



Call to Action

for low carbon and more inclusive culture

May 2023

eurocities.eu



Cities are an integral part of the fight to mitigate global warming, adapt to climate change and make societies more inclusive. These challenges coalesce in cities, and it is cities that hold the wealth of expertise and experience to solve them.

As city leaders, we must act now

It's up to all of us to face the intensification of climate change and the collapse of biodiversity across the globe: we must act more quickly to achieve greater restraint whilst demonstrating new ways of working. Set by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services reports and the international scientific community, our common horizon is 2025. Unless we gain traction before that, we risk reaching the breaking point of our ecosystem and, thus, of our models of society.

As leaders of large European cities, and in line with the European Green Deal, we commit to making our local policies more sustainable and more inclusive; we acknowledge that this entails working together with local actors; and we commit to making this ambition and the actions taken visible to local people.

**That is why we are
making a Europe-wide
appeal for a low carbon
and more inclusive
culture**

Culture is part of the solution

Arts, culture and heritage, in all their diversity, are the expression of our European identity. They are a source of emancipation, a space for collective expression and awareness, a force that unites, and a lever to make our territory lively and attractive throughout the world.

Local cultural policies aim to provide access to art and culture for all (enjoying, creating and practicing art at all stages of life), foster a better understanding of heritage, develop imagination, sharpen critical thinking and openness to the world, and share emotions.

Arts and culture are a powerful lever to support positive change. They affect emotions, open consciences, and inspire both individual and collective action to achieve a restrained and sustainable model. Culture also helps to forge links and strengthen solidarity within our territories.

Nevertheless, cultural and artistic activities consume energy, resources and materials and can also generate several types of pollution. We understand and share the urgency for action to meet the ecological imperative through all our public policies, including those on culture. We also maintain our commitment to the objectives of artistic excellence and social inclusion, understanding that provision for society's least privileged ultimately benefits everyone.

We are convinced that cities and their urban areas have a key role to play. It is at local level that concrete decisions can be taken, in close proximity to people's everyday lives. It is also on this scale that cultural institutions, artists, audiences and other stakeholders can gather to build projects and models of more sustainable culture.

By signing this call, signatories commit to

- » Develop more sustainable and inclusive cultural policies, by implementing at least one priority from each of the two pillars of this call to action.
- » Work with other major European cities to improve their policies and practices. This is done through the new Eurocities task force on sustainable culture, where cities share expertise, know-how and innovative practices on sustainable culture.
- » Consider developing collaborative projects with other European cities, including by using European funding.
- » Raise awareness on the ecological transition and on social inclusion among public and independent local cultural actors: cultural institutions, associations, artists and audiences.

Environmental protection knows no borders. We propose a collective commitment at European level for local sustainable and responsible cultural policies.

This call to action is a follow-up action of the Eurocities culture forum hosted by Lille in September. The forum focused on sustainable culture and gathered over 150 politicians and technicians representing large cities throughout Europe.

The call to action demonstrates a political commitment to act locally.





Ecological transition in the field of culture

We identify the following priorities to fight climate change:

PRIORITY 1 REDUCING THE USE OF RESOURCES AND USING SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

We strive to choose the most sustainable solutions when organising cultural events, particularly through the choice of materials. This approach consists of consuming the least new material possible by: facilitating circular economy; promoting the re-use of material and props; and helping local organisations to share existing resources.

We commit to introducing a principle of sustainability and eco-responsibility in all new public contracts created, in order to implement responsible purchasing policies such as:

- » committing to the principle of only purchasing what is necessary;
- » favouring the purchase of materials that are sustainable over time and easily reusable;
- » favouring second-hand purchases;
- » encouraging the sharing of materials.

PRIORITY 2 PRESERVING NATURE IN URBAN AREAS WHEN HOSTING EVENTS

To minimise the impact of cultural events, cities commit to respecting natural sites' biodiversity when hosting events in natural environments. This requires assessing sites prior to events and restoring them afterwards.

PRIORITY 3 RETHINKING MOBILITY / REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS DUE TO THE MOBILITY OF ARTISTS AND AUDIENCES

Cities will act on sustainable mobility when organising cultural events (festivals, concerts, exhibitions) with the following ambitions:

- » avoiding unnecessary travel;
- » shortening or sharing unavoidable travel;
- » encouraging soft and active mobility, and the use of low-carbon vehicles.

This approach will apply to the mobility of local actors organising cultural events, but also to the mobility of artists, artworks, equipment and especially the audiences.

PRIORITY 4 ENCOURAGING LOCAL ARTISTIC CREATION

We strive for cultural activities to be as locally made as possible. This approach should be cross-cutting, focusing on the origin of the materials and consumables needed to organise cultural activities and, as much as possible, supporting local artists and creators from all artistic disciplines.

PRIORITY 5 FACILITATING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN LOCAL CULTURAL STAKEHOLDERS

The role of the local authority is central when it comes to bringing the local cultural sector together. We commit to supporting local cultural and creative actors in their sustainability efforts, for example by promoting the exchange of innovative practices between actors, by providing common support services or facilitating contacts and joint projects with actors outside the culture sector.

PRIORITY 6 IMPROVING THE ENERGY EFFICIENCY OF CULTURAL BUILDINGS

Energy efficiency is key in reducing the energy consumption of cultural buildings. As owners of heritage and cultural buildings, we commit to improving the energy efficiency of such buildings; we commit to supporting cultural organisations in finding technical solutions to reduce their energy consumption and to produce renewable energy on site.

PRIORITY 7 ASSESSING THE ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT OF CULTURAL EVENTS

We commit to producing, as far as possible, the most exhaustive carbon report possible (ideally SCOPE 3) and life cycle analysis for each cultural event organised.

PRIORITY 8 USING THE POTENTIAL OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN A RESPONSIBLE WAY

Using digital technology can help reduce unnecessary travel and thus reduce the environmental impact of our activities. However, our digital habits must also evolve, as greenhouse gas emissions from the digital sector are increasing year upon year. We are aware of the importance of assessing the environmental impact of our digital use, and commit to developing and implementing sustainable solutions that minimise carbon emissions from digital technologies.

PRIORITY 9 TRAINING OUR STAFF AND LOCAL ACTORS ON BIODIVERSITY AND ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

Adaptation to climate change and the preservation of biodiversity are two essential elements to ensuring a collective ecological transition. We commit to increasing the awareness and skills of staff throughout city administrations regarding both biodiversity and ecological issues, as well as issues linked to inclusion.

PRIORITY 10 HAVING SPECIALISTS TO CARRY OUT PUBLIC POLICY OBJECTIVES ON SUSTAINABLE CULTURE

We commit to appoint contact persons within the city administration who can monitor initiatives aiming at making cultural policies and activities more sustainable, and document changes and impacts on the ground. Such persons can support local cultural organisations in their sustainability efforts. City administrations can also be supported in this journey by external specialists providing the necessary training to the city's staff members.



Inclusion in culture and through culture

Sustainable culture also has strong ambitions to help forge an ever more inclusive society, enabling everyone to participate in cultural life, but also more generally in the life of the city. We identify the following priorities:

PRIORITY 11 PROVIDING ACCESS TO CULTURAL PROGRAMMES FOR ALL, ENSURING THAT BARRIERS TO ACCESS TO CULTURE ARE ADDRESSED

An ambitious cultural policy also fosters the conditions for creativity and expression for all, at all stages of life, regardless of their social background. To achieve a more inclusive society, we commit to facilitating access to cultural activities for all inhabitants of our territories and neighbouring areas, and to remove barriers to accessing culture (socio-cultural, geographical, economic, technological ones etc.).

PRIORITY 12 DEVELOPING AMBITIOUS CULTURAL PROJECTS FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

Excluded audiences are those for whom cultural sites or activities have not been designed or adapted. This may result in an inability to participate fully in the cultural life of the city, and/or a less physically/intellectually rewarding cultural experience. In the interests of fair access to art and culture, we commit to inclusion through culture and in culture, through:

- » cultural and artistic activities that raise awareness of different types of vulnerability, including those arising from disabilities;
- » making cultural places and events more accessible to vulnerable or disabled people;
- » projects that allow intergenerational dialogue and reach audiences across the different stages of life;
- » cultural activities in settings where excluded audiences are (for example social centres, hospitals, prisons, or homes for the elderly).

PRIORITY 13 TAKING CREATIVE CLIMATE ACTION TO IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Artists and designers are agents of change, and cultural experiences can have positive benefits on health, mental health and wellbeing, help develop confidence, dignity and new skills, and create new links between people.

We commit to exploring the opportunities to integrate climate considerations with health programmes through arts and culture, tackling the existential climate crisis humanity is facing.

PRIORITY 14 STRENGTHENING CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC DIVERSITY

The protection and celebration of all cultures are essential to ensuring cultural diversity on urban territories, and all cultures deserve equal status. We commit to favoring the conditions of creation for all artistic expression, without discrimination, and to ensuring favorable conditions for the participation and enjoyment of everyone.

We commit to cultural policies that support the creation of a modern cultural heritage for our cities whilst preserving and enhancing that of the past. This involves assigning value and space to contemporary and emerging artistic and cultural trends, without normative judgement.

PRIORITY 15 INTEGRATING GENDER ISSUES AND ENSURING GENDER PARITY IN LOCAL CULTURAL POLICIES

Culture plays an essential role in raising awareness of gender discrimination and in renewing social relations. We commit to promoting cultural and artistic actions that reflect the voices of women and gender minorities.

To avoid gender discrimination, we undertake to implement preventive measures and make cultural events accessible and welcoming to all genders.

Signatories also commit to achieving parity within their local authorities, including in leadership positions, and to ensuring full equality of access to jobs in the cultural sector.

PRIORITY 16 INCREASING CITIZEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF CULTURAL POLICIES

We reaffirm that the issue of local governance is intimately linked with cultural policies. Signatories commit to developing dialogue and creative means of deliberative democracy on cultural activities, whether through the participation of residents, civil society, educational institutions, and other groups or networks.

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Endorsement of the call to action

HOW DO YOU BECOME A SIGNATORY CITY?

Signatory cities commit to work locally towards the 16 priorities of the call to action, and commit to implement at least one priority from each of the 2 pillars of this call to action. It is up to each city to sign the call to action directly (signature by the mayor or by the deputy mayor in charge of a relevant portfolio) or to have the call to action formally adopted by the City Council.

Once the decision to commit to the call to action is formally made, cities should inform Eurocities (julie.herve@eurocities.eu), which will facilitate the signature process.

An official signing ceremony is organised in the framework of the Brussels Urban Summit (June 2023) but individual signings can also be done in the city itself or during the annual Eurocities culture forum.

COMMUNICATION, KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND MONITORING

Signatory cities commit to sharing local practices developed to implement the 16 priorities of the call to action. These practices will be shared throughout the Eurocities network and outside the network. Each signatory city will be made visible through a Eurocities communication campaign on sustainable culture; local actions will be promoted, and will inspire other cities.

Each year, signatory cities will be asked to provide examples of new policies or activities developed locally to support low carbon and more inclusive cultural policies.

City

Mayor's signature

