European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards (2025)
1277-Citizens' Engagement & Awareness-raising 4. Citizens' Engagement & Awareness-raising

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Casa Batlló: Championing Neurodiversity in European Heritage Management

Entry details

General information

Main country of application	Spain

Brief description of the project

> Casa Batlló, a UNESCO World Heritage site, launched a groundbreaking neurodiversity initiative in 2021 with Specialisterne, becoming the first cultural site globally to integrate neurodivergent individuals into public-facing roles. With 85% of its visitor-facing team neurodivergent, this €1.5 million self-funded program creates meaningful employment, enhances visitor engagement, and sets a replicable model for heritage institutions. Interactions with 2 million annual visitors foster cultural dialogue, raise neurodiversity awareness, and achieve a high Net Promoter Score of 67. Casa Batlló's initiative exemplifies social innovation, advancing EU values of inclusivity and diversity while inspiring cultural sites worldwide to adopt inclusive practices.

Start date of the project	2021-01-01
Website(s) of the project/nominee	https://www.casabatllo.es/en/visitor-care-service-team/
Facebook page of the project, if any	https://www.facebook.com/casabatllo/
Twitter page of the project, if any	https://twitter.com/CasaBatlloGaudi/
Instagram page of the project, if any	https://www.instagram.com/casabatllo/
Any other relevant social media	https://www.youtube.com/casabatllo
Does the site or heritage in question have national/regional/local cultural heritage designation or protection status in its country?	Yes

If yes, please specify:

> Bien Cultural de Interés Nacional

Is the site or heritage in question included on the UNESCO World Heritage List, either as a single World Heritage Site or as part of one larger site?	Yes

If yes, please specify:

> Casa Batlló is a component of the UNESCO site Works of Antoni Gaudí.

If relevant, is the site/heritage accessible to the public?	Yes

If relevant, is the site/heritage accessible to people with disabilities?

> Yes.

Contact details

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Entrant's position	World Heritage manager
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Organisation of the owner	Casa Batlló
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Project leader's position	Cultural Visits Manager
Organisation of the project leader	Casa Batlló
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Other relevant participants

> Mme. Nuria Arenys. Specialisterne. Project Manager

Concise summary

Concise summary

> Casa Batlló, Antoni Gaudí's Modernist masterpiece and a UNESCO World Heritage site, launched a pioneering neurodiversity initiative in May 2021 in collaboration with Specialisterne, an organization dedicated to employing neurodivergent individuals. This initiative underscores Casa Batlló's commitment to social responsibility, inclusivity, and enriching the visitor experience. Casa Batlló is now the first heritage site globally to integrate neurodivergent individuals into public-facing roles, setting new standards in cultural heritage management across Europe.
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> The initiative has three primary objectives: to create meaningful employment for neurodivergent individuals, to enhance visitor engagement through personalized interactions, and to establish a replicable model for other European heritage institutions. Neurodivergent employees now constitute 85% of Casa Batlló's team in roles such as visitor guidance, retail operations in the "Simbòlic" store, and audio guide management, interacting directly with Casa Batlló's 2 million annual visitors. Their involvement fosters a unique cultural dialogue, raising awareness of neurodiversity among diverse visitor groups and contributing to broader social inclusion in the community. This impact is evident in the consistently high Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 67, reflecting exceptional visitor satisfaction and heightened empathy for neurodivergent individuals.
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> The initiative, costing approximately €1.5 million, has been fully funded through Casa Batlló's revenue streams, including ticket sales, retail purchases, and event rentals. This self-sustaining model allows for independent management of the program, with Specialisterne providing specialized training, coaching, and feedback to optimize both visitor and staff experiences. Phased implementation—beginning with targeted recruitment, followed by training and integration—has ensured the initiative's sustainability.
>
> Casa Batlló's project serves as a model of social innovation within European cultural world heritage sites, advancing the EU's values of inclusivity and diversity. The initiative demonstrates how cultural sites can foster social cohesion while remaining economically sustainable, contributing to cultural preservation and social progress. Casa Batlló's neurodiversity program not only marks a milestone in heritage management but also provides a scalable, inspirational model for Europe's cultural institutions to enhance accessibility, inclusivity, and community engagement.

Objectives and work undertaken

Aims and objectives of the project/initiative

> The aim of the neurodiversity program is to contribute to the labor inclusion and social awareness of neurodivergent people in public-face work in a cultural heritage context.
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> The objectives were defined as follows:
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> Safe Workplace: Foster an environment where neurodivergent employees feel supported, valued, and empowered, ensuring equal opportunities for success in a heritage management context.
>
> Citizen Awareness: Educate visitors and the broader public on neurodiversity's importance, showcasing its valuable contributions to society through meaningful interactions.

Combat Stigmatization: Promote understanding to reduce stereotypes and discrimination against neurodivergent individuals by highlighting their skills and dedication in public-facing roles.

Mutual Understanding: Strengthen collaboration between neurodivergent and neurotypical team members, fostering empathy, respect, and inclusive teamwork.

Inclusion Model: Establish a replicable, sustainable framework for integrating neurodiversity into cultural heritage institutions across Europe, inspiring similar initiatives globally.

Any historical and technical research undertaken for the project/initiative

Casa Batlló undertook extensive research to integrate neurodiversity into its visitor experience, collaborating closely with Specialisterne to support neurodivergent staff in hiring, training and engaging to performing public-facing roles at this cultural landmark. With a keen understanding of neurodiversity, Casa Batlló adapted employment practices to consider sensory sensitivities, interaction styles, and the unique strengths neurodivergent individuals bring to guiding and customer service roles.

By examining inclusion models at other institutions, Casa Batlló implemented practical changes, such as creating quieter spaces, refining tasks, and adapting visitor interaction protocols. This approach allows neurodivergent team members to confidently engage in roles that enhance visitor experiences.

Visitor feedback helped shape these roles, ensuring interactions that are warm, informative, and memorable. Through a research-driven approach, Casa Batlló honors Gaudí's vision, creating an inclusive environment where visitors connect deeply with the heritage of Casa Batlló and the diverse team.

This initiative balances traditional working environment with an inclusivity perspective, setting a new standard in heritage management by demonstrating how understanding and collaboration enrich cultural sites and all who visit and work at them.

Activities carried out and stages of implementation of the project/initiative

The initiative was strategically implemented in stages to ensure a sustainable integration of neurodivergent individuals, enhancing both visitor experience, social inclusivity and citizen awareness.

- First stage. Setting the fundamentals. In early 2021, we partnered with Specialisterne to create a tailored recruitment and training program for neurodivergent individuals. Initial efforts focused on aligning project goals with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and recruiting through social media and neurodiversity organizations to reach suitable candidates.
- Second stage. First steps on the field. This training and adaptation phase launched in April 2021, during a period of lower visitor volume. This provided a supportive environment for selected candidates to train in visitor engagement and customer service roles.
- Third stage. Full implementation. By mid-2021, the program reached full implementation, expanding the neurodivergent team and adding on-site support to ensure a consistent, quality experience for both employees and visitors.
- Fourth stage. First one-year cycle evaluation. In 2022, the annual evaluation phase began, incorporating performance reviews and feedback from both neurodivergent staff and visitors, allowing for ongoing adjustments. This phase also introduced augmented reality and digital tools to enrich visitor interactions and improve staff support.
- Fifth stage (current). Consolidation. Through 2023 and 2024, Casa Batlló consolidated its practices, expanding the neurodivergent team to nearly 90 members and receiving recognition from institutions like the Barcelona City Council. This structured, phased approach, supported by continuous stakeholder engagement, has allowed Casa Batlló to set a benchmark in inclusive heritage management, creating a harmonious balance between inclusivity, cultural stewardship, and visitor satisfaction.

Challenges or problems encountered and solutions found to overcome them

> Casa Batlló faced meaningful challenges in creating an environment for neurodivergent employees within the dynamic setting of a world-renowned heritage site. Integrating neurodivergent team members into visitor-facing roles required adaptations to both tasks and the physical environment to meet sensory and interaction needs. To support this integration, we developed a comprehensive training program and ongoing support systems, empowering neurodivergent staff to confidently engage with visitors while maintaining high service standards.
>
> Citizen awareness to tackle stigmatization and lack of understanding towards the visitor-care team also became a priority, leading us to initiate campaigns that foster understanding and appreciation of neurodiversity among our visitors. Adapting Specialisterne's employment model to Casa Batlló's dynamic operations required creating flexible workflows and a stronger support network. Despite these challenges, we built a compassionate, inclusive workplace that has positively impacted both our employees and visitors, reinforcing Casa Batlló's commitment to social inclusion and cultural enrichment.

Results and impact

Summary of the main results achieved and knowledge that has been gained. List the ways that the project/initiative contributes to the preservation and/or enhancement of the historical, cultural, environmental, educational and/or social values of the heritage in question. Mention the project's impact on conservation policy and practice, if any.

> Casa Batlló's neurodiversity initiative has driven profound impacts on citizen awareness, visitor experience and workforce dynamics. Using qualitative analysis to measure the social impact to tackle stereotypes through interviews and surveys, positioning neurodivergent individuals in public-facing roles has increasing empathy and understanding among visitors. Since 2022, positive feedback around inclusivity has risen by 40%, reflecting visitors' appreciation of our diverse team.
>
> The results in visitor experience, since its 2021 launch, we have consistently welcomed close to 2 million visitors annually, and saw a 33% surge from 2023 to 2024, all while maintaining a high Net Promoting Score of 67. This indicates that our increasing attendance has not compromised visitor satisfaction. Our feedback loop is robust, gathering insights from nearly 40% of our visitors—amounting to over 11,000 responses monthly—allowing us to adapt quickly to visitor expectations.
>
> Last, but not least, regarding the workforce dynamics, within our team, 82 neurodivergent employees now represent 85% of our visitor service roles. These team members contribute over 15,000 hours of visitor engagement annually in roles like guidance, audio guide management, and sales. Their inclusion has lowered turnover rates by 11% and reduced absenteeism, enriching our team's cohesion and enhancing visitor engagement.
>
> This model not only upholds Gaudí's vision of Casa Batlló as a cultural beacon but also redefines best practices in heritage conservation, setting a new standard for inclusive, socially engaged heritage sites across Europe.

Aspects of the project that can be considered innovative within its area or field.

> At Casa Batlló, our neurodiversity initiative redefines innovation in heritage management across social, economic, and technological dimensions. As the first World Heritage site to employ neurodivergent individuals in guest-facing roles in such percentage, we demonstrate how inclusivity enriches visitor interactions and strengthens social inclusion and tackle discrimination and stigmatization of neurodiversity. Nearly 90 neurodivergent employees, comprising 85% of our frontline team, contribute to a welcoming, inclusive experience.
>
> The main features of the project can be defined as follows:
>
> - Pioneering in labor inclusion of neurodivergent people in public-face roles.
> - Communication strategy to raise citizen awareness of neurodiversity among visitors and locals.

- Outstanding collaboration with an NGO focused on labor inclusion of neurodiverse people.
- Systematic, individualised and people-centered follow-up to improve the satisfaction of the workforce.
- Quantitative and qualitative measure of the visitor satisfaction and the performance of the visitor staff with tools like Net Promoter Score (NPS).

Measures to ensure the sustainability/future viability of the project (in terms of future plans and funding).

To ensure the sustainability of our neurodiversity initiative, Casa Batlló has built a robust support system that empowers nearly 90 neurodivergent staff members through continuous training, personalized coaching, and feedback anchored in our Net Promoter Score (NPS) system, which receives over 11,000 monthly responses. This data-driven approach enables timely adjustments to maintain high standards and visitor satisfaction.

Collaborations with Specialisterne provide essential resources, fully integrating neurodivergent employees within our heritage framework. Aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), our commitment to social responsibility and inclusivity fosters equitable employment and it is included in our Annual Sustainable Plan reviewed and upgraded annually.

Our phased implementation—from training through full integration—demonstrates scalability and adaptability, ensuring long-term project viability. With an NPS of 67 amid a 33% increase in visitor numbers, Casa Batlló remains dedicated to sustaining an inclusive environment that strengthens both heritage preservation and social cohesion as we expand.

Environmental sustainability of the project and contribution to climate action (in terms of results, techniques, materials employed, methodologies etc.), if relevant.

The project integrates environmental sustainability through energy-efficient technologies and eco-friendly practices that support its social and ecological goals. Integrated in the Annual Sustainable Plan, the visitor-staff are encouraged to implement environmental sustainability practices and the reuse, reduce and recycling of materials and the use of public transportation for arriving to work. The uniforms used by the team are also of enough quality to improve their durability in a long term.

Operationally, Casa Batlló has implemented energy-saving LED lighting and smart climate control systems, significantly reducing energy consumption in the working areas of the neurodivergent people. Digital tools, such as augmented reality and digital guides, minimize the need for printed materials, cutting waste.

These actions demonstrate Casa Batlló's commitment to a sustainable tourism model, showcasing how heritage sites can maintain conservation standards while advancing the European Union's climate and environmental goals.

Dissemination of the project's results and knowledge gained and any outreach or educational activities.

Casa Batlló actively shares the impact of its neurodiversity initiative to inspire inclusive heritage practices worldwide. Through presentations on different platforms and forums we demonstrate how neurodivergent team members enrich visitor engagement and shift social perceptions. Collaborations with Specialisterne and the Barcelona City Council amplify our impact, reaching over 5 million people through public endorsements and media and gaining recognition through participation in international awards and contests to enhance the visibility of the project.

We document our approach with case studies, webinars, and reports, offering insights into inclusive visitor experiences. Since 2021, over 4 million visitors from 130 countries have interacted with neurodivergent staff and received our inclusivity message. Academic partnerships allow students, researchers, and professionals to explore sustainable inclusion and citizen awareness in heritage and social inclusivity of neurodiverse people.

Our social media and website extends this outreach, motivating similar initiatives in cultural institutions globally.

Participation in the initiative (number of participants/audience/users per year and/or, in the case of websites and digital platforms, information regarding visitor numbers and online interaction).

Our neurodiversity initiative at Casa Batlló is central to our visitor experience, with 98 staff members, 85% of whom are neurodivergent. These team members play essential roles in visitor services, audio guide management, photography, and our Simbòlic store, enhancing visits for nearly 2 million guests annually. Supported by Specialisterne trainers and neurotypical colleagues, we provide ongoing training and support for their success.

Since launch, feedback from over 11,000 survey respondents has informed continuous improvements. Casa Batlló's strong online presence and media partnerships extend our inclusive mission globally, positioning us as a leader in inclusive heritage management. This sustainable model offers a replicable framework to inspire cultural institutions worldwide.

Involvement of youth, community, non-traditional audiences and/or people with disabilities.

We actively engage youth, communities, and non-traditional audiences through our neurodiversity initiative, creating an inclusive environment that resonates widely. Partnering with local schools, neurology child patients and autism-focused organizations, we provide pathways for young neurodivergent individuals to take meaningful roles in heritage, building confidence in public-facing positions.

Our inclusivity approach also appeals to families with neurodivergent members, who value Casa Batlló as a supportive space. By integrating digital tools like augmented reality and customizable audio guides, we cater to younger audiences and make our site accessible for visitors with diverse sensory and cognitive needs.

The lectures, academic conferences and our apprenticeship program spread the word of the initiative and promotes involvement of youth and young professionals on the possibilities that exist when heritage institutions open the doors to neurodivergent people in public-facing roles.

Through these combined efforts, Casa Batlló sets a new standard for accessible, youth-friendly heritage experiences.

Contribution to intercultural dialogue and to the protection of cultural diversity.

Casa Batlló's neurodiversity initiative promotes intercultural dialogue by celebrating the unique talents of our neurodivergent staff at this iconic heritage site. With nearly 2 million visitors annually from over 130 countries, we foster understanding through interactions with our team of 98 employees, of whom 85% are neurodivergent. These dedicated team members enhance cultural exchanges across visitor services, building empathy and mutual respect.

Inspired by Gaudí's vision of inclusivity, we embrace diversity as core to heritage. By placing neurodivergent staff in public-facing roles, we challenge stereotypes and expand representation within the sector. Collaborations with Specialisterne and support from the Barcelona City Council and the Barcelona Sustainable Tourism Award elevate our achievements, creating a model that inspires other institutions to prioritize inclusivity. Through these efforts, we redefine cultural diversity in heritage, setting a standard for global inclusivity.

Transferability of the initiative to other contexts and its scalability potential.

Casa Batlló's neurodiversity initiative offers a scalable model for cultural institutions worldwide. Our phased approach —planning, recruiting, training, integration, and evaluation—provides a framework adaptable to other heritage sites. Expanding to nearly 90 neurodivergent employees, we demonstrate how inclusive hiring enriches cultural engagement in diverse settings.

In partnership with Specialisterne, we've developed resources and best practices to foster inclusion effectively. By using Net Promoter Score (NPS) feedback, we make data-driven improvements, ensuring an evolving experience for audiences of all sizes. Technological integrations like augmented reality enhance flexibility across various heritage environments.

Casa Batlló's model shows how embracing neurodiversity strengthens cultural experiences and reinforces social responsibility, inspiring institutions worldwide to adopt and scale similar initiatives.

Any related work that still needs to be completed, if applicable.

> Casa Batlló plans to develop a detailed interim and final evaluation report to assess long-term impacts on neurodivergent employee well-being, visitor satisfaction, and inclusivity awareness. Additionally, future goals include scaling the initiative to other Gaudí heritage sites and expanding partnerships with neurodiversity-focused NGOs across Europe.

Interim or Final Evaluation Report

PDF	Employee-Driven Inclusive... (1.8 MiB download)

European and international dimension

European significance of the project/initiative/nominee.

> The initiative embodies European ideals by integrating inclusivity into cultural heritage. By placing neurodivergent individuals in public-facing roles, we demonstrate Europe's commitment to social equity, aligning with EU principles on inclusion and accessibility. This project promotes diversity, dismantles stereotypes, and fosters social cohesion and citizen awareness—core European values.
>
> This initiative resonates strongly with EU's Disability Strategy 2020-2025. By prioritizing social responsibility, we set a benchmark within the heritage sector for sustainable and inclusive cultural practices.
>
> As active members of the Art Nouveau European Route and partners with NGO European Heritage Volunteers, we extend our impact across the continent, inspiring other heritage sites to embrace neurodiversity. By sharing best practices and fostering intercultural dialogue, Casa Batlló encourages a socially inclusive approach to heritage.
>
> This initiative reinforces Europe's leadership in inclusivity and citizen awareness on this social issues, uniting institutions to create welcoming spaces that reflect a shared European identity.

Costs of the project/initiative

Costs of the project (in euro), financial and management arrangements, funding partners and/or the type of funding.

> Casa Batlló's neurodiversity initiative, with a budget of €1.5 million, reflects our commitment to inclusivity in heritage. This budget supports training, recruitment, technology enhancements, and support systems, enhancing experiences for both visitors and staff. A significant portion of funds specialized training programs with Specialisterne, preparing neurodivergent team members to excel in visitor-facing roles. Additional investment in infrastructure and augmented reality technology aids neurodivergent staff in delivering a seamless, enriched visitor experience.
>
> Funded entirely by Casa Batlló through ticket sales, store purchases, and event rentals, the initiative is managed in-house with Specialisterne's guidance. Our team oversees training, performance, and well-being, while regular assessments through Net Promoter Score (NPS) and visitor feedback help allocate resources effectively. This approach ensures sustained high satisfaction levels for both visitors and staff, cementing our commitment to an inclusive cultural experience. This follows the long-term relationship with our visitor-care team satisfaction and wellbeing and the commitment with citizen awareness on the topics of neurodiversity.

Funding provided by the European Union or the EEA/Norway Grants (including programme, year and amount of the Grant), if any.

> No European Union funds were used in this project. It is fully funded through our self-sustaining revenue sources: ticket sales, the Simbòlic store, and event space rentals. This independent financing model allows us to direct and manage the program in alignment with our mission of inclusivity in cultural heritage without reliance on external funds.

Additional information

How would winning the European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award benefit you, your project and/or your organisation?

> Winning the Europa Nostra Award would greatly enhance Casa Batlló's visibility as a pioneer in inclusive heritage management, inspiring other cultural institutions to integrate neurodiversity into their operations. The recognition would validate Casa Batlló's commitment to social responsibility, helping to expand partnerships and foster additional resources for neurodiversity initiatives. This award would strengthen Casa Batlló's role as a model for inclusivity within the European cultural heritage landscape, promoting broader adoption of innovative, socially responsible practices.

In case this submission is the winner of the Grand Prix, what will the monetary award be used for?

> The monetary award would support ongoing training and well-being programs for neurodivergent staff, helping to further enhance their roles within Casa Batlló and deepen visitor engagement. It would also fund outreach initiatives to share Casa Batlló's model with other European cultural institutions interested in adopting neurodiversity practices.

In case this submission is the winner of the Grand Prix, who will be the recipient of the monetary award?

> Casa Batlló would be the recipient of the monetary award, specifically allocated toward the neurodiversity initiative's continued development and expansion. The funds will directly benefit neurodivergent employees through enhanced training and support, as well as extend outreach efforts to inspire similar inclusive practices across Europe's cultural institutions.

How did you find out about the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards?	Europa Nostra website
Is this the first time that this entry has been submitted to the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards?	Yes
On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with this online submission form?	✓ 10

Do you have any comments on the application form or suggestions that you would like to share with us?

> The Europa Nostra award application form has demonstrated remarkable evolution, reflecting the organization's commitment to modernization and digitalization. Casa Batlló's experience with the nominations has seen significant qualitative improvements in just four years, transitioning from printed-only submissions to a user-friendly online platform. This shift highlights an up-to-date policy for digitalization, streamlining processes and ensuring accessibility for all applicants. The form's structure, emphasizing innovation, sustainability, and scalability, allows projects to be presented comprehensively and effectively. Congratulations to the Europa Nostra team for their dedication to enhancing the application process and setting a benchmark for digital excellence in cultural heritage awards.

By submitting your data, photographs and other material to the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards you agree to the processing and sharing of your data in accordance with Europa Nostra's	Privacy Policy	. Please check the box to indicate you agree with the Privacy Policy.	✓

Log in to european-heritage.awardsplatform.com to see complete entry attachments.



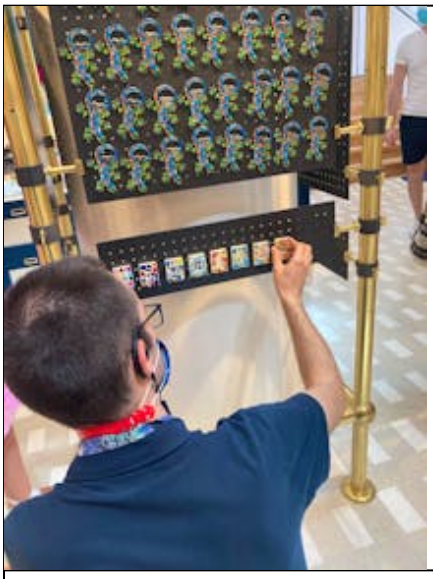
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Specialisterne T... 273 KiB



Specialisterne T... 70 KiB



Specialisterne T... 178 KiB



Specialisterne T... 162 KiB



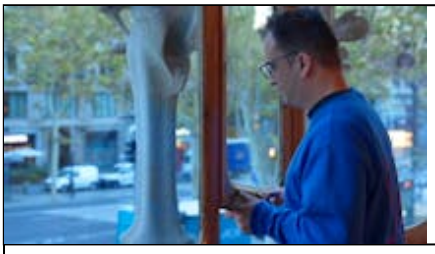
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Specialisterne T... 132 KiB



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Specialisterne T... 75 KiB



Specialisterne T... 93 KiB



Specialisterne T... 127 KiB



Specialisterne T... 115 KiB

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Captions of Pho... 22 KiB

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Casa Batlló's no... 164 KiB

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