young people to experiment with digital media. We want to harness their expertise and the community they have built around their work for a participatory process in which young people help to create the artwork for the town hall. This will result in a work created not only for, but also by, the people of Leuven.

The form of this participatory process may vary: we are open to different ways of collaborating, both in terms of intensity and format. It is essential that the participating young people experience a genuine sense of involvement and co-ownership of the project.

Shift's digital youth workers will guide the artist through this process and encourage the young people to participate actively. The details of the process will be finalised in consultation, but the artist will set out an initial proposal in the application.

Please bear in mind Shift's approach: the programme is very accessible, with no registration or fixed workshops, and participants are free to come and go as they please, with no obligations.

Further information: <https://www.shiftlab.be/leuven>

Budget

A budget of €50,000 has been allocated for this commission, including VAT and production costs. The specific allocation of the budget will be worked out by mutual agreement.

Submission and selection

The selection process will take place in two rounds.

Round 1 — Application and portfolio

Candidates must submit a proposal in which they explain their project (max. 15 pages, excluding appendices). The proposal must answer the following questions:

1. **Artistic vision for the artwork.** What are the theme and atmosphere of the artwork? How does the work relate to the town hall and, by extension, the historic town centre? What is the relationship with the public?
2. **Artistic vision of the process.** What role do you envisage for the young people from Shift? How will you ensure that the young people feel a sense of ownership and involvement? How do you intend to collaborate with them, and how does this translate into a concrete working method? How will you ensure that some young people can easily make a small contribution, whilst others can make a slightly larger one?
3. **Initial outline of the technical production.** What technical requirements are necessary for the development of the project? Outline the feasibility. (See the appendix for further information on the location and specific technical requirements).

Please attach an example of a previously completed project, including the technical plan and budget.

Round 2 — Interview

Selected candidates will be invited to an (online) interview, consisting of two parts:

- a presentation (10 minutes) in which the artist(s) explain the project;
- a question-and-answer session (20 minutes).

Timeline

Stage	Date
Deadline for submission of application	1 September 2026
Interviews	Week of 14 September 2026
Announcement	1 October
Handover	To be confirmed, before the start of winter time
Presentation	Wintertijd (8 December 2026 – 10 January 2027)

Enquiries and submissions

For enquiries about this project, please email: stadhuis@leuven.be

Enquiries about how Shift works: florian@lidk.be or 0456/72.57.87

You can also submit your application and supporting documents by email to stadhuis@leuven.be

Attachments

Appendix 1: Photo of Town Hall façade

A view of the façade under construction whilst the first section of the hoarding is being installed, showing the current situation. The hoarding will be further completed across its full width this summer and will also have an additional section added at the bottom, to the left and right of the entrance door (not visible in this photo).



Appendix 2: Plan of the Grote Markt

Production and projection equipment may be positioned on the Grote Markt, between the planting area around the tree, St Peter's Church and the red line on the plan below – an imaginary line marking the boundary for temporary structures without disrupting through traffic or safety on the square.

The space occupied may therefore be approximately 8m x 6m at most. This measurement is an estimate based on plans; for final planning, exact on-site measurements must be taken and a detailed plan drawn up by the contractor.

If projection or production space is required in other locations (from a different angle, from a height, from St Peter's Church, etc.), this must always be discussed with the project coordinator for this project and the relevant departments or institutions.

