

RULES



7th EDITION
INTERNATIONAL AWARD

UCLG
MEXICO CITY
CULTURE 21



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The objective of the
**INTERNATIONAL AWARD
UCLG – MEXICO CITY –
CULTURE 21** is to recognise
leading cities and individuals
that have distinguished
themselves through their
contribution to culture as a
key dimension in sustainable
cities.



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INTRODUCTION

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the leading international organisation of local and regional governments, promotes cultural rights in sustainable development at local, national and international levels. This work is mainly carried out through its Committee on Culture, which is co-chaired by Mexico City, Lisbon and Buenos Aires, and involves the cities of Barcelona, Bilbao, Bogotá, Brazzaville, Jeju and Izmir as vice-presidents. With more than 100 active members on all continents, the Committee has become the leading platform on culture and sustainable development for local and regional governments, and has positioned UCLG as a global network of reference in this field. At the World Congress in Daejeon in October 2022, UCLG adopted the "UCLG Pact for the Future of Humanity: for People, for the Planet and for the Government". The Pact for the Future defines the strategic priorities of the Organisation from 2022 to 2028.

Since 2004, UCLG has been at the forefront of integrating culture into sustainable development strategies, becoming the most influential global platform on this issue. International frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the New Urban Agenda, and Climate Action are located in cities, where the major challenges of sustainable development—environmental balance, cultural vitality, social justice, economic progress, and inclusive governance—intersect. UCLG considers that cultural aspects play a fundamental role as the fourth pillar of sustainable development due to their capacity to promote debates on societal values and, at the same time, place memory, heritage, creativity, indigenous peoples, diversity and knowledge at the heart of public policies. Thus, the **UCLG Committee on Culture** promotes several programmes, in addition to the organisation of the biennial **International Award UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21**, which will be presented in the following pages. The UCLG Committee on Culture also offers capacity-building and learning programmes on cultural policies (with 20 **Leading Cities**, 24 **Pilot Cities** and 5 **Culture 21 Labs**, and 11 **Seven Keys**) and participates in **international advocacy campaigns** (such as the **#Culture2030Goal** campaign), advocating together with other networks in favour of culture in the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. It also hosts the **"OBS" database of good practices** on culture in sustainable cities, and organises the **UCLG Culture Summit**.



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Mexico City is an undisputed international leader in the field of cultural rights. The approval of the new Constitution in 2017, and the approval and subsequent implementation of the Law on Cultural Rights of Inhabitants and Visitors (Ley Derechos Culturales de los Habitantes y los Visitantes) in 2019 were milestones for the global municipal movement, which have inspired similar measures in cities such as Barcelona, Izmir, Lisbon, Montreal, Kazan, Ouagadougou, Jeju, Geneva, Washington DC, Bogota, Malmoe, Gwangju, Rome or Seoul, among others. Moreover, the promotion of cultural rights takes place in a coherent and synchronised manner alongside the fight against all inequalities, such as in the areas of gender equality, community empowerment or climate action.

PREVIOUS EDITIONS OF THE AWARD

The first edition of the Award was held in 2014. The winner in the "City / Local or Regional Government" category was the project "Arena da Cultura", presented by Belo Horizonte (Minas Gerais, Brazil) and, in the "Individual" category, Manuel Castells and Farida Shaheed were awarded.

The second edition of the Award was held in 2016, with the winners in the category "City / Local or Regional Government" being the programmes " "Cultural heritage and reinvigoration of socio-economic activities in Timbuktu", presented by the City of Timbuktu (Mali) and the project "I AM... / The adventure of one community in the middle of a transformation", from Vaudreuil-Dorion (Quebec, Canada) and, in the category "Individual", Jon Hawkes and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui.

The third edition of the Award took place in 2018. The city of Lyon (France), with its cultural policy "The Sustainable City of Lyon: the Charter of Cultural Cooperation", and Seongbuk (Seoul, Republic of Korea), with the programme "Common Seongbuk Artist Roundtable: Local Culture Governance", were recognised as winners in the category "City / Local or Regional Government". In the "Individual" Category, the Jury decided to jointly award Basma El Hussein and Patrice Meyer-Bisch.

The fourth edition of the Award took place in 2020. The cities of Medellin (Colombia) and Segou (Mali) were awarded for the programmes "Network of Arts and Cultural Practices" and "Segou, a creative city" respectively. In the "Individual" category, the award went exaequo to Eusebio Leal and Vandana Shiva.



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The fifth edition of the Award was held in 2022 and focused on the promotion of cultural rights in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the post-pandemic recovery, and culture as an important part of the care system. The winning cities of this edition were Dublin (Ireland) and Buenos Aires (Argentina) in the category "City / Local or Regional Governments" for their initiatives "'AWE': Cultural Engagement through Accessibility, Wellbeing and Evidence" and "Abasto Cultural Neighbourhood: Economic Boost and Urban Regeneration" respectively. Lourdes Arizpe and Daisy Fancourt were also awarded exaequo in the "Individual" category.

The sixth edition of the Award was held in 2024, focusing on cultural rights as a key driver of local sustainable development. The winning cities were Gwanak-gu (Republic of Korea) and La Paz (Bolivia) in the category "City / Local or Regional Governments" for their initiatives "Capital of Youth Culture" and "Traditional Medicine Information and Guidance Centres – Qullañ Uta," respectively. Milena Dragičević Šešić and Alfons Martinell Sempere were awarded ex-aequo in the "Individual" category.

GOOD PRACTICES

Almost three quarters of the candidacies submitted to the Award have been recognised by the Jury as good practices. UCLG has an excellent tool, the Observatory of Good Practices "**OBS**", which currently has more than 440 good practices, most of which come from the previous six editions of the Award. All the good practices that have their origin in this Award have a "label" that explicitly identifies their corresponding edition.

The OBS can be searched according to 3 criteria: the 17 SDGs, the 9 Culture 21 Actions Commitments, and 104 keywords.

Its exhaustiveness and indexing make the OBS a unique resource, unmatched by any other organisation or initiative. The OBS allows UCLG members to have a broad visibility.



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THE 7TH EDITION OF THE AWARD

CENTRAL THEME

JUSTIFICATION

The 7th edition of the International Award UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21 aims to recognise cities and personalities who have excelled in the promotion of cultural rights for local sustainable development.

According to article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits". Cultural rights encompass the right of all people to access, actively participate in and contribute to cultural life. The **Rome Charter**, promoted by the UCLG Committee on Culture and the City of Rome, approved at the UCLG World Council in 2020, advocates for public policies in culture and recognises the commitment of UCLG and the City of Rome to recognising cultural rights as a central component of caring societies, affirmed amidst the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. A city working for cultural democracy must support and strengthen the cultural capacities of its inhabitants to discover, enjoy, create, share and protect culture.

Culture has been recognised by UCLG as the fourth pillar of sustainable development. This narrative has been supported with very concrete and locally applicable declarations and operational guides: **Agenda 21 for culture** (2004), **Culture 21: Actions** (2015). Culture is an essential component of sustainable development, both for its intrinsic values (memory, heritage, creativity, diversity, critical knowledge) and for its cross-cutting nature (its contribution to social inclusion, health, education, the fight against poverty, gender equality and sexual diversity, peace, security and coexistence, employment, sustainable tourism, sustainable urban planning and environmental protection).



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This narrative has been enriched by the pioneering actions of the cities in the network that concretely build into their policies the relationship between culture, cultural rights and sustainable development. The newest global framework document, **Culture 21 Plus** (2025), is the culmination of over 20 years of expertise, advocacy, monitoring, and collaboration by the UCLG Committee on Culture. Developed through an extensive consultation process, it builds on past experiences and insights from cities worldwide. This updated guide on culture and sustainable cities reflects both local and global transformations over the last decade, ensuring its relevance in addressing contemporary realities and challenges. It also recognizes the diversity of local spaces and, while presenting a coherent global framework, can be adapted to specific realities: large cities, small municipalities, rural areas, territories with varying degrees of experience in linking culture and sustainable development, topics of specific interest, etc.

Culture 21 Plus is developed in the following blocks:

I RIGHTS

Ensuring cultural democracy by promoting the capabilities of all inhabitants to discover, create, share, enjoy and protect cultural resources.

I COMMUNITIES

Mobilising culture to reinforce social cohesion and inclusion, address local challenges and build more democratic, sustainable and strong communities.

I PROSPERITY

Making culture a driving force for a sustainable and inclusive local economic development.

I TERRITORIES

Making culture a key dimension of local planning and development in order to improve the living environment, the sense of belonging and the quality of life of the population.

I NATURE

Fostering harmony between nature and culture, and mobilising culture in the fight against climate change and towards climate resilience and a sustainable and fair transition.

I GOVERNANCE

Building a participative, transversal and cooperative local governance of culture.



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This Award highlights the leadership of cities in the promotion of cultural rights as a transversal driver of local sustainable development, highlighting the diversity and excellence of policies and actions of local governments from all over the world. This shows that there is no single model of development, and that each project and policy is inscribed in specific and different local contexts, and constitute unique and original proposals.

More specifically, the **7th edition of the International Award “UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21”** will recognise:

in the **CATEGORY “CITY / LOCAL OR REGIONAL GOVERNMENT”**

- I One (or two) winning city(ies) of the Award.
- I Cities with a "Special Mention of the Jury".
- I The recognition as "good practices" of the initiatives that the Jury deems to meet the requirements, giving visibility to a wide variety of initiatives from all corners of the world, which constitute exemplary practices for the promotion of cultural rights for local sustainable development.

in the **CATEGORY “INDIVIDUAL”**

- I One or two personalities who have made a fundamental contribution to cultural rights and to the relationship between culture and local sustainable development.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The 7th edition of the International Award UCLG - Mexico City - Culture 21 aims to recognise cities, local or regional governments, and leading individuals who have excelled in the promotion of innovative practices linked to the exercise of cultural rights, citizenship and sustainable development.



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SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The 7th edition of the International Award UCLG - Mexico City - Culture 21 has the following specific objectives:

- I To encourage cities and local and regional governments around the world to present innovative practices in the field of cultural rights and sustainable development.
- I To provide the international community with examples of policies and practices that have had a positive impact and continue to improve people's quality of life for the cities of the future.
- I To highlight the links between local cultural policies and practices and international goals for sustainable development, such as the SDGs integrated in the United Nations 2030 Agenda or the New Urban Agenda.
- I Consolidate a learning network among local and regional governments themselves through the Observatory of Good Practices ("OBS").

CATEGORIES

The International Award UCLG - Mexico City - Culture 21 has **two categories**:

- I City / Local or Regional Government.
- I Individual.

CATEGORY "CITY / LOCAL OR REGIONAL GOVERNMENT"

PRESENTATION

This category will award a city, local or regional government whose policy, programme or project has significantly contributed to the promotion of the exercise of cultural rights in local sustainable development. The terms "city, local or regional government" should be interpreted broadly and include any local territorial entity (city, town, region, etc.) and governments operating at the local (cities, towns, etc.), provincial, regional, state (within a federation) and other similar levels.



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The Award will be given to the local or regional government that wins the competitive call process, which is open to direct and indirect UCLG members, as well as to any local or regional governments collaborating with UCLG partner organisations. Indirect members of UCLG include local or regional governments that are members of an association or federation of local or regional governments that is, in turn, a member of UCLG. In practice, the vast majority of local and regional governments around the world are part of UCLG directly or indirectly, although they may not be aware of it. If you have any doubts about your indirect membership of UCLG, we encourage you to contact the Technical Secretariat of the Award at cultureaward@uclg.org.

The application a) must focus on an innovative policy, programme or project, with a minimum duration of existence of two (2) years; b) may have been promoted directly by the local or regional government, or by local cultural actors (civil society, associations, cultural institutions or organisations, universities, activists, etc.); and c) regardless of its origin, the application must be submitted to the Award only by the local or regional government.

Each city, local or regional government may submit **only one candidacy**.

THEMES

The themes or thematic subcategories are designed to recognise innovative policies, programmes or projects, reward the performance of local and regional governments and promote the replicability of cultural practices in favour of people, the government and our planet.

In this edition, policies, programs, and projects must be based on one or two of the following axes:

I Cultural rights and care

Care, understood as the collective organization of life and the relationships that sustain it, is increasingly permeating local cultural policies. From this perspective, culture is conceived as a space for reconfiguring the bonds between people and with nature, generating new forms of coexistence, well-being, and justice.



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Cultural policies, programmes, and projects based on cultural rights and care recognize the value of creativity, diversity, and heritage as resources for regenerating communal life. Linked to local strategies on health, inclusion, and well-being, they address social, economic, and environmental justice in an integrated manner and repair the legacies of discrimination and exclusion. In this sense, these cultural policies, programmes, and projects can be understood as a care infrastructure when they materialize the relationships that sustain community life.

I Cultural policies and gender equality

Gender equality is a common cross-cutting approach in municipal competences and actions. Cultural policies, programmes, and projects can contribute to revising gender narratives from a feminist perspective and integrating an intersectional perspective that guarantees equity. These cultural policies, programmes, and projects contribute to creatively transforming the narrative and imagery of cities and territories, so that they reflect the history, identity, and values of the populations that inhabit them, in a diverse, inclusive, plural, and representative manner.

Considering cultural factors and how they facilitate or impede the exercise of human rights is essential to understanding that cultural representations, and, in turn, social norms and behaviors can be at the root of gender inequalities and the inability of women and girls to fully exercise their rights.

The Technical Secretariat of the Award (cultureaward@uclg.org) will respond to any queries about the relevance or suitability of a potential candidacy.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The Jury will apply the following criteria:

| EVALUATION CRITERIA | DESCRIPTION |
|----------------------------|---|
| Addressing Local Needs | The proposal efficiently and effectively responds to an identified local need, problem, or challenge. Evidence of results and quality of implementation is provided. |
| Innovation and Originality | The proposal shows original and creative initiatives to address local needs of its inhabitants or challenges of the territory. It demonstrates a clear creative process in its design and development, leading to a visible progressive and transformative change since its implementation. |



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Effectiveness and Sustainability

The proposal demonstrates its impact on people and the sustainable development of its territory through mechanisms or tools that demonstrate its effectiveness. The potential for continuity and long-term benefits will be assessed.

Exemplarity and Transferability

The proposal includes elements that allow it to be replicated in other territories or areas facing similar needs, challenges or problems. It provides evidence and evaluation mechanisms to consolidate its transferability.

HOW TO APPLY?

Candidacies for the "City / Local or Regional Government" category must be submitted exclusively online by completing the form available [here](#). This form is available in the three official languages of UCLG: English, French and Spanish.

Once you begin the form, you will receive a unique link, allowing you to work on your application at your own pace. Please note that after the deadline, you will no longer be able to access or submit the application form.

THE DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS IS 12/03/2026.

WHAT SHOULD MY APPLICATION INCLUDE?

MANDATORY DOCUMENTS

Completed application form

Submitted through the official online platform.

Photographs

Five (5) high-quality images illustrating the initiative (minimum 300 dpi; JPEG, PNG, TIFF or similar formats).

Letter of presentation

Signed by the Mayor or Head of Government; PDF format. It may have free structure and content. However, the letter should be addressed to the 'Secretariat of the International Award UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21' and must include:

- I A paragraph that outlines the project (summarising section 1 of the form).
- I A paragraph that mentions its direct or indirect membership of UCLG.



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OPTIONAL DOCUMENTS

Supporting annexes

Up to three optional annexes in free format, each file not exceeding 2MB.

RECOGNITION

The winning city will receive a trophy made by an artist from Mexico City, accompanied by a recognition signed by the Head of Government of Mexico City and by the President of UCLG. The winning city will be invited to the Award Ceremony, as well as to relevant and related events organised by UCLG, as well as to the UCLG World Congress.

As part of the Award Ceremony, winning cities and personalities and selected exemplary projects will be invited to a peer-learning exercise hosted with Mexico City. This session will foster dialogue, exchange, and mutual learning among cultural leaders and local governments from around the world. It will highlight innovative practices, explore shared challenges, and promote lasting cooperation.

The Jury may choose to award a single candidacy or decide that the Award will be shared by more than one candidacy. The Jury may also recognise some applications as "Special Mention of the Jury". Winners, Mentions and Good Practices will be disseminated worldwide by the UCLG Committee on Culture.

DISSEMINATION OF THE BIDS

Section 1 of each form may be translated by the organisers from the original language into the other two official languages of UCLG, and its contents may be published on the Award website in 2026.

Other contents of the each may also be published, at the suggestion of the Jury and with the explicit agreement of each government, after the announcement of the winner of the Award.



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OBLIGATIONS OF THE WINNERS "CITY / LOCAL OR REGIONAL GOVERNMENT"

The winning city, local or regional government in this category assumes the following obligations:

- I The communication in writing of the acceptance of the Award, within a maximum period of 30 days after receiving the notification.
- I The personal attendance of the Mayor or Head of Government at the Award Ceremony.
- I The dissemination of the obtention of the Award in the local media.
- I The communication to the organisers of the implementation of the activities mentioned as destination of the Award (section 6 of the application form), within a maximum period of one year after receiving the notification.

CATEGORY "INDIVIDUAL"

PRESENTATION

This category will recognise an internationally renowned individual who has made a fundamental contribution to cultural rights, and to the relationship between culture and sustainable development. The Individual award will be designated by the Jury without an open competition process.

The organisers of the Award invite all members of UCLG (direct or indirect), as well as other interested individuals and organisations, to make a spontaneous nomination of a personality by using the nomination form created for this purpose, available **here**, and emailing it to **cultureaward@uclg.org**. The nomination shall be duly motivated, explicitly indicating the contribution of the personality to cultural rights and the relationship between culture and sustainable development, including the promotion of cultural rights and/or the link between culture and the SDGs (UN 2030 Agenda) or the New Urban Agenda.

The Jury may award a single individual or decide that the Award will be shared by more than one person, as has been the case in previous editions.

The winner will receive a trophy made by an artist from Mexico City, accompanied by a recognition signed by the Head of Government of Mexico City and the President of UCLG. The winner will also be invited to the Award Ceremony, the peer-learning exercise, and the UCLG World Congress.



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FORMALISATION OF NOMINATIONS

Spontaneous nominations for the category "Individual" shall be submitted only to the email address cultureaward@uclg.org. The spontaneous nomination shall consist of one document, according to the proposed form. Once a nomination has been received, the organisers of the Award will send a message by email acknowledging receipt.

Nominations will not be published.

THE DEADLINE FOR NOMINATIONS IS 12/03/2026.

OBLIGATIONS OF THE "INDIVIDUAL" WINNERS

The winning personality in this category assumes the following obligations:

- I Personal attendance at the Award Ceremony.
- I Writing and reading at the Award Ceremony of an original text on cultural rights in local sustainable development.



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JURY

The selection of candidatures and nominations will be made by a Jury or Technical Evaluation Committee, formed by international personalities or experts, proposed by Mexico City and UCLG. The members of the Jury will be distinguished personalities with a proven track record in the cultural world.

The Jury will work with the technical secretariat of the Award, formed by the UCLG World Secretariat and the Secretariat of Culture of the Government of Mexico City.

In the category "**City / Local or Regional Government**", the Jury will analyse the applications received through the formulaire and will designate the winner(s) of the Award, as well as the Special Mentions of the Jury and the applications identified as good practices.

In the "**Individual**" category, the Jury will evaluate the nominations and will designate the winning personality(ies) of the Award.



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CONTACT

Technical Secretariat of the Award:

| cultureaward@uclg.org

Organising Entities:

UCLG — Committee on Culture

Mexico City Government — Culture Secretariat

Mexico City Government — Institutional Relations



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