



Manifesta 16 Ruhr Open Call for Local Projects: This is not a Church

What is Manifesta 16 Ruhr?

The 16th edition of Manifesta, the European Nomadic Biennial, will take place in Germany's Ruhr Area in 2026. From the 21st of June until the 4th of October 2026, Manifesta 16 Ruhr will unfold across a range of venues in cities throughout the region. Through close collaboration with local communities and institutions, Manifesta 16 engages with social, political and environmental issues, offering fresh perspectives on the historical and contemporary fabric of the Ruhr Area. Manifesta 16 strives to be a catalyst for change by addressing socio-cultural issues, sparking dialogue, challenging conventions and ultimately leaving a legacy in its Host Region.

By opening, revitalising and activating unexpected venues across the region, the biennial creates a locally rooted programme that explores themes of urban development and societal transformation. The main venues of Manifesta 16 will be former, abandoned post-war church buildings. Built to bring together communities throughout the neighbourhood following the Second World War, these often-iconic architectural structures are closing at a rapid rate across Germany. Manifesta 16 re-thinks how these spaces can serve their neighbourhoods in a renewed, inclusive manner through art and culture.

Each edition of Manifesta includes an Open Call inviting local initiatives, collectives, institutions, and individuals to become part of the *Manifesta 16 + Programme* — a parallel programme of the biennial co-developed with selected project partners. Manifesta 16 launches its Open Call welcoming interdisciplinary proposals from across the entire the Ruhr Area. Manifesta 16 is looking for proposals of socio-cultural and ecological projects that activate communities and neighbourhoods around the abandoned churches or other houses of worship through participation, education and/or cultural activities. The biennial encourages a diverse range of ideas from project partners spanning from the arts to music, literature, ecology, sports, democracy and beyond. The essential departure point for the projects should be to create programmes that cherish and highlight common perspectives within the multicultural society of the Ruhr Area, preferably taking place in or around a (previous) place of worship in the Ruhr Area, to create alternative functions for these spaces.



How does the Manifesta 16 Open Call work?

Manifesta 16 invites you to think how your project proposal might bring diverse groups and generations within neighbourhoods together, while fostering cultural exchange and collaboration across different social groups. We particularly welcome ideas that demonstrate how diversity can strengthen community building in the neighbourhoods.

All projects must be realised in the Ruhr Area¹ during the biennial period from the 21st of June until the 4th of October 2026. Your project can range from a recurring series of events or activities to a project that remains open for the entire biennial dates of 100+ days. The opening times of the Open Call projects do not need to be aligned with the official daily opening times of the biennial. The selected project partners will collaborate with the Manifesta 16 team to define responsibilities and timelines related to venue coordination, financial planning, production, and communications.

Manifesta 16 will enter into collaboration agreements with the selected project partners, which will include a financial contribution of up to 15,000 Euro (incl. taxes), depending on the scale and complexity of the project. Manifesta 16 will align with the project partners on their communication strategy and will identify the support given to the project by the Communication Department of Manifesta 16.

Manifesta 16's Open Call project ideas will be evaluated by an international jury (to be announced), who will select 11 projects. The chosen projects will form part of the Manifesta 16 + Programme – an independent yet integrated programme running in parallel with the main programme of Manifesta 16. These selected projects will be featured in Manifesta 16's digital and printed communications. Further details to be confirmed.

¹ <https://www.rvr.ruhr/politik-regionalverband/staedte-kreise/>



Submission Guidelines

Proposals must include:

- Project description (500 words max, in English or German) and argumentation why this project is important for the Ruhr Area and aligns with Manifesta 16's conceptual framework.
- Conceptual project details: the format and medium (e.g. performance, exhibition, event, installation, cooking session, a garden, an action, a workshop, a tour), proposed date, target audience (youth, families, the elderly) and location/s where the project will take place, including photographs and floorplans.
- Specification whether the project is existing, being adapted or newly conceived for Manifesta 16 Ruhr. All versions are acceptable.
- Profile or CV of project partner/s and portfolio/information of previous work (10 pages max, downloadable format) if applicable.
- A financial plan including a detailed budget.
- Please include a list of collaborators/partners involved in any project phase with letters of intent, if applicable.
- Explanation of the co-financing strategy if the Manifesta 16 financial contribution to the collaboration is not sufficient for the full realisation of the project.

Please group the content listed above in one PDF file. If you submit a portfolio heavy in images, you can send it separately and include a downloadable link in the PDF.

Timeline

- 31st of July 2025: Launch of the Manifesta 16 Open Call
- 27th of August: Information Session at Werkhalle, Union Gewerbehof in Dortmund
- 4th of September: Information Session at WerkStadt in Essen
- 11th of September: Online Information Session (details to follow)
- **30th September 2025: Deadline for project submissions**
- October 2025: Jury session and pre-selection of projects
- October and November 2025: Feasibility study of each project with the selected project partners



- December 2025: Contracts signed and public announcement of the selected project partners
- December 2025 until June 2026: Production and implementation of the projects

How to Apply:

Please send the requested information to m16opencall@manifesta.org before the 30th of September 2025 at 23:59h.

For additional questions, please contact m16opencall@manifesta.org. The Manifesta 16 team will review your question and respond accordingly.

Do you want to join one of our Information Sessions? Come join us on the following days:

27th of August 2025 from 18.00 – 19.30 at the Werkhalle, Union Gewerbehof (Rheinische Straße.143, 44147 Dortmund)

4th of September 2025 from 17.30 – 19.00 at WerkStadt (Viktoriastraße 5, 45327 Essen)

10th of September 2025 – Online (More information to follow)

We look forward to reviewing your project proposals!

Prospective project partners in the Manifesta 16 Open Call undertake to accept the decision of the Jury. Participation is subject to several conditions: selection by the Jury, feasibility of the project and conclusion of the cooperation agreement.

More information about the 16th edition of Manifesta in the Ruhr Area

Manifesta 16, in 2026, will focus on the architectural and social renewal that occurred in the post-war era of the Ruhr Area, a time marked by the construction of modernist churches to address the urgent need for reconstruction and rapid population growth. During this period, the churches became symbols of democracy and examples of civic engagement, having been built through the collective physical labour of the local community. As an outcome of the Manifesta 16 Urban Vision, led by Josep Bohigas, Manifesta found that abandoned church buildings can serve as cultural spaces in the broadest sense. With the 2026 biennial, we aim to transform these former places of worship into long-lasting venues with a social and cultural purpose, activated by local communities.



While many post-war churches left a significant architectural legacy, declining church attendance over the past 30 years have left many of these buildings abandoned or underused. The fate of these churches—whether demolished, repurposed, or left to decay— demands urgent attention. Manifesta 16 is selecting extraordinary venues across the Ruhr Area that embody this edition's thematic and conceptual approach. We aim to include diverse and local perspectives that reflect the region's ever-changing socio-cultural fabric and histories. For more information, visit manifesta16.org.

DATA PROTECTION & IMAGE RIGHTS

Manifesta 16 Ruhr GmbH is the Data Controller for the personal data of the Data Subject and informs you that this data will be processed in accordance with the provisions of Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of 27 April (GDPR) and the Second Act on the Adaptation of Data Protection Law to Regulation (EU) 2016/679 and on the Implementation of Directive (EU) 2016/680 (2nd DSAnpUG-EU), for which you will receive the following information on processing:

Purposes and legitimacy of the processing: The purpose of the processing is to collect data from prospect project partners necessary for the development of the contest rules and the public communication of the winner's identity including their image in the internal communication channels manifesta16.org, through social media (Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn) and press release. Prospect project partners have given their consent by accepting the advertised terms and conditions of the competition, which expressly refer to these purposes.

Data retention criteria: data will be retained for no longer than is necessary to maintain the purpose of the processing or as long as there are legal requirements that dictate their custody and when it is no longer necessary for this purpose, they will be deleted with appropriate security measures to ensure the anonymisation of the data or the total destruction of the data.

Communication of data: data will not be communicated to third parties without the consent of the data subject, unless such communication is mandatory by law. **Rights of the Data Subject:** The data subject is provided with all the rights granted to him/her by law, including but not limited to



- Right to withdraw consent at any time.
- Right of access, rectification, portability and deletion of their data, and to limit or oppose its processing.
- The right to lodge a complaint with the supervisory authority (www.aepd.es) if you consider that the processing does not comply with the regulations in force.

Contact details for exercising your rights: Manifesta 16 Ruhr E-mail:
m16opencall@manifesta.org