

**URBAN
AGENDA**

WORKING TOGETHER
FOR BETTER CITIES



FOR THE EU

CULTURE / CULTURAL
HERITAGE

Implementation period
2018-2021

Urban Agenda for the EU

Urban Agenda for the EU

Local cultural services fostering social inclusion: Identification of cities' research needs and peer learning

Action 11

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November 2021



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LOCAL CULTURAL SERVICES
FOSTERING SOCIAL INCLUSION
ACTION LEARNING

1) Who we Are

Action Leaders

Eurocities (Julie Hervé) and Urbact (Lead Expert Laura Colini), in collaboration with the Urbact Action Planning Network ACCESS involving the cities of Amsterdam, Greater London Authority, Dublin, Riga, Sofia, Tallinn, Vilnius, Lisbon.

2) Background context

By culture and social inclusion, we understand inclusion within culture (ensuring access to cultural activities for all) and inclusion through culture (ensuring that art and culture play a role in addressing local challenges linked to social inclusion). Access to culture for all increases social cohesion at local level and considerably strengthens the sense of belonging to a given territory and to society in general. Social cohesion objectives and ensuring that culture is made accessible to the greatest number are priorities of most European cities. Links between culture and social inclusion are increasingly known and transversal policy approaches are being developed by local governments.

Local administrations strive to deliver cultural services that are accessible to their population and that brings people together. All over Europe, cities face similar challenges and develop different solutions to overcome them. Research plays a key role here to understand how culture and cultural activities are effective and beneficial for all citizens including the most disadvantaged. Research informs local policy makers and technicians about a specific situation and makes it easier to adjust local policies and services. Furthermore, city representatives (both at political and technical levels) feel the need to exchange knowledge between them to find inspiration from other local contexts and to improve their local policies and activities.

3) Objectives

The aim of the action was to identify precise research topics linking culture and social inclusion that local governments would find useful to develop better local cultural policies and activities, and to share a method of peer-learning and exchange of practices among cities.

The list of research topics presented in this action is meant to encompass the diversity of thematics covered by Culture and cultural heritage, and it is used to collect input for funders of future research at European level, be they public or private: European Commission, European Parliament, universities, research centers, NGOs etc. Indeed, the European Union actively supports research on culture through calls for proposals (including under Horizon Europe programme, the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation with a budget of €95.5 billion), calls for tenders, studies, and research projects.

The Horizon Europe programme (2021-2027) includes a new thematic cluster entitled 'Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society'. This cluster aims to strengthen European democratic values, including rule of law and fundamental rights, safeguarding our cultural heritage, and promoting socio-economic transformations that contribute to inclusion and growth. Many cities have been involved in EU funded research projects and many more are willing to be involved in future projects as they provide unique opportunities to foster innovative practices at local level. It is therefore important that future European research opportunities match cities' research needs.



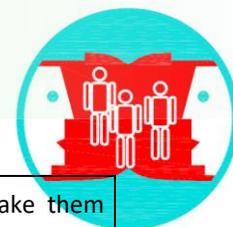
3) Results and main outcomes

The main milestones are two different and interrelated sub-actions namely: a survey on research needs for cities; and a peer-learning event online showcasing good practices in culture and inclusion local policies and methods for coproduction.

A) Survey on cities' research needs

Cities' research needs on culture and social inclusion were collected through an online survey from 28 April to 27 May 2021. The survey was shared among URBACT and Eurocities partners working on culture and heritage. 15 cities submitted responses: 7 capital cities, 3 large cities, 1 medium size city, 4 undefined. Cities' representatives were asked about existing local policies on culture and social inclusion and about research that would be useful to make current and future policies more effective. Not all questions were mandatory, and respondents had the opportunity to add comments in any thematic section of the survey. Responses were analysed to develop the list of research needs presented below. In our final research paper we also detail the challenges faced by cities and provide examples of local policies to overcome them.

Focus on	Cities' specific research needs
culture and people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expectations and needs that the different societal groups (senior people, children, teenagers, etc.) have towards local cultural offerings. Qualitative data would be useful for city administrations and local cultural organisations to increase cultural participation. The specific needs of senior citizens should be considered in terms of price, transport, programming, communication etc. - Research and data on reasons and (hidden) barriers preventing people from participating in cultural activities, and successful initiatives to overcome such barriers. - Making the most of culture as a vehicle for intercultural encounter, mutual understanding and positive interaction between ethnically and culturally diverse groups. - Ensuring the representation of diverse groups in cultural programming (ethnic and cultural background, race, age, ability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, others) and reaching out to those groups. This includes a focus on post-colonial heritage and anti-racist practices and innovative ways to foster intercultural dialogue and positive interaction between ethnically and culturally diverse groups.
culture and space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mapping local cultural infrastructure: methodologies used, transferability to other local contexts and use of mapping results to improve policy making. - Innovative models of cultural spaces, maker spaces and multifunctional spaces in neighborhoods, be they developed through adaptive reuse of heritage buildings or in new buildings. - Long-term impacts of cultural programmes in neighbourhoods.
culture and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research on successful local cultural education programmes (objectives, activities, systemic solutions). - Research on the concrete impacts of investing in cultural and creative skills on a city and its inhabitants. - Supporting creative entrepreneurship and youth entrepreneurship in cities. - Ways to introduce and consolidate art and cultural paths in the study courses of schools of different levels, from elementary schools to higher education.



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<p>culture, health and wellbeing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impacts of culture on health and wellbeing: what are they and how to make them sustainable. - Lessons from the pandemic regarding the importance of arts and culture in relation to health and wellbeing. - Addressing the cultural needs of people who are isolated, in distressed physical or mental condition; analysis of the relationships between cultural participation and health, psychological wellbeing, social cohesion, individual and social empowerment. - Ways to integrate art and culture into wellbeing and healthcare spaces in the long term.
<p>governance of local cultural policies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legislative, organisational and financial tools for building cross-sectoral partnerships and forms of cooperation. - Participatory governance within cultural policies and facilities and/or approaches to learn directly from city residents about their cultural needs/ambitions. - Inclusive methods of citizen participation: success factors and weaknesses. - Enabling communities to administer and govern cultural heritage in a sustainable way.
<p>culture and resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examples of non-financial support provided to local cultural organisations: objectives, conditions for implementation and impact. - Building local networks of cultural operators sharing both financial and non-financial resources. - Targeted support for grassroots organisations and community spaces at risk. - Research on policy measures and support mechanisms at local, regional and national levels that may encourage skill development, vocational training and intersectoral cooperation. - Support to the creative workforce facing the fragility of working conditions. - Models of integration of several support funds (local, national, European, private) to finance local projects.
<p>evidence and data</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The impact of culture in cities: job opportunities, attractiveness and other spillover effects, impacts on health and wellbeing. - Methodologies to collect effective data on people's needs and expectations regarding local cultural activities.

B) Peer-learning between cities

The peer-learning event due to COVID restriction was held online, in a shorter timeframe than initially planned and less interactive as imagined in a lively face to face event. The webinar highlighted the role of culture and inclusion as key indicators for social equity, but also discussed the gaps and challenges that exist in the EU. Areas of further examination and discussion included: the capacity to measure cultural participation at subnational levels; the effective methods for improving participation for measuring the effectiveness of social inclusion strategies; the need for differentiation of passive and active culture in policy design; the role of cities in decolonizing cultural offerings strategies for improving working conditions in cultural sectors in response to the effects of the pandemic.

The online event **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** took place on 10 Nov 2021, hosted by URBACT, with three objectives:

1. Share results of the above survey carried out by Eurocities and URBACT.
2. Cross-fertilise the activities between the UA partnership Culture and Cultural Heritage (C&CH) with the **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** partnership. Both partnerships were dealing with culture and inclusion with a slightly different but complementary angle: on cultural offers from the perspective of local authorities (action 11 of the Urban Agenda Partnership on culture and cultural heritage) and arts



and culture from the perspective of NGOs, associations and other formal and informal initiatives, also led by migrants (Action on arts, Urban Agenda Partnership on the inclusion of migrants and refugees) with a study conducted by Migration Policy Institute (MPI).

- 3. Peer-learn from showcasing experiences and concrete solutions developed by cities in URBACT **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** and by Eurocities members. Some examples presented are listed below and others are available on the respective organisations websites.

The **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**- Museum without walls, Tallin (Estonia) ACCESS URBACT - A museum arts and engagement team working with local residents to explore and celebrate heritage;



The **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** project, arrival in London. Learning with Little Amal, Greater London Authority (UK) - London's policy and URBACT local group are testing new evaluation measures to understand the social impact of a cultural project highlighting the plight of Syrian refugees;



Error! Hyperlink reference not valid., L'Hospitalet de Llobregat (Spain) - ON STAGE URBACT - Promoting urban social cohesion, diversity and academic achievement through music, focusing on economically deprived areas with high levels of unemployment and poverty.





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4. To showcase the URBACT method for peer-learning among cities, taking the example of ACCESS network dealing specifically with inclusion and culture.

The URBACT Method is based on three key concepts: **Integration Participation Action-Learning**. The combination of these principles enables cities to manage the policy cycle from planning resources and assigning actions, to implementing and following up policies, evaluating the impact and feeding back the lessons learnt. In particular, **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** is a network of eight European capital cities committed to cultural inclusion and inclusion through culture – to ensuring that everyone in their territories has a rich and fulfilling cultural offer, and that through this offer they feel included as citizens within their communities (Amsterdam (Lead Partner), Dublin, Lisbon, London, Riga, Sofia, Tallinn and Vilnius). Five or six transnational exchange meetings took place over 18 months, in partner cities, with partners working with local stakeholder groups meanwhile on production of their integrated action plans. The programme structure is carefully designed to ensure that partnerships have freedom to work according to their specific style and preferences, but that they benefit from the wisdom of many cities' experience in transnational learning programmes.

The ACCESS partnership agreed on five additional principles to make the most of the learning opportunity that the programme presents:

- Prioritise sharing 'smarter solutions' – learning from real life practice examples that have creatively addressed the cultural inclusion challenge
- Embrace challenge and failure – essential on the path to delivering change
- Include local groups across the programme – conversations restricted to policy-makers only become stale, and the benefits of transnational exchange deserve to be widely shared
- Engage with 'humans' – there are no desk-bound solutions to ensuring people feel included, partners must go out of their offices, meet with and listen to people to be able to work effectively
- Reflective space – working on inclusion frequently means challenging assumptions, including those of you and your organisation. This is hard, emotional work and demands that participants have space to step back from time to time in a supportive environment.

Peer learning in a shared physical space and online peer learning are very different, and it took time and testing to effect this transition – a process which was generously supported by the URBACT programme. Whilst discussion and decision-making within local groups has been markedly hampered by the online context, as participants' experience was so varied and only limited social connection already existed, with the aid of the existing social capital within the partnership network the peer learning process in ACCESS has been highly successful.



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Key aspects of ACCESS methodology

- Online transnational meetings are shorter than in real life (IRL) meetings: typically three mornings rather than three days. Participants value the lack of disruption to their lives and the intense focus outside of day-to-day work of these online engagements, though miss the gain in perspective from immersion in a new place.
- Warmth, speed and energy are vital. Online participants can easily disappear into other work or boredom: sessions are one hour maximum, the chat function provides a vital space to keep participants engaged, the facilitator must ensure that the ice is broken, that audience participation begins from the start, that the atmosphere is engaging. Individuals are greeted by name, with personal goodbyes at the end.
- For presentations – of case studies, of the work of a city, of expertise – audience size isn't important, and we invite unlimited numbers of representatives from partner cities and their local groups to attend. For workshops, however, in an online space in particular, being able to see the whole group on screen and to work with a group of familiar people are key. For workshop sessions in which we are embedding or testing learning, reviewing each other's progress or agreeing on shared practice, attendance is limited to two representatives per city such that we have a maximum of 18 attendees (16 city partners, one Lead Expert, one tech assistant). We also insist that representatives attend all sessions in any given meeting, such that we can build session on session – the potential to easily slide into a group and catch up when working online is much reduced.
- Our online space has character – the host city provide music, images, presentations of their city's highlights and culture. This has included a tutorial in making flower crowns, recipe exchange, a live broadcast gallery visit and full chorale. The space is engaging – people feel transported from the everyday, and open to learning. This replicates the effect of being away from home.
- Case studies remain essential, both for the sharing of inspirational practice and for the inclusion of different voices and presentation styles. We include three across three morning sessions, with space for the group to pick up key learning in workshops in between. Presentations roughly correspond to the three focus areas in our approach to cultural inclusion: decentralisation, widening participation and data. As well as discussion during the meeting, presenters provide contact details for further exchange.
- Quarterly transnational meetings do not include programme administration - this is instead delivered via monthly hour long meetings between lead representatives. This maintains momentum and connection. In addition, every six weeks there is an unstructured meeting held for those running their local groups, to provide the space for reflection on the hard process of working with a wide range of local partners. All cities have a 'buddy' city, also, with whom they arrange informal catch-ups to their own schedule.
- Beyond meetings, partners collaborate in creating 'guidebooks' – compendia of ideas and practice in cultural inclusion. These are created in advance of meetings to ensure participants are already thinking about the topics at hand and provide another avenue for exchange.

Beyond this formal programme there is a lively informal exchange of contacts, ideas and information.



4) Observations/Remarks/Recommendations

- The survey results provide concrete proposals to all organisations that fund research at European level, be they public or private: European Commission, European Parliament, universities, research centers, NGOs, philanthropies etc.
- The list of research needs resulting from the survey will be widely disseminated and will reach out to these organisations, helping to co-shape future calls and initiatives for cities at EU level.
- Long term European peer-learning schemes for cities are smart investments. Local leaders are committed to continuing efforts to become more resource efficient, more resilient, more inclusive and to work with citizens to understand their needs and deliver innovative solutions to local challenges. Sharing experience through peer-learning programmes such as **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** the European peer-learning programmes for cities and regions on cultural heritage, led by Eurocities, allow cities to develop and grow; it is important that they continue to learn from each other in the future.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the city representatives who responded to the survey on cities’ research needs on culture and social inclusion and who contributed to the peer-learning event; and to the coordinators of the Urban Agenda Partnership on the inclusion of migrants and refugees, MPI and members of the action on arts and culture of that partnership.

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- Italy
- National Governmental Agency for the Territorial Cohesion
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- Ministry for Culture (MIC)
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