

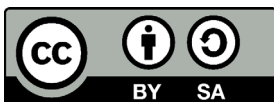
12

Capitals of Culture Engaging for the Culture Goal



**UCLG
CGLU**

United Cities
and Local Governments



The report is available online at www.agenda21culture.net.
This report can be reproduced for free as long as the authorship is mentioned.

We recommend the following quote: Amann, Sylvia (2026). "Capitals of Culture Engaging for the Culture Goal".
UCLG Committee on Culture Reports, n°12. Engerwitzdorf - Barcelona. January 2026

The author is responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained
in this text and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those
of UCLG and do not commit the organisation.
The copyright of this report belongs to UCLG – United Cities and Local Governments.

Table of contents

Preface	IV
Executive Summary	01
1. Context Analysis	05
1.1 The Culture Goal	05
1.2 Capitals of Culture	13
2. Proposed Common Specific Objectives	26
3. Proposed Action Plan	29
3.1 Proposed Actions by / with CoCs in 2026 and 2027 for a Culture Goal (Campaign)	29
3.2 Proposed Updates of Terms of Reference of Capitals of Culture	37
Bibliography	38
Annexes	39
Annex 1 – Overview “Local Dimensions of the Culture Goal”	39
Annex 2 – Overview “Local Dimensions of the Culture Goal & Capitals of Culture ToR”	41
Annex 3 – Overview “Favourable Culture Goal Ecosystems & Designated Capitals of Culture	44
Annex 4 – Stakeholders Involved to Elaborate this Report	46

UCLG CULTURE COMMITTEE

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is the world organization created in 2004 which represents local and regional governments and defends their interests on the world stage. It currently represents 70% of the global population, and it is the association of cities with the most members, and with the greatest capacity of influence before the United Nations. The World Secretariat of UCLG is based in Barcelona.

UCLG has an important cultural programme based on the **Agenda 21 for Culture**, approved in Barcelona in May 2004, on the Declaration “**Culture is the 4th pillar of Sustainable Development**”, approved in Mexico City in November 2010 , and on the practical toolkit **Culture 21: Actions**, approved in Bilbao in March 2015; the **Rome Charter**, adopted in 2020 and the guide **Culture 21 Plus**, approved in 2025.

The **UCLG Culture Committee** is a unique global platform of cities, local governments, associations, organizations and networks that cooperate and promote the role of Culture in Sustainable Cities. The mission of the UCLG Culture Committee is to promote culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development through the international dissemination and the local implementation of Agenda 21 for culture, and to foster and make more explicit the relationship between local cultural policies and sustainable development. The narrative is based on human rights, good governance, people-centered development and the co-creation of the city.

Website: www.agenda21culture.net
Social media: [@agenda21culture](https://twitter.com/agenda21culture)



PREFACE

The title of this report is “Capitals of Culture Engaging for the Culture Goal”. It was written as one of the final outputs of the “Capitals of Culture Working Together” programme (2023-2026), coordinated by the Committee on Culture of the global organisation of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), with the support of the European Commission (INTPA).

UCLG has played an important role in the connection among (regional, continental) Capitals of Culture and the global advocacy on the place of cultural policies in sustainable development.

At least since May 2017 (at **the 2nd UCLG Culture Summit**, held in Jeju), the dialogue between several regional initiatives of Capitals of Culture have been facilitated through UCLG activities, with the presence of the European Commission, mainly with representatives from DG-EAC. The aim of these dialogues was coherent with the role played by UCLG globally: to discuss approaches and experiences led by cities, to connect the continents and regional spaces, as well as to facilitate the possible emergence of synergies among them, and (not the least) to advance towards a meaningful advocacy on culture in the global conversation on development and sustainability. The UCLG Culture Summits of 2019 (Buenos Aires) and 2021 (Izmir) discussed the feasibility of a Culture Goal, and **the 5th UCLG Culture Summit** in Dublin devoted plenary sessions to both the Culture Goal and to (explicitly) the potential role that Capitals of Culture could play in this endeavour.

Expanding and sharing the Capitals of Culture experience is extremely valuable. It promotes multi-level partnerships, peer-learning exchanges and capacity-building. It fosters meaningful connections across borders. Bringing discussions from the local level to international arenas also triggers shared advocacy initiatives and contributes to shaping global agendas, such as current efforts to include a stand-alone Culture Goal in the post-2030 Agenda. The global campaign Culture 2030 Goal published in 2022 a zero-draft of a Culture Goal (with 10 targets), in the document “**A Culture Goal is Essential for Our Common Future**”. In 2025, the campaign published a complete version of the proposal, with the Culture Goal, 10 targets and several qualitative and quantitative indicators, in the document “**The Culture Goal: from Necessity to Reality**”.

On 11 December 2024, the UCLG Culture Committee, in cooperation with UCLG-Africa and the UCCI, and with the support of the European Union and technical assistance by Culture et Développement (NGO), organised a webinar to go in-depth on the relation between the Culture Capitals and Culture Goal, in order to boost the connections between the regional “Capital” initiatives and the global challenges. On 15 January 2026, a second workshop was organised, to update the relation between the Culture Capitals and Culture Goal, and to discuss a draft version of this report. Both webinars are also outputs of the “Capitals of Culture Working Together” programme.

This report is the result of a collection of efforts. All the participants in the webinars mentioned above deserve a sincere gratitude from the Secretariat of the UCLG Culture Committee, with a special mention to Valeria Marcolin, Jordi Baltà, Hugues Ondaye, U-seok Seo, Francisco Mugaburu, Alessandro Lamonica and the Culture Next team leaders and experts, including Ștefan Teșanu and András Farkas.

This report has been coordinated and written by Sylvia Amann. She deserves a very sincere gratitude from the Secretariat of the UCLG Culture Committee.

Capitals of Culture Engaging for the Culture Goal

Report written by Sylvia Amann

Executive Summary

Global (culture / policy) frameworks face considerable transformation. The Culture Goal provides an answer to these challenges and opportunities. In that sense, Capitals of Culture and the Culture Goal framework are good examples of the adoption of holistic approaches, which serve to demonstrate the value of culture for social cohesion, local (economic) development as well as international relations. Both aim equally for advanced culture ecosystems and fair cultural relations. However, the local level has so far often been overlooked in international (cultural / policy) making.

With this report, we provide an analysis as well as key areas for common action to fully connect the communities of those already engaged for the Culture Goal and Capitals of Culture initiatives in four continents. At least since 2017, UCLG is providing a related networking and cooperation platform. The Culture Goal contents are ready for testing and implementing – A common movement can start right now!

This report provides, in chapter 1, some basic information related to the Culture Goal campaign as well as to four Capitals of Culture initiatives. Chapter 2 brings forward a proposal for common specific objectives which have the potential to be shared by the Culture Goal promoters and the stakeholders of Capitals of Culture. In the last chapter, we highlight a set of specific (common) actions which could be brought forward together, complemented with strategic options in Capitals of Culture Terms of References – based on the frameworks in place in December 2025 - to better reflect the Culture Goal framework in the future.

The Culture Goal is strongly relevant for the further development and improvement of cultural ecosystems and disposes of strong and transversal local dimensions. **Cities, regional and local governments will benefit from the new Culture Goal system (on a voluntary basis and once approved) in many ways** like connecting better with their inhabitants or for benefiting from advanced impact measurements for policy purposes.

Based on the further analysis of the ten targets of the proposed Culture Goal, we have identified five key areas of attention for considering enhanced common action between Culture Goal promoters and Capitals of Culture stakeholders:

- Local (Culture) **Governance** (1)
- Local Culture **Programme & Outreach** (2)
- **Internationalisation** of Local Culture (3)
- **Capacity-Building** on Local Level (4)
- **Evaluation** of Local Cultural Activities & of Local Culture Governance (5)

We have complemented these five intervention areas with additional information for each Capital of Culture initiative analysed in view of the:

- **Communication Strategies** at the Local Level and by the Local Level Targeting National / International Levels (6),
- **Referring to the *SDGs*** (7) as well as
- **Capitals of Culture Governance Process and Stakeholders** (8) and
- **Eligibility, Countries Covered & Designated Capitals** of Culture 2025-2030 (9).

Common needs and actions will be most beneficial for both – the Culture Goal promoters and the Capitals of Culture. Based on this needs analysis we propose three common objectives on which a future action plan can be built on:

- **Enhanced Local, National and International Visibility**
- **Improved Multilevel (Culture) Governance on Local and International Contexts**
- **Better Access to Funding and Know-How with Pilot Actions for Sustainable Development**

In the view of an **action plan** in this field, the following key elements are proposed:

Actions for Enhanced Visibility

- Connecting with **international / culture development strategies** e. g. at ECoC family meetings
- Social media **communication and marketing plans** with heads of communication of CoCs / networks like UCCI
- Common **high-level events** at e. g. the African, European, Mediterranean Days, Regional Forum of the UoM
- **High-level stakeholder** mobilisation for communication and events like the Africities conference

Actions for Improved Multilevel Governance

- Cooperating with **national partners from culture and foreign ministries** e. g. as „informal ambassadors“
- Connecting with **local, national and international networks** e. g. in an annual online event by UCLG
- **Monitoring and review frameworks** to include the Culture Goal targets and indicators e. g. in view of updated European Capital of Culture ToR or UCCI indicator frameworks

Actions for Better Access to Finance & Know-How of Sustainable Development

- Connecting with sustainable development projects in the artistic and culture programmes e. g. Oulu 2026
- Art Linnakallio International Symposium
- Systematic screening of CoC **capacity-building programmes** related to the SDGs / Culture Goal e. g. Bourges 2028 “The Matrix” programme
- Joining forces for getting **access to funding** for Culture Goal activities, e. g. a small funding guide

Related action by Culture Goal and Capitals of Culture communities could be guided by a range of **priority areas identified during an international stakeholder workshop** implemented in the course of the elaboration of this report:

- Providing a strong answer to changing geopolitical frameworks with global (culture) cooperation
- Overcoming the imagination gap and raising awareness about the transversal nature of culture
- Helping stakeholders to better understand the connectivity between the local and international levels
- Raising the understanding that the Culture Goal supports the core actions of local (culture) policymakers
- Furthering substantially culture exchanges beyond continental borders
- Ensuring fair culture cooperation including in view of mobility, visa, and travel support
- Engaging for strong cultural policies and appropriate budgetary frameworks
- Advocating for strong (culture) representativeness of local levels in decision-making and governance
- Involving in debates beyond Ministries of Culture also e. g. the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Finance
- Strengthening the culture of cooperation beyond continents in order to generate a space of togetherness and dialogue

Furthermore, the current status of preparation for new or **updated Terms of References** for the African and European Capitals of Culture provides momentum for a substantial anchorage of the Culture Goal framework. The annual calls of the Iberoamerican and Mediterranean initiatives can be beneficial for updates in view of the Culture Goal and proposed actions in this report. Related negotiations are under way and require exchange and action to anchor culture and an updated cultural ecosystem at the city and local levels.

1. Context Analysis

1.1 The Culture Goal

The current UN SDG framework lacks a Culture Goal. Arguments during the negotiation of the current UN Sustainable Development Goals framework referred to the assumption that Culture is not “goalable”, which led to the 17 SDGs. The Culture Goal Campaign, with the publishing of a Culture Goal proposal during Mondiacult 2025 in Barcelona, demonstrates the feasibility of the integration of a stand-alone Culture Goal (report “**The Culture Goal: from Necessity to Reality**”). In July 2027, with the SDG Summit and the High-Level Forum, the UN will launch the processes for official negotiations for a potential new framework. This provides stakeholders and promoters with a window of opportunity for one and a half years.



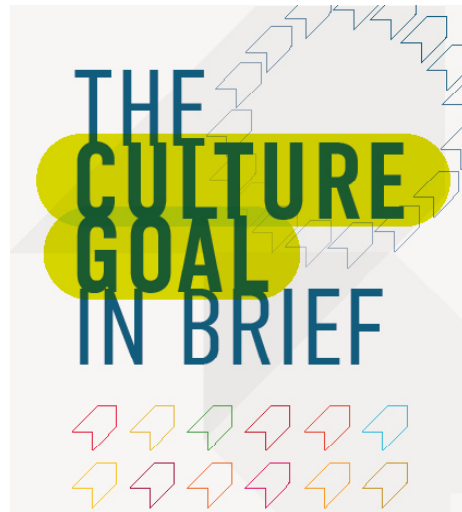
UCLG Culture Summit in Barcelona. Session “Why We Need a Culture Goal Now”, 27 September 2025
Source: UCLG Culture Committee

A global engagement for the integration of the Culture Goal in a potential upcoming updated UN framework is under way. The Culture Committee of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is one of the key promoting networks and organisations of this global endeavour together with a range of strategic partners. The opportunity / feasibility of a Culture Goal has already been discussed by the UNESCO, the G20, the G7 and the European Union. The Culture Goal Campaign was a common advocacy effort towards the parties who gathered at the Mondiacult 2025 in Barcelona. The Culture Goal might be also affected by changing geopolitical frameworks including those concerning the United Nations.



[Access full report](#)

Source: UCLG Culture Committee



[Access infographic](#)

Source: UCLG Culture Committee



UCLG Culture Summit in Dublin, 28 November – 1 December 2023

Source: UCLG Culture Committee

The Proposed Culture Goal (Zero Draft) includes eight culture-specific targets plus two targets representing the connections between the Culture Goal and other SDGs.

These comprise the following areas:

- **Target 1** - Realize cultural rights for all by fostering inclusive access to and participation in cultural life, creativity and diversity and artistic expressions, in particular for women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities and vulnerable populations.
- **Target 2** - Promote a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural and biological diversity.
- **Target 3** - Protect and safeguard cultural and natural heritage and leverage it as a resource and enabler for sustainable development.
- **Target 4** - Protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions to strengthen the creativity, development capacity, resilience, and regenerative capacity, of individuals and communities.
- **Target 5** - Promote the economic and social rights of artistic and cultural professionals, artistic freedom and safety, as well as local art, culture and products, notably in the context of artificial intelligence.
- **Target 6** - Enhance legal conditions and practical opportunities for mobility of cultural professionals and cross-border creativity in the creation of cultural goods, services and practices.
- **Target 7** - Enhance the conditions for indigenous peoples to strengthen their own institutions, cultures and languages, and to pursue their development in keeping with their self-determined needs and aspirations.
- **Target 8** - Implement a regenerative cultural approach to ecosystemic governance including environmental protection, sustainable urbanization, land planning, landscape management, biodiversity stewardship, agriculture and natural areas management.
- **Target A** - Strengthen the cultural institutions including through international cooperation, to build capacity at all levels and in all policy areas to realize cultural rights and sustain cultural pluralism.
- **Target B** - Ensure that cultural considerations are taken into account in all international development goals, at the outset of and throughout all policy-making processes, whether or not associated with pre-existing cultural targets.

We recognize that the Culture Goal as a whole is relevant for the local level too. Table 1 provides an initial summary of this relevance.

Table 1.1.a Relevance of the Culture Goal for Policies and Programmes of Cities, Regions and Local Governments (LRG)

Target Number	Culture Goal Target	Relevance for LRG
1	Realize cultural rights for all by fostering inclusive access to and participation in cultural life, creativity and diversity and artistic expressions, in particular for women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities and vulnerable populations	The LRG are the closest level to inhabitants and therefore best placed to identify and address the inequalities that prevent the implementation of cultural rights. The access and participation of all in cultural life is the priority of local cultural policies. Some LRG have designed programmes that explicitly address cultural rights, aligned with recommendations by the UN Special rapporteur on Cultural Rights and UCLG Culture toolkits.
2	Promote a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural and biological diversity.	LRG need peace and non-violence at local scale. Promotion of peace and non-violence at a local level is often a reality, while the local-national-global connections are not always explicit. Appreciation of cultural and biological diversity are obviously connected when they are locally relevant.
3	Protect and safeguard cultural and natural heritage and leverage it as a resource and enabler for sustainable development	Cultural and natural heritage are the foundations of local identity. LRG often connect heritage to sense of belonging and empowerment of inhabitants. Museums, monuments, memorials as well as festivals and festivities are often supported by LRG.
4	Protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions to strengthen the creativity, development capacity, resilience, and regenerative capacity, of individuals and communities.	LRG promote policies and measures to support the development of dynamic cultural and creative sectors. Local contexts are also well-situated to address gender equality, intergenerational dialogue and antiracism as highlighted by many good practices from cities and local governments. Some LRG understand the local cultural system as a dimension of local development and explicitly connect the cultural system with the local systems on education and health.
5	Promote the economic and social rights of artistic and cultural professionals, artistic freedom and safety, as well as local art, culture and products, notably in the context of artificial intelligence.	LRG and their cultural institutions are essential in the implementation of policies protecting the economic and social rights of artists and cultural professionals. Furthermore, LRG and their cultural institutions can be involved in policies protecting artistic freedom.
6	Enhance legal conditions and practical opportunities for the mobility of cultural professionals and cross-border creativity in the creation of cultural goods, services and practices.	Many LRGs are explicitly supporting the mobility of artists and cultural professionals, sometimes in general (global outreach of local cultural production), sometimes with a focus on neighbouring or sister cities, or in areas of specific or common interests (language, culture, belonging to global networks).

Target Number	Culture Goal Target	Relevance for LRG
7	Enhance the conditions for indigenous peoples to strengthen their own institutions, cultures and languages, and to pursue their development in keeping with their self-determined needs and aspirations.	Recognition of Indigenous Peoples is sometimes explicit in national legislation, and then their institutions are sometimes considered as specific types of “local governments”, with specific policies and programmes. In countries without Indigenous Peoples, awareness of institutions, cultures and languages of Indigenous peoples (as a fundamental element in the global conversation on culture and development) is generally weak including on LRGs level.
8	Implement a regenerative cultural approach to ecosystemic governance including environmental protection, sustainable urbanization, land planning, landscape management, biodiversity stewardship, agriculture and natural areas management	LRGs with a regenerative cultural approach are scarce. There is a growing interest on “evaluation of cultural impact” of urbanization and land planning, with some LRGs integrating cultural and heritage considerations in urban and regional planning strategies. There is a growing connection between cultural policies (raising awareness / heritage preservation) and climate action (adaptation, mitigation, loss and damage) including at the local level.
A	Strengthen the cultural institutions including through international cooperation, to build capacity at all levels and in all policy areas to realize cultural rights and sustain cultural pluralism.	In many countries, LRGs are the most important sources of public funding of cultural institutions. The annual programmes of cultural institutions sometimes include the realization of cultural rights and sustain cultural pluralism. Presence of representatives of LRGs (and local civil society) in governance bodies of cultural institutions largely varies, according to national legislation and balances in expression of power.
B	Ensure that cultural considerations are taken into account in all international development goals, at the outset of and throughout all policy-making processes, whether or not associated with pre-existing cultural targets.	LRGs, compared to national governments and international organisations, are more likely to recognise (and implement) policy frameworks for the transversal consideration of cultural factors in other policies. Some LRGs have recognised an SDG 18 on Culture in their local implementation of Agenda 2030.

Also, some of the targets proposed, as well as other elements of the proposed implementation framework, such as relevant indicators, are specifically relevant for the local level of cultural development or are connected to frequent competences of local governments or cities related to culture (policy). We provide a related overview of the specific local dimensions of the Culture Goal in Annex 1 of this report. Based on this analysis, we have identified some potential main areas of attention for supporting and implementing the Culture Goal at the local and city level.

Local level stakeholders might consider the following activities to support the Culture Goal (pre-) implementation as well as supporting the Culture Goal Campaign, including related initiatives at national / regional level. A whole range of advocacy actions can be targeted towards national governments in view of the negotiations of the Post-2030 Agenda.

Table 1.1.b Main Local dimensions for the Implementation of the Culture Goal

Activity Fields of Cities / Local Governments	Culture Goal Targets Competences / Actions on Local Level	National / International Communication Options
Local (Culture) Governance	E. g. the integration of the Culture Goal elements in the culture development plans on local level; Including of culture in the local development plans; local culture funding programmes reflecting the Culture Goal orientations	E. g. (Culture) Mayors meetings, international experts meeting on cultural development plans
Local Culture Programme & Outreach	E. g. art, culture and heritage programmes and projects reflecting cooperation e. g. with the Global South, Indigenous Peoples, different strata of the populations and citizens	E. g. thematic co-production and performing with local / national media outreach as well as local artists as multipliers
Internationalisation of Local Culture	E. g. international cultural relations strategies on local level; networking of local culture stakeholders interested in the Culture Goal; residency programmes, mobility programmes, hosting of international conferences	E. g. hosting of meetings and conferences with international partners; involving networks of residencies and their social media potential
Capacity-Building on Local Level	E. g. local training and education programmes including on global citizenship, peace and sustainable development modules, cross-sectoral cooperation, international networking, green (culture) practices	E. g. Co-communication with high-level speakers and influencers on strategic topics like peace, cultural rights, global cooperation
Evaluation of Local Cultural Activities & of Local Culture Governance	E. g. application of Culture Goal indicators in cultural planning, implementation, and analysis at the local level as well as of understanding of cultural rights frameworks at the local level	E. g. joining forces with universities and evaluation specialists as well as their networks and scientific journals

In order to bring forward a standalone Culture Goal in the UN framework for sustainable development, considerable global efforts are required. There is an urgent need for a coherent alignment in national governments, explicitly connecting the positive messages on the Culture Goal from Ministries for Culture with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and ambassadors in the United Nations fora. Local actors have so far been difficult to engage as their focus is normally more on local development

than on global engagement, although the support for the Culture Goal is unanimous in UCLG (as one of the eight members of the Steering Group of the Culture 2030 Goal campaign) and in the Global Taskforce that represents Local and Regional Governments at the the UN High Level Political Forum and SDG Summits.

With this report, we investigate the potential for a stronger commitment of Capitals of Culture mainly on three continents in order to contribute to the achievement of a Culture Goal by 2030. In the following chapter, we analyse the Capitals of Culture as a specific case of local cultural development in view of the above-mentioned five main areas of attention (governance, programme & outreach, internationalisation, capacity-building, evaluation) and potential for bringing forward the Culture Goal ambitions.

In this regard, this report builds on the outcomes of the webinar “Capitals of Culture and the Culture Goal. Working to Boost the Connections between Regional Initiatives and Global Challenges”, held in December 2024, in cooperation with UCLG-Africa and the UCCI, with the support of the European Union, and the technical support of Culture et Développement (NGO). The report of that first webinar, written by Valeria Marcolin, Co-Director of Culture et Développement, outlined key needs and opportunities and joint ways forward suggested by participants, as shown in the table below.

Table 1.1.c Key Needs and Opportunities Identified in 2024

Needs	Opportunities
Greater recognition of culture in SDG frameworks	Sharing and scaling up best practices across regions
Capacity building for local authorities and cultural operators	Strengthening international and interregional cooperation
Sustainable funding and resource mobilization	Leveraging Capitals of Culture as platforms for innovation and advocacy
Clearer evaluation and impact measurement tools	Using Capitals of Culture to foster social cohesion and economic development
Inclusion of diverse voices and marginalised groups (youth, minorities, artists, civil society)	Building platforms for decentralized cooperation and cross-border cultural dialogue, training on internationalisation of activities for teams
Bridging local and global priorities	Developing new indicators and methodologies for cultural impact assessment
Stronger integration of culture in urban and territorial development	Organizing joint events (e.g., World Day for Cultural Diversity, Africities Summit, Mondiacult)
Sustaining impact beyond event-based programming	Developing new indicators and methodologies for cultural impact assessment, participatory design and implementation of the programme, stronger evaluation of the process, political commitment

Furthermore, conclusions of the webinar in December 2024 included:

- Encouraging regional and interregional discussion of issues and best practices, by sharing lessons learned and experiences from ongoing Capitals of Culture annual programmes in different regions; and involve universities across regions in joint research initiatives based on the needs' assessment of the Capitals of Culture programmes;
- Contributing to the Culture Goal consultation process and support the Culture 2030 Goal campaign in each Capital program, both individually and through a collaborative narrative;
- Examining pilot projects and collaborative events for 2025 (e.g., World Day for Cultural Diversity, Mondiacult, Africities, which was later postponed to 2026 in Egypt);
- Creating and disseminating methods to foster cultural impact;
- Encouraging peer learning and decentralised collaboration between cities and regions;
- Involving partners from the financial and private sector for the support (both financial and technical) of pilot and capacity building initiatives.



Webinar 1. Culture Capitals for the Culture Goal. "Working to Boost the Connections between Regional Initiatives and Global Challenges", 11 December 2024

Source: UCLG Culture Committee



Webinar 2. Culture Capitals for the Culture Goal. "Connecting regional initiatives and global challenges", 15 January 2026

Source: UCLG Culture Committee

1.2 Capitals of Culture

Capitals of Culture are gaining increasing interest across the globe and a variety of initiatives have been brought forward. For the purpose of this report, UCLG has preselected four Capitals of Culture initiatives:

The **European Capitals of Culture** celebrated 40 years of existence in 2025. European Capitals of culture aim at safeguarding and promoting the diversity of cultures in Europe and to highlight the common features they share as well as to increase citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural area as well as to foster the contribution of culture to the long-term development of cities in accordance with their respective strategies and priorities.



European Capital of Culture Initiative

Source: European Capital of Culture

The **Iberoamerican Capitals of Culture** are implemented by a network of capital cities, UCCI, with the objectives to demonstrate the commitment of UCCI member cities to further the local and Iberoamerican cultural development including with comprehensive cultural strategies and programmes. It is one of the key processes

in UCCI's history, to bring culture and Iberoamerican heritage at the local level to the fore.



Iberoamerican Capital of Cultures Initiative
Source: [Capital Iberoamericana de las Culturas](#)

The **African Capitals of Culture**¹ initiative was launched in 2018 during the Africities summit. This Capital of Culture promotes and celebrates the diversity of African cultures, African cultural heritage, creativity and innovation, and African identity; aims at strengthening the capacity of cities and territories to achieve the SDGs through the definition and implementation of local cultural policies; wants to unite culture and creative stakeholders and facilitate their networking to create conditions for dissemination, production, and creation that foster a strong continental market open to the international community, and aims to strengthen understanding among stakeholders and enhance cooperation between African countries and cities, and international cooperation.



First Forum of Mayors of the African Capital of Culture. Rabat, May 2023
Source: [UCLG Afrique, Facebook](#)

¹ Based on the information of UCLG-Africa on the intended objectives for the upcoming call for the third edition of African Capitals of Culture.

The most recent of the analysed Capitals of Culture is the **Mediterranean Capital of Culture & Dialogue** which was started in 2022 based on the call of Ministers of Culture of the Euro-Mediterranean region. It aims at highlighting the cities' rich Euro-Mediterranean cultural identities, involving their populations in all their diversity and culminating on the Day of the Mediterranean (28 November).



Mediterranean Capitals of Culture and Dialogue Initiative
Source: Mediterranean Capitals of Culture and Dialogue



UCLG Culture Summit in Dublin. Session "Capitals of Culture Working Together", 28 November 2023
Source: UCLG Culture Committee

Based on the findings of chapter 1.1 (Table 1.1.b) we link the different local intervention areas with relevance for the Culture Goal implementation and (high-level) negotiation with the related features of the four Capitals of Culture. These are:

- Local (Culture) **Governance** (1)
- Local Culture **Programme & Outreach** (2)
- **Internationalisation** of Local Culture (3)
- **Capacity-Building** at the Local Level (4)
- **Evaluation** of Local Cultural Activities & of Local Culture Governance (5)

We have complemented these five intervention areas with additional information in view of the:

- **Communication Strategies** at the Local Level and by the Local Level Targeting National / International Levels (6),
- **Referring to the SDGs** (7) as well as
- **Capitals of Culture Governance Process and Stakeholders** (8) and
- **Eligibility, Countries Covered & Designated Capitals** of Culture 2025-2030 (9).

For further information, please refer to the analysis table provided in the Annex 2 of this document. Nota bene that the available information on these Capital of Culture Initiatives in December 2025 was the basis for the elaboration of Annex 2 as well as the analysis provided below.

1-Local Culture Governance

Activity Fields of Cities / Local Governments / CoCs	Local (Culture) Governance
African Capital of Culture (ACoC) on the basis of draft	Long-term cultural strategy is mandatory for final selection and refers to citizens, cultural rights, cultural diversity as well as the SDGs; Proven support of local decision-making bodies.
European Capital of Culture (ECoC) for up to 2033	Long-term cultural strategy is mandatory including legacy plans, long-term links to economic and social sectors, related impact and urban development; Broad and strong political support, adequate and viable infrastructures.
Iberoamerican Capital of Culture since 2019	Contribution to an existing long-term cultural strategy which is in coherence with local sustainable development and the SDGs; Proven support of local, regional and national authorities.
Mediterranean Capital of Culture	No specific reference is made to a long-term strategy; Full political support and commitment from local, regional, and national authorities is mandatory.

The requirement for a long-term cultural strategy in order to be selected as a Capital of Culture is already widely spread which would provide ***solid ground for the integration of the global dimension, including the discussion on the importance of having a Culture Goal and dedicated targets. This integration could be two-fold, on the one hand, the Culture Goal targets could serve as a framework for the establishment of a long-term cultural strategy. On the other hand, the Culture Goal indicators could be used as a harmonised indicator framework for local culture policy too.*** Some Capitals of Culture initiatives refer to ***environmental impact***, although the potential of culture to address climate change and conflicts, particularly in certain areas, should be enhanced in Capitals of Culture ToR, ***connecting with target 8 of the Culture Goal.***

In view of governance settings: all Terms of Reference **requires cities to ensure a broad and strong political support** which encompasses in most cases local, regional, and national authorities. **This fact constitutes an interesting opportunity to come up with multilevel governance initiatives with Capitals of Culture in view of the support of the Culture Goal.**

2-Local Culture Programmes & Outreach

Activity Fields of Cities / Local Governments / CoCs	Local Culture Programme & Outreach
African Capital of Culture (ACoC) on the basis of draft	Artistic quality and African dimension are combined with clear orientation towards inclusion of citizens and civil society, pupils, linguistic diversity and local cultural heritage as well as the creative industries
European Capital of Culture (ECoC) for up to 2033	A clear and coherent artistic vision, involvement of local artists and cultural organisations, a diversity of activities proposed; capacity to combine local cultural heritage and traditional art forms with new, innovative and experimental cultural expressions; Involvement of local populations, civil society, overall audience strategy.
Iberoamerican Capital of Culture since 2019	Strengthening a local cultural and artistic programme including the integration of local cultural heritage with new cultural expressions.
Mediterranean Capital of Culture	A cultural programme coordinated by local authorities and reflecting their capacities and contexts; good involvement of the entire population, civil society; cooperation with educational institutions and for intercultural learning; cultural performances celebrating the Euro-Mediterranean identity and diversity; Addressing environmental impact.

The reference to **artistic quality** in roughly all Capitals of Culture ToR provides solid ground for those Culture Goal targets specifically referring to the artistic production and creation (e. g. **Target 5, Target A**). Furthermore, **local cultural heritage** is another area to which all the initiatives refer. This fact allows for connecting with the **Target 4 of the Culture Goal**.

The required involvement of the **civil society and NGOs** provides another opportunity to connect the high visibility of the Capitals of Culture with the requirement to **bring to the fore those voices and strata of the populations which are often unheard (Target 1)**. This would also apply to **indigenous voices (Target 7)**. **However, none of the Capitals of Culture ToR makes specific reference to indigenous groups – a shortcoming** which should be addressed in the context of a **potential update of ToR**. **Overall, all Capitals of Culture aim at ambitious and broad cultural programmes and activities which provide a variety of opportunities to communicate, to disseminate and to debate on the Culture Goal at the local level.**

3-Internationalisation of Local Cultures

Activity Fields of Cities / Local Governments / CoCs	Internationalisation of Local Cultures
African Capital of Culture (ACoC) on the basis of draft	Programme in cooperation with the five partner cities reflecting the five African regions (four on the continent and the diaspora) including intercultural dialogue and generating interest in Africa and on the globe.
European Capital of Culture (ECoC) for up to 2033	Strong European dimension is required to promote the cultural diversity of Europe, intercultural dialogue and greater understanding between European citizens; common aspects of European cultures, heritage and history, European integration, European themes, European artists, cooperation with (other designated) cities, and transnational partnerships.
Iberoamerican Capital of Culture since 2019	Activities with an Iberoamerican dimension covering the diversity of these cultures, cooperation with the other member cities and other Iberoamerican cities, furthering mobility, cooperation and generating interest in the Iberoamerican context and internationally.
Mediterranean Capital of Culture	Cities should combine local objectives with a solid regional MED vision, reflect on the diversity and richness of cultures in the Euro-Mediterranean region and commonalities; The capital title is awarded each year to two cities – one from the Southern and one from the Northern shore of the Mediterranean. The two cities should establish a partnership and collaborate. Large celebration of the day of the Mediterranean [28.11.].

The international dimension is strong in all four analysed Capital of Culture initiatives. However, for the **European and Mediterranean Capitals**, it is mainly limited to the continents or cultural spaces for which it has been designed. ***In the context of updated ToR for those two Capital of Culture initiatives, it would be desirable to enhance the international and global dimensions which could better connect these actions with the global conversation on culture and (sustainable / regenerative) development) and efforts for a Culture Goal.***

The areas of international dimension addressed are the furthering of intercultural dialogue including on the globe, the generation of interest for a specific linguistic or cultural context, the establishment of transnational partnerships between cities and cultural stakeholders as well as the international celebration of a specific cooperation area. This engagement faces ***considerable challenges in view of geopolitical tensions as well as considerable budget cuts for international (cultural) cooperation.*** ***The mobility aspects as highlighted by the Culture Goal target “Enhance Legal Conditions and Practical Opportunities for Mobility of Cultural Professionals” can be easily connected with the proposed internationalisation activities of all Capitals of Culture which are broadly anchored in extensive cultural exchange. However, cultural***

exchange opportunities beyond continental borders are not yet fully exploited. Overall, mobility and exchange activities provide easy connectors for Culture Goal related common dissemination and communication actions.

4-Capacity-Building at the Local Level

Activity Fields of Cities / Local Governments / CoCs	Capacity-Building at the Local Level
African Capital of Culture (ACoC) on the basis of draft	Capacity-building of the sector is mandatory
European Capital of Culture (ECoC) for up to 2033	The long-term strategy should also provide plans to strengthen the capacity of the cultural and creative sectors including cross-sectoral cooperation competences.
Iberoamerican Capital of Culture since 2019	Exchange programmes with the culture policy teams in the cities.
Mediterranean Capital of Culture	Promote intercultural learning.

Capacity-Building is foreseen throughout all Capital of Culture initiatives which we analysed. This is a **perfect framework to mainstream capacity-building in view of the SDGs as well as of the Culture Goal**. Synergies could be also achieved by **proposing related programmes for several or all Capitals of Culture cities and their stakeholders** with two-fold effects: **Helping the cultural sectors in their lifelong learning efforts with skills for international cooperation and engagement and gaining larger crowds for campaigns as well as policy actions in view of the Culture Goal integrated in the 2030 UN framework.**

5-Evaluation of Cultural Activities & of Cultural Governance

Activity Fields of Cities / Local Governments / CoCs	Evaluation of Cultural Activities & of Cultural Governance
African Capital of Culture (ACoC) on the basis of draft	Expected are culture, social, economic and environmental impacts; identified negative environmental aspects are addressed.
European Capital of Culture (ECoC) for up to 2033	Evaluation as part of the cultural strategy chapter of candidacy for measuring impact including dissemination of evaluation results.
Iberoamerican Capital of Culture since 2019	Presentation of the final results of the capital to the Cultural Committee of UCCI.
Mediterranean Capital of Culture	Monitoring activities are implemented in a cooperative manner; Report after each assessment; Make Best Practices available.

Evaluation and monitoring are integrated in all current ToR of Capitals of Culture. ***Expected impacts without explicitly naming the principles are all linked to sustainable development (economic, social, environmental, cultural impacts). Current evaluation results of Capitals of Culture can – in this sense – constitute a source for proof of impact of sustainable culture initiatives*** at the local level and ***back the argumentation line of the Culture Goal***.

Furthermore, ***updated Capitals of Culture ToR can use the Culture Goal indicator framework***. A harmonisation of the framework used for the Culture Goal with those impact evaluation criteria ***could constitute a common initiative between the Culture Goal promoters and the Capitals of Culture implementation bodies***.

The evaluation at the local level could also provide additional insights into potential differences between national and local results – a valuable learning to bring forward the Culture Goal indicator framework.

6-Communication at the local and by the local level towards the national / international level

Activity Fields of Cities / Local Governments / CoCs	Communication at the local and by the local level towards the national / international level
African Capital of Culture (ACoC) on the basis of draft	A communication strategy and action plan are mandatory to ensure broad accessibility and visibility at the regional and international level. The international part in cooperation with UCLG-Africa.
European Capital of Culture (ECoC) for up to 2033	Strategy to attract the interest of a broad European and international public (as part of the European dimension chapter); A comprehensive marketing and communication strategy (as part of the Management chapter).
Iberoamerican Capital of Culture since 2019	Selected cities are expected to develop a communication plan and a specific logo for inclusion into all documents. They receive a dedicated space on the website of the initiative.
Mediterranean Capital of Culture	International partnerships should encourage the interest of a broad Euro-Mediterranean and global public. A communication and dissemination plan is required to ensure national and international accessibility and visibility. Local communication plans are complemented with efforts from the UfM and the ALF Secretariats.

All Capital of Culture initiatives foresee **substantial communication activities including at the international level as well as some with the support of international networks (UCLG-Africa, UCCI, UfM, ALF)**. This fact constitutes **a perfect entrance door for proposing common action at the international level related to the Culture Goal**. Activities could address **general as well as expert audiences** due to the nature of the stakeholders involved e. g. international networks, cities aiming at enhancing their international profile by being a Capital of Culture. **A comprehensive analysis of communication and marketing activities of designated Capitals of Culture would allow for the identification of areas of common interest with the Culture Goal promoters as well as potentially converging time lines of desired / required visibility.**

7-Reference to Sustainable Development Goals in Objectives of the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Capitals

Activity Fields of Cities / Local Governments / CoCs	Reference to SDGs in Objectives of the ToR
African Capital of Culture (ACoC) on the basis of draft	Supporting the cities to reach the Sustainable Development Goals
European Capital of Culture (ECoC) for up to 2033	No reference to Sustainable Development Goals
Iberoamerican Capital of Culture since 2019	UCCI interlinks the culture action with sustainable development
Mediterranean Capital of Culture	No specific mention of the Sustainable Development Goals

Half of the Capitals of Culture ToR refer to the Sustainable Development Goals. This remains to a larger extent a mere mention without detailing further how the Capital of Culture should in fact contribute to the implementation of these principles. **In view of a good/better anchorage of a future Culture Goal in the Capitals of Culture initiatives it would be desirable to advocate for an integration of the SDGs into (future, updated) Terms of Reference.**

8-Capitals of Culture Governance Process and Stakeholders

Activity Fields of Cities / Local Governments / CoCs	Capital of Culture Governance Process and Stakeholders
African Capital of Culture (ACoC) on the basis of draft	UCLG-Africa Jury "7 Keys" Workshop is mandatory. Selected city needs to finalise the international communication plan with UCLG-Africa
European Capital of Culture (ECOC) for up to 2033	European Commission with Member States Cultural Ministries, Expert Panel EP, Council, Committee of the Regions Member States designate based on the decision of panel. Appropriate cooperation between cities, local authorities and delivery team. Delivery team with management and staff
Iberoamerican Capital of Culture since 2019	Cities present their candidacy to the members of the Cultural Committee of the UCCI (Unión de Ciudades Capitales Iberoamericanas). The members might consult on aspects of the candidacy. The Committee members decide on the support of a candidacy.
Mediterranean Capital of Culture	UfM Secretariat and the Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF) coordinate the process. Advisory Committee comprising the UfM Secretariat, the ALF Secretariat, Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) which reports to the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM).

The stakeholders on which the governance of Capitals of Culture initiatives are built provides an interesting framework of high-level high-visibility organisations and personalities. For example, the juries are composed of ***international cultural experts or high-level staff*** – many of them interacting regularly in within their (substantial) personal networks. For common initiatives of Capitals of Culture initiatives with the Culture Goal promoters, ***we can envisage a two-dimension approach: common activities with the governance organisations AND common activities with the involved high-level stakeholders.***

In addition, at the ***local level high-level decisionmakers*** are closely involved with Capital of Culture initiatives. This opens another dimension on which strategic cooperation for the promotion of the Culture Goal can be built on. These ***local stakeholders like mayors dispose of interesting national and international networks for strategic alliances.***

9-Eligibility, Countries Covered & Designated Capitals of Culture 2025-2030

Activity Fields of Cities / Local Governments / CoCs	Eligibility Calendar (between 2023 ² and 2030)
African Capital of Culture (ACoC) on the basis of draft	Cities situated on the African continent 2022-23 - Rabat (Morocco) 2024-25 - Brazzaville (Rep. Congo) & Kinshasa (DRC)
European Capital of Culture (ECoC) for up to 2033	Cities and their surrounding areas in the EU, from candidate countries or potential candidate countries 2025 – Chemnitz (Germany) & Nova Gorica (Slovenia) 2026 – Oulu (Finland) & Trenčín (Slovakia) 2027 – Liepāja (Latvia) & Evora (Portugal) 2028 – České Budějovice (Czechia) & Bourges (France) & Skopje (North Macedonia) 2029 – Lubin (Poland) & Kiruna (Sweden) 2030 – Leuven (Belgium) & Larnaka (Cyprus) & Nikšić (Montenegro) 2031 – cities in Spain & Malta (TBC)
Iberoamerican Capital of Culture since 2019	Only members ³ of UCCL are eligible for participation 2023 - San José (Costa Rica) 2024 - San Juan (Puerto Rico) 2025 - La Paz (Bolivia) & Sucre (Bolivia)
Mediterranean Capital of Culture	City located in a member state of the Union for the Mediterranean ⁴ 2025 - Tirana (Albania) & Alexandria (Egypt) 2026 - Tetouan (Morocco) & Matera (Italy) 2027 - Cordoba (Spain) & Saida (Lebanon)

These four Capitals of Culture **cover large parts of the countries on the globe including all of Europe, Africa and Central and Southern America – a sound starting point for common global initiatives. For the horizon of the year 2030, the planning framework** of the European Capital of Culture is the most detailed, allowing for substantial strategic common activities. The Mediterranean initiative disposes of a stable planning framework too as it designates the cities 1.5 years in advance with the official announcement on the Day of the Mediterranean each year on November 28.

² It is assumed that those cities holding the title in 2023 might still be active / still feasible to reach teams

³ Andorra la Vella, Asunción (Paraguay), Bogotá (Colombia), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Brasilia (Brazil), Caracas (Venezuela), Guatemala (Guatemala), Mexico City (Mexico), Panama (Panama), Havana (Cuba), La Paz (Bolivia), Lima (Peru), Lisbon (Portugal), Madrid (Spain), Managua (Nicaragua), Montevideo (Uruguay), Quito (Ecuador), Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), San José (Costa Rica), San Juan (Puerto Rico), San Salvador (El Salvador), Santiago (Chile), Sucre (Bolivia), Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), Tegucigalpa (Honduras).

⁴ Member States are Albania, Algeria, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mauritania, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, The Netherlands, North Macedonia, Palestine, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Syria, Tunisia, Türkiye.

Preliminary conclusion on the local dimensions of the Culture Goal and how these are addressed by the Terms of Reference of the four Capitals of Culture initiatives:

There are multiple connecting points with the Capitals of Culture based on their objectives and thematic orientations which converge largely with the advocacy for the Culture Goal. While the global network of LRGs (UCLG) is a founding member of the campaign for a Culture Goal, key stakeholders of the Capitals of Culture still need to be convinced to engage explicitly for a Culture Goal (Campaign).

We can identify three main intervention areas:

- **Building strategic alliances and partnerships related to the Culture Goal with organisations in charge of Capitals of Culture governance and including the related city ecosystems**
- **Establishing dissemination partnerships on the Culture Goal with high-level culture experts and staff involved in the selection and evaluation of Capitals of Culture**
- **Proposing pilot actions with designated Capitals of Culture in order to bring forward the proof of concept of the Culture Goal targets as well as indicator frameworks**

These intervention areas should be carefully co-designed by key stakeholders from different parts of the globe in order to come up with functional frameworks (e. g. related to diverse notions of communities or specific testing environments for indicators of the Culture Goal).

Despite good opportunities, it has to be **kept in mind that Capitals of Culture are not per se focused on advocacy and policymaking**. Their interests are defended by their networks (e. g. Culture Next), by networks of cities and local governments (e. g. UCLG-Africa), by initiatives of policymakers in CoC cities (e. g. MEPs being mayors of Capital of Culture cities) or by the wider community of culture policy stakeholders on the different continents (e. g. Arterial network, Culture Action Europe). In that sense, according to the current Terms of Reference, campaigning for initiatives like the Culture Goal is not a core business of a designated Capital of Culture city. This is partly related to the relatively “recent” appearance of the Culture Goal campaign in the global conversation, with a zero-draft published in September 2022 and a full proposal in September 2025.

Furthermore, **national policy contexts matter for a potential engagement of Capitals of Culture for a Culture Goal**. Engaging for global causes might oppose the Capitals of Culture with their national ministries on which they often depend for funding. Dedicating time of staff and budget from a Capital of Culture for global engagement also bears the risk of local (political) opposition including from the local cultural sector often struggling for funding. **However, developing and improving cultural ecosystems is at the heart of local (culture) policy action**. In that sense, **the Culture Goal supports the core action of local (culture) policymakers**. The local (culture) policymakers are equally key stakeholders for the implementation of Capital of Culture initiatives – a “natural” alliance can be brought forward in that sense. **The necessary resources need to be provided for comprehensive actions** – this can be a challenging task in some countries.

Based on national context element of these preliminary conclusions, we matched the countries from which a strong engagement for the Culture Goal was brought forward with designated Capitals of Culture (Countries) until 2030. We assume that cities in a favourable “Culture Goal”-ecosystem (countries with a Voluntary National Review on the Culture Goal, countries in which Culture Goal Campaign partners have their seat, etc.) are more ready to engage for the Culture Goal too, with a multiplier effect through the stakeholders, networks and exchanges in the respective Capitals of Culture ecosystems.

Based on the analysis summarized in an overview provided in the Annex 3 of this report, the **favourable ecosystem is mainly in place related to the European Capital of Culture.** Nota bene that favourable ecosystems can transform rapidly e. g. due to political changes.

On the European continent, main strategic partnerships could be envisaged with:

- **2026 – Oulu (Finland)**
- **2028 – České Budějovice (Czechia) & Bourges (France)**
- **2030 – Leuven (Belgium)**
- **2031 – Spain & Malta**

Furthermore, a partnership with **Matera** could be beneficial in view of the fact that the city was European Capital of Culture and will be **Mediterranean Capital of Culture & Dialogue in 2026**. In addition, **the EU institutions are preparing an update of the ToR of the European Capitals of Culture** – an occasion to propose related inputs in view of the Culture Goal as well as the Sustainable Development Goals. Options would also consist of **enhancing the bi- and multilateral cooperation of the European Capitals of Culture with counterparts on the African and South American continents** – an option for the planned update of the **international culture strategy of the European Union**.

On the African and South American continents, a cooperation for the Culture Goal might be, in a first step, better anchored on the level of the implementing networks and their partners namely **UCLG-Africa, Arterial network**, as well as **UCCI**. Furthermore, **the cultural cities of Bogotá (Colombia), Concepción (Chile) and Brazzaville (Republic of the Congo)** have expressed specific interest for collaboration during the stakeholder workshop in January 2026 implemented in the context of this analysis report.

In Asia, Saida in Lebanon is the only capital of culture designated so far related to the four CoC initiatives analysed. Activities can be envisaged in cooperation with the implementation bodies of the Mediterranean Capitals of Culture & Dialogue.

In the next chapter, we investigate based on the most interesting partners identified (from the **WHO**), the reciprocal and common objectives (to the **WHAT**) which could be brought forward by the Culture Goal promoters together with the Capitals of Culture (initiatives) implementers.

2. Proposed Common Specific Objectives

The objectives pursued by the Culture Goal (campaign) promoters and the Capital of Culture (initiatives) stakeholders are not fully harmonised. In order to bring forward engagement and common initiatives, we aim at better understanding the different and the potential common objectives related to the endeavour of anchoring a stand-alone Culture Goal in the future UN framework in 2030.

What are key objectives of the Culture Goal (campaign) promoters? Enhancing the visibility of the Culture Goal campaign is crucial in order to convince further parties to support a Culture Goal. This fact requires strong communication efforts and an enlargement of communication as well as campaign partners. ***Convincing government stakeholders to support the Culture Goal*** is another central objective which requires professional advocacy as well as a deep understanding of multilevel governance frameworks when local stakeholders like cities and local governments should be brought on board too. Furthermore, promoters of the Culture Goal will also wish to ***further test and pilot the Culture Goal targets and indicators in order to prove the feasibility of the concept including at the local level.***

Capitals of Culture ecosystems are different from targeted policymaking frameworks. ***What are the objectives of most Capital of Culture cities? A central objective is the improvement of the local culture ecosystems by providing opportunities and by promoting actions for its professionalisation.*** This includes access to funding, outreach activities targeting inhabitants for integrative approaches in order to ensure the rights to participate in the cultural life, enhanced mobility and co-production, professional evaluation, etc. Capitals of culture also aim at generating long-term effects and impact linking them substantially to sustainable development as brought forward by the Culture Goal. Furthermore, many cities engage to be a ***Capital of Culture to enhance their reputation as well as their national, continental and international visibility.*** With these engagements the Capitals of Culture wish to ***generate better urban, social, economic and environmental development based on the specific capacities of culture, heritage and creative industries*** and related collaboration across sectors.

Proposal for Common Specific Objectives

We propose a set of **three specific objectives** which have the potential to meet the overarching objectives of the Culture Goal (Campaign) promoters as well as the aims of the Capitals of Culture ecosystems. We have complemented the specific objectives with areas of implementation by the Culture Goal promoters and from the point of view of Capital of Culture stakeholders (Table 2.1).

1- Enhanced Local, National and International Visibility

Capitals of Culture as well as the community of Culture Goal promoters aim at substantial visibility. The Culture Goal promoters need to convince key stakeholders and demonstrate that a wide community on the globe supports this initiative. The range of Culture Goal campaigning partners requires enlargement and wider international coverage including further engagement of the local levels. The visibility of a Culture Goal global and diverse community is crucial. Capitals of Culture struggle for considerable international attention in order to bring forward local economic and tourism agendas, to shape their image as a cultural and innovative place, to attract visitors and investors. Communication and marketing plans receive considerable attention by Capital of Culture stakeholders in order to achieve on visibility and branding agendas. High-level stakeholders play an important role in Capitals of Culture. E. g. ambassador models are implemented and decision-makers involved in high-level events and conferences – a further connecting point related to the Culture Goal promotion activities.

2- Improved Multilevel (Culture) Governance in Local and International Contexts

Multilevel (Culture) Governance frameworks are relevant for the Culture Goal as well as the Capitals of Culture communities and stakeholders. From the Culture Goal side, intensive efforts are under way to partner with national networks and organisations including in those countries where Capitals of Culture are implemented. Some national partners have already engaged with Voluntary Reviews – a further connecting point with the e. g. long-term cultural strategies of the Capitals of Culture. The Capitals of Culture integrate a range of national partners in their implementation. The Capitals cooperate with a substantial number of local, national and international networks generating a framework of common ecosystem with the Culture Goal promoters. Impact measurement is a key element of Capitals of Culture to prove the added value of the initiatives and the achievements once a Capital of Culture has ended. The proposed indicator framework from the Culture Goal is a related interesting reference with the potential to build a common global reference for the measuring of impacts by and with culture.

3- Better Access to Funding and Know-How with Pilot Actions for Sustainable Development

Common objectives by Culture Goal promoters and Capitals of Culture also cover the wider engagement for sustainable development. The local level covered by the Capitals of Culture provide an ideal testing environment for the Culture Goal targets as well as the indicator sets. Capitals of Culture with their cultural strategies aim at considerable improvement of local culture ecosystem. An objective which they share with the Culture Goal community. While the Culture Goal framework provides the overarching policy objectives for sustainable culture development, the Capitals of Culture implement a range of thematic cultural and artistic programmes closely linked to sustainability. Those involved in Capitals of Culture require training on sustainable development or can share related good practices with the Culture Goal community. Furthermore, both initiatives share the need of access to finance and would have potential for common funding applications e. g. for pilot initiatives for the implementation of the Culture Goal.

Table 2.1. Specific Objectives and Implementation Areas to Bring Forward the Culture Goal with Capitals of Culture

Specific Common Objectives	Culture Goal (Campaign) Promoters	Capitals of Culture Ecosystems & Stakeholders
Enhanced Local, National and International Visibility (1)	Parties to be convinced or with convincing potential Campaigning partners Campaign action plans up to 2030	City internationalisation strategies Communication and marketing plans for the Capitals of Culture Planned high-level conferences and events High-level stakeholders involved (panels, staff, decision-makers, etc.)
Improved Multilevel (Culture) Governance in Local and International Contexts (2)	National networks and organisations engaged for the Culture Goal in countries of Capitals of Culture Parties engaged in Voluntary Reviews (including potential local, city involvement)	Cooperating national partners of Capitals of Culture Local, national, international networks involved Researchers and experts on Capitals of Culture monitoring and review frameworks
Better Access to Funding and Know-How with Pilot Actions for Sustainable Development (3)	Culture Goals targets with special added value for test and pilot implementation on local and city level including indicators application Training needs of local stakeholders in order to promote and implement the Culture Goal Funding opportunities for local / city stakeholders engaging for the Culture Goal with e. g. EU partners	Capitals of Culture artistic and culture programmes in view of connecting points with the Culture Goal & SDGs Capitals of Culture capacity building programmes and potential for anchorage of Culture Goal topics Funding opportunities for local engagement for the Culture Goal

Based on this framework, we develop elements of a common action plan in the next chapter.

3. Proposed Action Plan

3.1 Proposed Actions by / with CoCs in 2026 and 2027 for a Culture Goal (Campaign)

Based on the specific objectives identified in chapter 2 of this report, we detail a range of types of actions which can be implemented in cooperation with all/some Capitals of Culture taking place in the years 2026 and 2027. We complement these types of activities with concrete proposals in view of the actions foreseen in specific Capitals of Culture cities as illustrative cases. The following Capitals of Culture are implemented and/or prepared (operational⁵) in the years 2026 and 2027.

Table 3.1. Operational Capitals of Culture 2026-2027

Activity Fields of Cities / Local Governments / CoCs	Calendar (between 2023 and 2030)
African Capital of Culture (ACoC) on the basis of draft	2022-23 Rabat (Morocco) 2024-25 Brazzaville (Rep. Congo) & Kinshasa (DRC)
European Capital of Culture (ECoC) for up to 2033	2025 – Chemnitz (Germany) & Nova Gorica (Slovenia) 2026 – Oulu (Finland) & Trenčín (Slovakia) 2027 – Liepāja (Latvia) & Evora (Portugal) 2028 – České Budějovice (Czechia) & Bourges (France) & Skopje (North Macedonia) 2029 – Lubin (Poland) & Kiruna (Sweden) 2030 – Leuven (Belgium) & Larnaka (Cyprus) & Nikšić (Montenegro) 2031 – cities in Spain & Malta (TBC)
Iberoamerican Capital of Culture since 2019	2023 - San José (Costa Rica) 2024 - San Juan (Puerto Rico) 2025 - La Paz (Bolivia) & Sucre (Bolivia)
Mediterranean Capital of Culture	2025 - Tirana (Albania) & Alexandria (Egypt) 2026 - Tetouan (Morocco) & Matera (Italy) 2027 - Cordoba (Spain) & Saida (Lebanon)

⁵ Operational as being in an early legacy phase after the title, as holding the actual title year, as designated city preparing the year or as candidate city preparing the application

⁶ It is assumed that those cities holding the title in 2023 might still be active / still feasible to reach teams

Also relevant for the implementation of an action plan with Capitals of Culture are the projections of the **Culture Goal Campaign in 2026 and 2027** which have been started to be defined in the last **Agora meeting in December 2025**. Related key objectives are:

- “to be formally recognised as part of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders mechanism, and so take a more official role in processes around the SDGs
- to have engaged other groups and sectors within the SDGs space (example, key Major Groups such as the Indigenous Peoples, the Education and Academia, the Children and Youth, etc.)
- and to have identified a network of champions among UN Member States that are committed with the existence of the Culture Goal.”

In addition, a range of already rather supportive countries (based on their VNRs) was identified, comprising Chile, Croatia, the EU, Guyana, Lithuania, and Portugal (VNRs 2023), Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Oman, Palau, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (2024), and the Federated States of Micronesia, Finland, Malta, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, Seychelles, and Suriname (2025).

In addition, **participants in the stakeholder workshop** which was held in **January 2026** identified a whole range of **priority areas of common interest** which could be **taken up by Culture Goal promoters together with Capitals of Culture**. These provide an additional framework for a common action plan:

- Providing a strong answer to changing geopolitical frameworks with global (culture) cooperation
- Overcoming the imagination gap and raising awareness about the transversal nature of culture
- Helping stakeholders to better understand the connectivity between the local and international levels
- Raising the understanding that the Culture Goal supports the core actions of local (culture) policymakers
- Furthering substantially culture exchanges beyond continental borders
- Ensuring fair culture cooperation including in view of mobility, visa, travel support
- Engaging for strong cultural policies and appropriate budgetary frameworks
- Advocating for strong (culture) representativeness of local levels in decision-making and governance
- Involving in debates beyond Ministries of Culture also e. g. the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Finance
- Strengthening the culture of cooperation beyond continents in order to generate a space of togetherness and dialogue

1-Activities Related to Enhanced Local, National and International Visibility

Capitals of Culture are closely linked to long-term cultural strategies. Some cities dispose of integrated or related **international culture strategies**. Some Capital of Culture initiatives organise each year one to two continental training sessions (e. g. the ECoC family meetings).

Proposed activities related to the cultural strategies:

Organising of workshops with the Capital of Culture cities, local stakeholders and governing bodies **on the Culture Goal and how to integrate the related targets and indicators into a city international culture strategy**. These workshops could be implemented e. g. during so-called **ECoC-family meetings** and be accompanied with a small public event on the Culture Goal for local stakeholders. These could further **involve high-level Capitals of Culture stakeholders and/or representatives of National Culture / Foreign Affairs Ministries**. The workshops could happen in Europe and be **opened-up for (online) participants from other Capital of Culture cities from Africa and South America**. A similar workshop could take place in Iberoamerica (because of the long background of the initiative by the UCCI) and be explored in the African and Mediterranean capitals

Communication and marketing plans are inherent to all Capital of Culture initiatives. They target local, national and international audiences. Some of the plans are co-implemented with those bodies governing Capitals of Culture. The Culture Goal could be (further and better) understood as an opportunity for (beyond) local communication on the Capital of Culture too. More “traditional” communication activities like the continuous flow of social media posts provided by all Capitals of Culture could be an area of cooperation.

Proposed activities related to communication and marketing plans:

Culture Goal (Campaign) promoters could partner with a range of Capitals of Culture in a given year and agree on a common (light) dissemination strategy for the Culture Goal on social media. The campaign could include **information (like the presentation of a target each month) and or debate parts (e. g. discussion on Culture Goal indicators)**. Promoters of the Culture Goal could as a first step **invite CEOs of Capitals of Culture and heads of communication** for an exchange of views and options for commitment. This invitation for brainstorming on common social media actions should be extended to the **governing bodies of the different Capital of Culture initiatives like UCCI or the Union of the Mediterranean and their communication staff**.

Capitals of Culture organise a range of **high-level events**. Opening and closing ceremonies benefit of interesting visibility and good coverage by local, national and sometimes international media. While opening ceremonies are fully dedicated to the specific priorities of each Capital of Culture, closing ceremonies could be an interesting context for further linking with the Culture Goal. Furthermore, Capitals of Culture are often involved in (international) conferences or celebration days involving high-level representatives. The integration of the Culture Goal as a topic of such conferences or celebration days is one option.

Proposed activities in view of high-level events:

Linking the Culture Goal communication activities to celebrations organised by Capitals of Culture e. g. for **the Day of the Mediterranean on November 28 each year**. The moment of announcing each year the Mediterranean Capital of Culture & Dialogue has **multiplying potential due to related press releases and events**. The **Union for the Mediterranean** – one of the management bodies of the Mediterranean Capital of Culture & Dialogue gathers for their **regional forum** annually – another occasion to bring forward the Culture Goal with national stakeholders. Furthermore, a cooperation with the Culture Goal **would link regional with global perspectives** and demonstrate related power of collaboration. It could be equally envisaged for **cooperation during the Africa Day** activities which takes place on **May 25 each year**. This combination of Africa and Mediterranean Days provides interesting synergy potential and insights to **non-European perspectives on the Culture Goal** as well as potential for **dialogue with national culture ministers** from different countries.

High-level stakeholders are involved throughout all Capitals of Culture. They comprise international culture experts as selection and monitoring panel members, high-level staff in those structures governing Capitals of Culture as well as mayors and other influential persons in the designated Capital of Culture cities. While individual profiles could be involved with the proposed social media campaigns (see chapter “Communication and marketing plans”), the level of mayors in the designated cities provides further political and policymaking options in view of the Culture Goal.

Proposed activities in view of high-level stakeholders:

Organising **special sessions and panels dedicated to the engagement of Capitals of Culture for the Culture Goal with mayors and / or senior city staff** in events like the **international meeting of mayors organised by the European Commission** or at continental events like the **Africities Summit**. **Strategic meetings with the organisers** of the Africities Summit as well as the European Commission are recommended at an early convenience. Furthermore, **high-level individuals** might **join the social media campaign proposed or be invited as speakers to these summits** for which the Culture Goal (Campaign) **promoters provide a social media communication pack**.

2-Activities Related to Improved Multilevel (Culture) Governance in Local and International Contexts

The governance and the programme implementation of Capitals of Culture involves **cooperating national partners**. These can be formal representatives of national culture ministries or national organisations and networks with power to launch or contribute to the debates on the Culture Goal. E. g. the Ministries of Culture in the EU act as Managing Authorities for the European Capitals of Culture in their country. Furthermore, the Mediterranean Capitals of Culture and Dialogue dispose of a strong involvement of national ministries. These facts constitute opportunities for enhanced visibility and debate with the parties. In general, local stakeholders might face challenges related to imbalanced power relations to fully co-design and co-implement governance related actions – a fact to be taken into account when implementing an action plan.

Proposed activities in view of national stakeholders involved in Capitals of Culture:

Providing an **information and communication pack on the Culture Goal for Capital of Culture stakeholders for use for internal communication** which take place with National Ministries of Culture. This information could be integrated on internal agendas (AOB). Stakeholders could in that sense **broaden the range of informed civil servants** which – in the best case – are ready to become a sort of **“informal ambassadors”** for the Culture Goal cause. Furthermore, these internal meetings (like board meetings of ECoC foundations) provide a framework to **informally exchange on potential common actions in favour of the Culture Goal** and its visibility in the national and Capital of Culture contexts.

Capitals of Culture cooperate during their implementation with a wide range of **local, national, and international networks**. This fact provides solid ground to spread the word about the Culture Goal as well as to come up with common actions. These networks might hold their annual meetings during the Capital of Culture programmes or be integrated in capacity building or cultural programmes. This constitutes a range of cooperation opportunities to bring forward the agendas of the Culture Goal. Furthermore, the Capitals of Culture build their own networks.

Proposed activities related to local, national and international networks in Capitals of Culture:

The Culture Goal promoters could envisage to build an **informal platform e. g. for one annual (online) encounter for stakeholders and networks of Capitals of Culture**. UCLG and the UCLG Culture Committee are ready to provide sustainable support for networking activities and engage for a continuation of stakeholder exchanges and common action. The meetings could have two programme lines. An **internal programme line for exchanges on the advancement related to the Culture Goal** as well as a **brainstorming for common actions / campaigns**. The second activity could be a **public (online) panel** on selected topics / targets of the Culture Goal. **Speakers from networks** could be involved in the public part. Furthermore, **strategic partners** could be the **African Arterial network** and/or the **European Culture Next network as well as the informal ECoC network of ECoC internationalisation staff**.

The **monitoring and review frameworks** of Capitals of Culture provide an additional option for enhanced cooperation with the Culture Goal promoters. Furthermore, evaluation practices are well advanced in some of the Capital of Culture initiatives and are based on long-term research frameworks like the Liverpool case. The Culture Goal includes a whole indicator set to measure advancement in key culture development areas. On a strategic level, there can be interest to come up with a harmonised common framework of measurement. However, cities might need support to apply these indicators in view of expert or financial support. In a research context, a new global framework can be also further tested at the local level e. g. with Capitals of Culture, although it is important to bear in mind that it is in national governments where the decisions on the adoption and implementation of the Culture Goal are made.

Proposed activities related to monitoring and review frameworks:

Initiating a debate with the European Commission currently preparing a new Decision on the European Capital of Culture in view of **future harmonised indicators for Capitals of Culture**. **The proposal brought forward by the Culture Goal promoters** could be a promising first step in that sense. In order to test the concept also beyond Europe, a **strategic cooperation with the other Capitals of Culture in a (small) research project** could be a feasible approach. The later could be also part of a **Team Europe** initiative in cooperation with DG INTPA of the European Commission and a range of **Ministries of Culture from the countries concerned in which Capitals of Culture are implemented**. In addition, UCCI, as part of its coordination of the Iberoamerican Capitals of Culture, dedicates **substantial efforts to impact measurement and indicator frameworks** – another opportunity to join forces for harmonized evaluation contexts in view of the Culture Goal.

3-Activities Related to Better Access to Funding and Know-How with Pilot Actions for Sustainable Development

Activities, art works or thematic orientations in the Capitals of Culture **artistic and culture programmes** might provide further connecting points with the Culture Goal as well as the Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, most Capital of Culture ToR refer to the environmental dimensions which are linked to the implementation of a Capital of Culture Programme. These elements provide opportunities to communicate about the Culture Goal with a wide range of cultural practitioners and multipliers.

Proposed activities related to the artistic and culture programmes of Capitals of Culture:

A systematic screening of all upcoming Capital of Culture programmes in view of thematic connecting points is a valuable information for the **Culture Goal** promoters. Such an approach can be **realised in house or in cooperation with the Capital of Culture implementation teams (CEOs, artistic directors, leading staff, etc.)**. As an **example**, we highlight an event in the European Capital of Culture of **Oulu 2026** (Finland): “**Art Linnakallio**” **International Symposium** is looking for artists to **create site-specific works** in the new Zenith area in Kempele, Northern Ostrobothnia, Finland. The symposium will take place in two parts in August 2025 and **August 2026**. (...) All Art Linnakallio Oulu2026 events follow the **guidelines for environmentally friendly event organisation** and the principles of safe spaces. **The City of Kempele is committed to sustainable development** and has pledged to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 50% from 2007 levels by 2030.”

Capacity building is an important feature of the Capital of Culture initiatives as all try to bring forward broad **programmes** or learning modules. This fact allows for a wide range of **connecting points with the Culture Goal** promoters. On the one hand, it allows reaching out to newcomers and professionals in the cultural and creative sectors. On the other hand, capacity-building programmes might also provide opportunities for common ‘train the trainer’ initiatives related to the Culture Goal and by these means to further mainstream know-how about the Culture Goal.

Proposed activities related to the Capitals of Culture capacity building programmes:

A systematic screening of capacity-building programmes from Capitals of Culture as e. g. the “**7 Keys**” **Workshops** being mandatory for **African Capitals of Culture** or the **individual capacity-building programmes of European Capitals of Culture** would provide the Culture Goal promoters with topical as well as calendar insights. As an example, the European Capital of Culture **Bourges 2028** implements an ambitious capacity-building programme, the so-called “**The Matrix**” programme, which started already in the bidding phase and which will be pursued during the whole Capital of Culture period. Up to now it involves **more than 22 cities in the region and in Europe**. The programme is also implemented with **international conferences**.

Identification of funding opportunities for local engagement for the Culture Goal is crucial as Capitals of Culture might face challenges to fund e. g. advocacy campaigns. Advocacy campaigns for global culture policy aims like the Culture Goal (campaign) is often not part of the budget of Capitals of Culture. However, a whole range of culture and artistic actions financed by the Capitals of Culture can serve the (political) debate on the Culture Goal. Despite this fact, additional financial support might be needed so that local stakeholders are not blocked to engage (more intensively) for the Culture Goal.

Proposed activities related to funding opportunities for local engagement for the Culture Goal:

The **Culture Goal promoters could be bridge-builders to public institutions** aiming at bringing forward the Culture Goal initiative and **potentially ready to co-finance related activities and events in Capitals of Culture**. Furthermore, **a practical small funding guide of EU funding programmes** like the CERV or the Erasmus Programmes providing support for debates and civic engagement could further support Capitals of Culture. Culture Goal promoters could also **decide to apply together with Capital of Culture cities / foundations for funding of common activities**.

3.2 Proposed Updates of Terms of Reference of Capitals of Culture

The Culture Goal as a strategic global endeavour and the Capitals of Culture as a long-term strategic initiative at the local level provide a framework to **generate future win-win contexts for cultural development**. In order to bring forward such initiatives the regulatory contexts for Capitals of Culture becomes relevant. The Terms of Reference of the four Capitals of Culture as they stand in December 2025 have not yet fully endorsed the Sustainable Development Goals. The Culture Goal proposal with targets and indicators was published in September 2025 in the frame of Mondiacult in Barcelona. These developments provide momentum for initiating strategic conversations related to updating the Terms of References.

Proposed updates related to the Culture Goal for Terms of References of Capitals of Culture:

Special opportunities for strategic modifications of ToRs are linked to the African and European Capitals of Culture. The Terms of References for the **African Capitals of Culture (next call)** are under preparation in 2026, which provides a perfect framework for **enriching the call with Culture Goal related inputs**.

The **Decision for European Capitals of Culture is under preparation for modification** within the EU institutions. Related updates are available on the European Commission website and provide a starting point to investigate **options for the integration of the Culture Goal principles and indicators**. Furthermore, the European Commission plans the **update of the EU Strategy on international cultural relations** – another opportunity for anchoring the Culture Goal including with the European Capitals of Culture as well as for connecting with other Capital of Culture initiatives.

The European Commission also proposes the launch of a **Euro-Med initiative for culture, sport and tourism** in the context of the **Pact for the Mediterranean** which might provide **strategic opportunities in view of the Mediterranean Capital of Culture and Dialogues** frameworks.

The **annual calls of the Iberoamerican and Mediterranean Capitals of Culture** can be beneficial **for updates in view of the Culture Goal** and proposed actions in this report.

Furthermore, we recall here the main local dimensions of the Culture Goal which could orient the update of all the mentioned terms of reference with the targets and indicators.

- **Local (Culture) Governance**
- **Local Culture Programme**
- **Internationalisation of Local Culture**
- **Capacity-Building at the Local Level**
- **Evaluation of Local Cultural Activities & of Local Culture Governance**

In addition, we propose a **generalisation of the integration of Indigenous perspectives** as well as of the **SDGs** in future Capitals of Culture ToR.

Bibliography

We provide a short bibliography for further insights related to the Culture Goal (Campaign) and the Capital of Culture initiatives:

Further reading on the Culture Goal (Campaign):

The Culture Goal 2030 Website:

<https://culture2030goal.net/>

The Culture Goal: From Necessity to Reality – The full proposal as published in September 2025:

<https://culture2030goal.net/our-culture-goal-proposal>

Culturally Informed, Cultural Grounded, Culturally Powered: Culture in the 2025 Voluntary National Reviews (VNR):

https://culture2030goal.net/sites/default/files/2025-08/af_culture2030goal_2025_0.pdf

The Agora - Report of December 2025 meeting:

<https://culture2030goal.net/news/agora-report-december-2025-meeting>

Further reading on Capitals of Culture (in alphabetical order):

African Capitals of Culture Website:

<https://www.uclga.org/africans-capital-cities-of-culture/>

European Capitals of Culture Website:

<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/policies/culture-in-cities-and-regions/about-european-capitals-of-culture>

Iberoamerican Capitals of Culture Website:

<https://ciudadesiberoamericanas.org/capital-iberoamericana-de-las-culturas/>

Mediterranean Capital of Culture and Dialogue Website:

<https://medculturecapital.com/>

Annexes

Annex 1 – Overview “Local Dimensions of the Culture Goal”

We provide an overview of the Culture Goal in view of specific relevance for the local level (cities, local governments, their networks, and cultural organisations at the local level).

Target	Target Short	Target Long	Indicators
1	Realize Cultural Rights for All	Realize cultural rights for all by fostering inclusive access to and participation in cultural life, creativity and diversity and artistic expressions , in particular for women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities and vulnerable populations	Policies and measures to promote and protect freedom of creation and expression and participation in cultural life . Share of culture in national budget. Percentage of residents participating in cultural activities at least once a year.
2	Promote A Culture of Peace	Promote a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural and biological diversity.	Existence of education programmes on global citizenship and biological diversity, education for sustainable development, and peace . Reference in constitution to a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural and biological diversity.
3	Protect and Safeguard Cultural and Natural Heritage	Protect and safeguard cultural and natural heritage and leverage it as a resource and enabler for sustainable development	Percentage of UNESCO listed heritage with management plans (World Heritage) or safeguarding plans (Intangible Cultural Heritage). National heritage protection and safeguarding budgets. Number of heritage listings.
4	Protect and Promote the Diversity of Cultural Expressions	Protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions to strengthen the creativity, development capacity, resilience, and regenerative capacity, of individuals and communities.	Policies and measures to support the development of dynamic cultural and creative sectors . Policies and measures to facilitate access to diverse cultural expressions in digital environments . Number of intangible culture heritage elements safeguarded under 2003 UNESCO Convention.

5	Promote the Economic and Social Rights of Artists and Cultural Professionals	Promote the economic and social rights of artistic and cultural professionals, artistic freedom and safety, as well as local art, culture and products , notably in the context of artificial intelligence	Existence of national "status of the artist" legislation Existence of policies promoting freedom of artistic expression Existence of policies protecting economic and social rights of artists and cultural professionals.
6	Enhance Legal Conditions and Practical Opportunities for Mobility of Cultural Professionals	Enhance legal conditions and practical opportunities for mobility of cultural professionals and cross-border creativity in the creation of cultural goods, services and practices.	Agreements to encourage exchange of cultural goods and services respecting appropriate normative standards. Policies, measures and operational programmes to support the mobility of artists and cultural professionals, especially from the global South.
7	Enhance the Conditions for Indigenous Peoples to Strengthen Their Own Institutions, Cultures, and Languages.	Enhance the conditions for indigenous peoples to strengthen their own institutions , cultures and languages, and to pursue their development in keeping with their self-determined needs and aspirations.	Number of cultural heritage sites under indigenous management and inscribed intangible cultural heritage elements identified as indigenous. Budget allocated for Indigenous Peoples-led initiatives towards conservation of their cultural practices and heritage sites, as a percentage of total culture and heritage budgets. Proportion of cultural policy documentation translated into indigenous languages.
8	Implement a Regenerative Cultural Approach to Ecosystemic Governance	Implement a regenerative cultural approach to ecosystemic governance including environmental protection , sustainable urbanization, land planning, landscape management, biodiversity stewardship, agriculture and natural areas management	Number of environmental plans integrating heritage impact assessment Percentage of urban and regional planning strategies that integrate cultural and heritage considerations.
A	Strengthen the Cultural Institutions	Strengthen the cultural institutions including through international cooperation , to build capacity at all levels and in all policy areas to realize cultural rights and sustain cultural pluralism.	Per capita budget to support cultural institutions.
B	Ensure that Cultural Considerations are Taking into Account in All International Development Goals	Ensure that cultural considerations are taken into account in all international development goals, at the outset of and throughout all policy-making processes , whether or not associated with pre-existing cultural targets.	Existence of policy frameworks for transversal design and delivery of SDG implementation policies. Reference to culture in national development plans/strategies.

Annex 2 – Overview “Local Dimensions of the Culture Goal & Capitals of Culture ToR”

We provide an overview of the local dimensions of the Culture Goal and how these are addressed in four different Capital of Culture initiatives. Nota bene that the available information on these Capital of Culture Initiatives in December 2025 was the basis for the elaboration of the table below.

Elements of ToR (Terms of Reference) related to the main local dimensions of the Culture Goal

Activity Fields of Cities / Local Governments / CoCs	African Capital of Culture (ACoC) on the basis of draft	European Capital of Culture (ECoC) for up to 2033	Iberoamerican Capital of Culture since 2019	Mediterranean Capital of Culture
Reference to SDGs in Objectives of the ToR	Supporting the cities to reach the Sustainable Development Goals	No reference to Sustainable Development Goals	UCCI interlinks the culture action with sustainable development	No specific mention of the Sustainable Development Goals
Local (Culture) Governance	Long-term cultural strategy is mandatory for final selection and refers to citizens, cultural rights, cultural diversity as well as the SDGs; Proven support of local decision-making bodies.	Long-term cultural strategy is mandatory including legacy plans, long-term links to economic and social sectors, related impact and urban development; Broad and strong political support, adequate and viable infrastructures.	Contribution to an existing long-term cultural strategy which is in coherence with local sustainable development and the SDGs; Proven support of local, regional and national authorities.	No specific reference is made to a long-term strategy; Full political support and commitment from local, regional, and national authorities is mandatory.
Local Culture Programme & Outreach	Artistic quality and African dimension are combined with clear orientation towards inclusion of citizens and civil society, pupils, linguistic diversity and local cultural heritage as well as the creative industries	A clear and coherent artistic vision, involvement of local artists and cultural organisations, a diversity of activities proposed; capacity to combine local cultural heritage and traditional art forms with new, innovative and experimental cultural expressions. Involvement of local populations, civil society, overall audience strategy.	Strengthening a local cultural and artistic programme including the integration of local cultural heritage with new cultural expressions.	A cultural programme coordinated by local authorities and reflecting their capacities and contexts; good involvement of the entire population, civil society; cooperation with educational institutions and for intercultural learning; cultural performances celebrating the Euro-Mediterranean identity and diversity; Addressing environmental impact.

Internationalisation of Local Culture	Programme in cooperation with the five partner cities reflecting the five African regions including intercultural dialogue and generating interest in Africa and on the globe.	Strong European dimension is required to promote the cultural diversity of Europe, intercultural dialogue and greater understanding between European citizens; common aspects of European cultures, heritage and history, European integration, European themes, European artists, cooperation with (other designated) cities, and transnational partnerships.	Activities with an Iberoamerican dimension covering the diversity of these cultures, cooperation with the other member cities and other Iberoamerican cities, furthering mobility, cooperation and generating interest in the Iberoamerican context and internationally	Cities should combine local objectives with a solid regional MED vision, reflect on the diversity and richness of cultures in the Euro-Mediterranean region and commonalities; The capital title is awarded each year to two cities – one from the Southern and one from the Northern shore of the Mediterranean. The two cities should establish a partnership and collaborate. Large celebration of the day of the Mediterranean (28.11).
Capacity-Building at the Local Level	Capacity-building of the sector is mandatory	The long-term strategy should also provide plans to strengthen the capacity of the cultural and creative sectors including cross-sectoral cooperation competences.	Exchange programmes with the culture policy teams in the cities.	Promote intercultural learning.
Evaluation of Cultural Activities & Governance	Expected are culture, social, economic and environmental impacts; identified negative environmental aspects are addressed.	Evaluation as part of the cultural strategy chapter of candidacy for measuring impact including dissemination of evaluation results.	Presentation of the final results of the capital to the Cultural Committee of UCCI.	Monitoring activities are implemented in a cooperative manner; Report after each assessment; Make Best Practices available.
Communication at the local and by the local level towards the national / international level	A communication strategy and action plan are mandatory to ensure broad accessibility and visibility at the regional and international level. The international part in cooperation with UCLG-Africa.	Strategy to attract the interest of a broad European and international public (as part of the European dimension chapter); A comprehensive marketing and communication strategy (as part of the Management chapter).	Selected cities are expected to develop a communication plan and a specific logo for inclusion into all documents. They receive a dedicated space on the website of the initiative.	International partnerships should encourage the interest of a broad Euro-Mediterranean and global public. A communication and dissemination plan is required to ensure national and international accessibility and visibility. Local communication plans are complemented with efforts from the UfM and the ALF Secretariats.

Capital of Culture Governance Process and Stakeholders	UCLG-Africa Jury "7 Keys" Workshop is mandatory Selected city needs to finalise the international communication plan with UCLG-Africa.	European Commission with Member States Cultural Ministries, Expert Panel EP, Council, Committee of the Regions Member States designates based on the decision of panel Appropriate cooperation between cities, local authorities and delivery team Delivery team with management and staff.	Cities present their candidacy to the assistants of the Cultural Committee of the UCCI (Unión de Ciudades Capitales Iberoamericanas). The assistants might consult on aspects of the candidacy. The Committee members decide on the support of a candidacy.	UfM Secretariat and the Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF) coordinate the process. Advisory Committee comprising the UfM Secretariat, the ALF Secretariat, Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) who reports to the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM).
Eligibility	Cities situated on the African continent	Cities and their surrounding areas in the EU, from candidate countries or potential candidate countries	Only members ⁷ of UCCI are eligible for participation	City located in a member state of the Union for the Mediterranean ⁸
Calendar (between 2023 ⁹ and 2030)	2022-23 Rabat (Morocco) 2024-25 Brazzaville (Rep. Congo) & Kinshasa (DRC)	2025 – Chemnitz (Germany) & Nova Gorica (Slovenia) 2026 – Oulu (Finland) & Trenčín (Slovakia) 2027 – Liepāja (Latvia) & Evora (Portugal) 2028 – České Budějovice (Czechia) & Bourges (France) & Skopje (North Macedonia) 2029 – Lubin (Poland) & Kiruna (Sweden) 2030 – Leuven (Belgium) & Larnaka (Cyprus) & Nikšić (Montenegro) 2031 – cities in Spain & Malta (TBC)	2023 San José (Costa Rica) 2024 San Juan (Puerto Rico) 2025 La Paz (Bolivia) & Sucre (Bolivia)	2025 Tirana (Albania) & Alexandria (Egypt) 2026 Tetouan (Morocco) & Matera (Italy) 2027 – Cordoba (Spain) & Saida (Lebanon)

⁷ Andorra la Vella, Asunción (Paraguay), Bogotá (Colombia), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Brasilia (Brazil), Caracas (Venezuela), Guatemala (Guatemala), Mexico City (Mexico), Panama (Panama), Havana (Cuba), La Paz (Bolivia), Lima (Peru), Lisbon (Portugal), Madrid (Spain), Managua (Nicaragua), Montevideo (Uruguay), Quito (Ecuador), Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), San José (Costa Rica), San Juan (Puerto Rico), San Salvador (El Salvador), Santiago (Chile), Sucre (Bolivia), Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), Tegucigalpa (Honduras).

⁸ Member States are Albania, Algeria, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mauritania, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, The Netherlands, North Macedonia, Palestine, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Syria, Tunisia, Türkiye.

⁹ It is assumed that those cities holding the title in 2023 might still be active / still feasible to reach teams

Annex 3 – Overview “Favourable Culture Goal Ecosystems & Designated Capitals of Culture”

We provide an overview of the local dimensions of the Culture Goal and how these are addressed in four different continents.

Promising Geographies for Enhanced Engagement of Capitals of Culture in Culture Goal Related Initiatives

	On the African Continent	On the European Continent	On the American Continent	In Asia
Designated Capitals of Culture Cities 2025-2030				
ACoC	2024-25 Brazzaville (Rep. Congo) & Kinshasa (DRC)			
ECoC		<p>2025 – Chemnitz (Germany) & Nova Gorica (Slovenia)</p> <p>2026 – Oulu (Finland) & Trenčín (Slovakia)</p> <p>2027 – Liepāja (Latvia) & Evora (Portugal)</p> <p>2028 – České Budějovice (Czechia) & Bourges (France) & Skopje (North Macedonia)</p> <p>2029 – Lubin (Poland) & Kiruna (Sweden)</p> <p>2030 – Leuven (Belgium) & Larnaka (Cyprus) & Nikšić (Montenegro)</p> <p>2031 – cities in Spain & Malta (TBC)</p>		
IA-CoC			2025 La Paz (Bolivia) & Sucre (Bolivia)	
Med-CoC	<p>2025 Alexandria (Egypt)</p> <p>2026 Tetouan (Morocco)</p>	<p>2025 Tirana (Albania)</p> <p>2026 Matera (Italy)</p> <p>2027 Cordoba (Spain)</p>		2027 Saida (Lebanon)

Related Countries Engaged for Voluntary National Review				
Countries with a 2025 Voluntary National Review on the Culture Goal ¹⁰	None of the countries where Capitals of Culture are implemented.	Germany Finland Czechia Malta	None of the countries where Capitals of Culture are implemented.	None of the countries where Capitals of Culture are implemented.
Countries in which Culture Goal Campaign Partners are Based				
(Legal) seats of networks and partners which were engaged in the 2025 Culture Goal Campaign	Arterial network , seat: Mali ; Africa-wide activities	Culture Action Europe ; seat: Belgium ; Europe-wide activities ICOMOS , seat: France ; global activities IFLA , seat: The Netherlands ; global activities International Music Council , seat: France ; global activities UCLG Culture Committee , seat: Spain ; global activities	IFCCD ; legal seat: Canada ; global activities	

¹⁰ It is assumed that countries doing a Voluntary National Review which includes a cultural chapter or has substantial cultural elements are especially engaged for the Culture Goal and would welcome related onboarding of Capitals of Culture in their country

Annex 4 – Stakeholders Involved to Elaborate this Report

We provide an overview of the Authors, Contributors and Participants at the Online Stakeholder Group:

About the author: Sylvia Amann is director of **inforelais** in Austria engaging for more than 25 years as mission-driven entrepreneur for culture policy and development. She served as chair and member of the European Capitals of Culture selection and monitoring panels nominated by the European Parliament, consulted the Iberoamerican Capitals of Culture as well as the Canada Council for the Arts and connected African and European stakeholders with new models of local-to-local intercontinental cooperation.

Registered participants at the webinar on 15 January 2026 (in alphabetical order):

- | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Abigail Makhoali | 23. Belén Pazos | 46. Ezgi Sairoglu |
| 2. Ademir Resende | 24. Bruno Tripoloni | 47. Fatih Acar |
| 3. Adrien Licha | Balista | 48. Francesco Zarzana |
| 4. Agnès Ruiz | 25. Caio de Mesquita | 49. Francisco D’Almeida |
| 5. Ahmed Abulaban | 26. Camila Robaina | 50. Galina Vitanova |
| 6. Aidan Flegg | 27. Carine Debelle | 51. Gerardo Daniel |
| 7. Alessandro Lamonica | 28. Cecilia Bizzotto | Padilla |
| 8. Alexandra Polcovnicu | 29. Christine M. Merkel | 52. Gervais Hugues |
| 9. Alexandra | 30. Chyara Sales Pereira | Ondaye |
| Schjelderup | 31. Claudia Matos | 53. Giorgio Ficarelli |
| 10. Amparo Sayago | 32. Cristina Farinha | 54. Hans Sackers |
| 11. Amukelani Kubayi | 33. Daniel Gad | 55. Hélène Wullus |
| 12. Andile Ntoto | 34. Douglas Resende | 56. Henrik Dagfinruk |
| 13. Andrea Uribe | 35. Ece Mustafa Bildiren | 57. Hlompho Mphanje |
| 14. Anna Malatjie | 36. Edite Guimaraes | 58. Hüseyin Sert |
| 15. Annela Laaneots | 37. Ege Yildirim | 59. Ilkay Kivanc |
| 16. Antonia Blau | 38. Egemen Gokgoz | 60. Inês Brito Araújo |
| 17. Armelle Guyomarch | 39. Ekaterina Pelevina | 61. Irina Braun |
| 18. Ayman Elsherbiny | 40. Ekin Cuhadar | 62. Joana Miranda |
| 19. Aysegul Sabuktay | 41. Elisabeth Böhnlein | 63. Jordi Baltà |
| 20. Babylas Ndiaye | 42. Ella Kenny | 64. Jordi Pascual |
| 21. Bárbara Cárcamo | 43. Eugenia Castelli | 65. Jorge Melguizo |
| Cantín | 44. Eva Ramírez | 66. José Oliveira Junior |
| 22. Begoña Guzmán | 45. Evi Gillard | 67. Juan Camilo Palacio |

68. Madrid	98. Matti Hakamaki	127. Ramona Laczko
69. Julia Bucz	99. Mauricio Javier	David
70. Júlia Teixeira	Castro	128. Rarita Zbranca
71. Kate Joseph	100. Melanie Jacobs	129. Rodrigo Massi
72. Katerina Kubesova	101. Mercedes Guazzelli	130. Rosanna Lewis
73. Katherine Heid	102. Micaela Saconi	131. Rufus Maculuve
74. Kathryn Cops	103. Michelle Woolrich	132. Sally Abu Bakr
75. Kátia Maria de Souza	104. Mugabe Ratshikuni	133. Sara Salgueira
Costa	105. Nancy Kukovica	134. Shirlyn Serobatse
76. Keamogetswe Malefo	106. Natalia Echenique	135. Sille Talvet-Unt
77. Leonardo Civale	107. Natalia Sefair	136. Ştefan Teişanu
78. Lesego Ngoveni	108. Nathalia Larsen	137. Stellah Anyona
79. Letícia Cristelli	109. Nathália Peixoto	Kemunto
80. Liz Villegas	110. Nick Theledi	138. Stephen Wyber
81. Louise Tournillon	111. Nico Degenkolb	139. Susanne Panagoulas
82. Lourdes Nieves	112. Noemi Sánchez	140. Sylvia Amann
83. Lucas de la Torre	Escuadra	141. Thelan'uthando Nodu
84. Lucia Pérez	113. Nomashawekazi	142. Thusani Matshele
85. Lucila García	Damasane	Mulaudzi
86. Lucina Jiménez	114. Olga Partina	143. Thuthuka Mzimela
87. Lulama Ndlovu	115. Olivia Bertolini	144. Tita Larasati
88. Luz Elena Aranda	Monteiro	145. Turizm Istanbul
89. M. Eugenia Santar	116. Paloma Gámez	146. Turizm Mudurlugu
90. Margarethe Kreuser	117. Patricio Carrasco	147. U-Seok Seo
91. Margarida Fragoso	118. Pefi Kingi	148. Valentine Collin
92. María Nieves	119. Petr Perinka	149. Valeria Marcolin
93. Mariana Soares	120. Pierre Henry	150. Velimira Hristova
94. Marie Imbert	121. Piet Forger	151. Verônica Ildefonso
95. Marta Llobet	122. Piotr Michalowski	Cunha Coutinho
96. Matheus Lima	123. Priscila Ciancio	152. Yannis Koukmas
Cavalcanti	124. Rahmatouca Sow	153. Yves Zimmermann
97. Mathias Escotto	125. Raj Isar	
Gadea	126. Ralf Weiss	

We thank all the participants for their time and dedication for an enhanced cooperation between the Culture Goal and the Capital of Culture communities which considerably enriched this report!

Contact

UCLG Committee on Culture United Cities and Local Governments - UCLG

C/ Avinyó, 15
08002 Barcelona

+34 93 342 87 56
culture@uclg.org
@agenda21culture

www.agenda21culture.net

Author of the report

inforelais

inforelais - Mag. Sylvia Amann
Im Weizenfeld 26, 4209 Engerwitzdorf (AUSTRIA)

T: +43 7235 660 5411
M: office@inforelais.org

<https://www.inforelais.org>

Supported by



The European Union (DG INTPA)

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union, through the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA). Its contents are the sole responsibility of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.