
Committee on Culture – 23rd meeting Online

Thursday, 4 June 2026

16.00 – 17.15 CEST

REPORT

10 June 2026

SUMMARY

The **23rd meeting** of the Culture Committee of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) was held online on 4 June 2026, focusing on key developments and strategic priorities for 2026.

The meeting reviewed the implementation of the Culture 21 Plus framework, including the “Culture 21 Plus: Essentials” and “Culture 21 Plus: Extended” modules, as well as the development of an AI-assisted tool to facilitate access to the Culture 21 Plus framework and tailored recommendations.

The meeting also discussed the International Award UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21; the progress of the #Culture2030Goal campaign and its advocacy for the recognition of culture as a stand-alone Goal in the post-2030 Agenda; the Capitals of Culture programme; the UCLG Culture Summits; and the upcoming UCLG World Congress in Tangier.

Additionally, governance matters were also discussed, welcoming Izmir Metropolitan Municipality as a co-president in the Governance team of the Committee.

1. Context

The UCLG Committee on Culture is a **unique platform**: there is no other global meeting point that brings cities, organisations, and networks together to work on the relationship between local cultural policies and sustainable development.

The UCLG Committee on Culture is **equally open to participation from** cities on all continents and develops action-oriented activities. Around 1100 cities, local governments and organisations around the world are connected and involved in this work.

The **mission of the UCLG Committee on Culture** is *"to promote culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development through international dissemination and implementation of Agenda 21 for Culture at the local level"*. This mission was adopted at the UCLG World Congress in Mexico (2010), and confirmed in the UCLG World congresses of Rabat (2013), Bogotá (2016), Durban (2019) and Daejeon (2022).

Approved in 2004, the **Agenda 21 for Culture** was the first global statement on cultural rights and sustainable development, while the toolkit **Culture 21: Actions**, approved in 2015, focused on nine thematic commitments and 100 concrete actions. The newest **framework document** on cultural rights in cities and communities, the **Culture 21 Plus**, draws on more than 20 years of experience of UCLG in this field, and is the concrete result of a co-creation process (from May 2023 to March 2025). It unfolds the UCLG Pact for the Future and enables cities and local governments to make progress in cultural policies.

The current 2025 annual programme of the UCLG Committee on Culture has 6 areas: (1) Strengthening the UCLG network; (2) Implementation; (3) Advocacy, and in particular, the work towards achieving a "Culture Goal"; (4) Capacity Building and Learning with cities; (5) Monitoring and follow up; and (6) Governance and budget.

The previous official meeting was held online on 27 February 2025, focusing on key developments and strategic priorities for 2025. The Committee endorsed the final draft of Culture 21 Plus, co-created with cities and local governments, for its formal approval by the UCLG Executive Bureau. The meeting also reviewed the progress of the #Culture2030Goal campaign and its advocacy for the recognition of culture as a stand-alone Goal in the post-2030 Agenda; discussed the organisation of the UCLG Culture Summit in Barcelona in the framework of Mondiacult 2025 and the adjournment of the Jeonju Summit to 2027; and presented developments related to the International Award UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21. Additionally, governance matters were discussed, welcoming Izmir Metropolitan Municipality as a vice-president in the Governance team of the Committee.

2. The meeting

The **23rd meeting of the Culture Committee** of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) was held online on 4 June 2026, focusing on key developments and strategic priorities for 2026.

The session started with the opening words from the Presidency of the Committee. **Diogo Moura**, Secretary for Culture of Lisbon, highlighted the essential role of local governments in responding to the transformations affecting societies across the world. He emphasised the central place of culture in urban life and public policies, and referred to Lisbon's sustained investment in cultural participation, public facilities and local cultural networks. Moura also stressed the importance of culture in fostering social cohesion, dialogue, inclusion and urban regeneration.

In her turn, **María Victoria Alcaraz**, Director-General for Cultural Cooperation at the Ministry of Culture of the City of Buenos Aires, reflected on the main milestones of the Committee's programme. She highlighted the International Award UCLG - Mexico City - Culture 21 and congratulated Mexico City for sustaining this initiative over the years, while wishing success to the candidate cities in its 7th edition. She also referred to the implementation of Culture 21 Plus and welcomed the use of new technological tools to enable cities to identify possible strategies and actions adapted to their contexts and interests.

Alcaraz then focused on the progress of the Capitals of Culture programme, recalling the webinar organised in April 2026 as the closing moment of the first phase of the initiative "Capitals of Culture Working Together". She highlighted the importance of strengthening global cooperation between local governments in the field of culture and expressed the interest of Buenos Aires in exploring a new phase of the programme, including the development of a Capitals of Culture initiative in Latin America. She underlined that this initiative should be based on cooperation rather than competition between cities. Finally, she reaffirmed the commitment of Buenos Aires, as one of the founding members of the Committee, to collective work, cooperation between cities and the international cultural agenda.

Jordi Pascual, coordinator of the UCLG Committee on Culture, then provided an overview of the main elements of the work of the Committee, recalling the evolution of its key document frameworks and initiatives. After this brief introduction, he focused on the activities and milestones foreseen for 2026, introducing interventions from members of the Secretariat, cities and regional sections.

Marta Llobet, Programme Manager, UCLG Committee on Culture, presented the implementation of Culture 21 Plus. She explained that the framework is being operationalised through a set of modules focused on specific challenges and contexts, such as gender equality, cultural heritage, climate change or health and wellbeing, designed to respond to different local contexts and policy priorities. She introduced two newly developed modules: "**Culture 21 Plus: Essentials**" and "**Culture 21 Plus: Extended**", which provides a comprehensive set of actions across the six fields and 30 thematic areas.

The members of the Committee highlighted the diverse ways a city or local government can use the Culture 21 Plus, with its various modules.

Following this intervention, **Agnès Ruiz**, Policy Officer, UCLG Committee on Culture, presented the AI-assisted tool developed to facilitate access to Culture 21 Plus. She explained that the tool aims to help cities and local governments identify tailored actions and recommendations based on their local contexts, priorities and long-term cultural visions. The tool draws on the actions included in Culture 21 Plus and seeks to translate the Committee's accumulated experience into an accessible digital resource for cities and territories. Ruiz noted that the tool is still under development and is being tested and refined.

The members of the Committee celebrated the way the new AI tool is designed, its clarity of use and the fact it can be freely used by everyone.

Jordi Pascual then provided updates on the other main areas of the Committee's programme. He referred to the 7th edition of the International Award UCLG - Mexico City - Culture 21 and the ongoing work to identify, recognise and disseminate outstanding local cultural policies and programmes. He also recalled the progress of the #Culture2030Goal campaign and the advocacy efforts to include culture as a stand-alone Goal in the post-2030 Agenda.

Pascual highlighted the development of the Capitals of Culture programme, which seeks to connect initiatives from different regions of the world and strengthen cooperation between cities. He also referred to the UCLG Culture Summit, recalling the past editions held in Bilbao, Jeju, Buenos Aires, Izmir, Dublin and Barcelona, and announced that the next Summit is expected to take place in Jeonju in 2027. Finally, he presented the upcoming UCLG World Congress, to be held in Tangier from 22 to 25 June 2026, and underlined the importance of the Local Social Covenant as a key document for the municipal movement.

Reacting to these presentations, **Gonzalo Olabarría**, Councillor for Culture of Bilbao, reaffirmed Bilbao's commitment to the Committee and stressed that Bilbao is a city of and for culture. He highlighted the public value of culture and its contribution to sustainable human development, emphasising the importance of enabling all inhabitants to experience and enjoy cultural life without barriers to access.

Olabarría also reflected on the Culture Goal proposal (version 1) presented in the framework of Mondiacult. He called for continued advocacy so that culture can gain the recognition it deserves in the post-2030 Agenda and be considered as a transversal factor of sustainable human development. He noted that Bilbao benefits from the presence of the United Nations Secretariat for the Localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals and reaffirmed the city's willingness to support and learn from the other cities involved in UCLG.

The members of the Committee emphasised the importance of the advocacy for a Culture Goal in the post-2030 Agenda.

In his turn, **Esteve Caramés**, Director of Cultural Programmes at the Institute for Culture of Barcelona, reflected on the outcomes of the UCLG Culture Summit held in Barcelona in 2025 in the framework of Mondiacult. He welcomed the cooperation between institutions and highlighted the importance of strengthening the role of cities and local governments in international debates on cultural policies and sustainable development. Caramés reaffirmed Barcelona's commitment to continuing this work together with the members of the Committee.

Representing UCLG-Africa, **Rahmatouca Sow** highlighted the importance of reinforcing the contribution of the UCLG regional sections to the work of the Committee and strengthening the mobilisation of local governments around culture as a public policy. She referred to the African Capital of Culture initiative and the work undertaken with the Capitals of Brazzaville and Kinshasa, underlining the relevance of sharing experiences from African cities and building a strong programme of action for the region.

During the open floor, **Jorge Melguizo**, Advisor to the Mayor's Office of Bogotá, Department of Culture, Recreation and Sport, referred to the prospective development of a Culture 21 Plus module on culture, health and wellbeing. He explained that Bogotá wishes to contribute to the creation of a working group on this issue and invited cities to share relevant practices connecting cultural policies with health and wellbeing. Melguizo also announced the development, together with the Organization of Ibero-American States, of a diploma programme focused on these same topics.

Mauricio Castro, Director for Culture at Concepción Municipality, informed participants that the Culture Thematic Unit of Mercociudades had discussed the possibility of developing a Capitals of Culture programme for Latin America. He expressed the interest of the cities involved in learning more about the next steps and welcomed the opportunity to advance this initiative through cooperation between cities in the region.

Valeria Marcolin, co-director of Culture et Développement, reflected on the challenging international and financial context. She underlined the essential role of local authorities and civil society in supporting communities and called for stronger international advocacy and support for culture.

In the segment dedicated to the governance of the Committee, **Jordi Pascual** recalled the composition of the Governance team. As of 4 June 2026, the Governance team of the Culture Committee comprises 3 co-presidents - Buenos Aires, Lisbon and Mexico City - and 6 vice-presidents - Barcelona, Bilbao, Bogotá, Brazzaville, Izmir and Jeju. Then he gave the floor to **Pinar Okyay**, Deputy Secretary General of the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, who reaffirmed Izmir's commitment to the work of the Committee and to the Culture 21 Plus framework, and highlighted the importance of cooperation between local and regional governments in building inclusive societies and strengthening cultural policies.

Following this intervention, **María Victoria Alcaraz** warmly supported Izmir's candidacy to become a co-president of the Committee. She praised the city's sustained engagement at the local and international levels and highlighted the importance of working collectively on peace in all its dimensions: within cities, between cities and at the global level. Alcaraz stressed that local governments cannot remain as mere spectators of the challenges affecting the world and underlined the power of culture as a tool for dialogue, coexistence and collective action.

Izmir Metropolitan Municipality was welcomed as a new co-president of the UCLG Committee on Culture.

Finally, **Luz Elena Aranda**, Director of International Relations at the Secretariat for Culture of Mexico City, offered the closing remarks on behalf of **Ana Francis Mor**, Secretary for Culture of Mexico City.

Aranda reaffirmed Mexico City's commitment to the work of the Committee and thanked the Secretariat for its sustained efforts to place culture at the centre of development. She announced that the Award Ceremony of the 7th edition of the International Award UCLG - Mexico City - Culture 21 would take place in Mexico City in October 2026. She explained that the ceremony would be accompanied by a space for exchange and learning involving the winning cities, Mexico City and other UCLG members wishing to participate.

The members of the Committee were invited to attend the Award Ceremony and the peer-learning exercise that will take place in Mexico City on 7-8 October 2026.

In her concluding remarks, Aranda reflected on the complex international context and stressed the need to place peace once again at the centre of the discussion. She linked peace with care and highlighted the essential role of culture as a component, a pathway and a goal for building more caring societies.

After this final intervention, the session came to an end.

3. Annexes:

- Annex 1 includes the agenda of the meeting.
- Annex 2 includes the list of registered participants to the meeting.

ANNEX 1

Agenda of the meeting

Languages: English, French and Spanish.

Registration: [See here](#).

MEETING OF THE UCLG CULTURE COMMITTEE

16.00 Welcome

- Diogo Moura, Secretary for Culture, Lisbon
- Ana Francis Mor, Secretary for Culture, Mexico City
- María Victoria Alcaraz, Ministry for Culture, Buenos Aires

16.15. The development of our programme for 2026

- Background: our frame
- Culture 21 Plus: the modules "Complete" and "Essentials"
- Culture 21 Plus: the AI- assisted chatbot
- The Award UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21
- A Culture Goal in the SDGs: progress
- The Capitals of Culture: progress
- UCLG Culture Summits: Barcelona 2025 and Jeonju 2027
- The UCLG Congress in Tanger: 22-25 June 2026

Presentations and comments by

- Gonzalo Olabarria, Councillor for Culture, Bilbao
- Esteve Caramés, Institute for Culture, Barcelona
- Kate Lee, International Affairs Team, Jeonju City
- Rahmatouca Sow, UCLG-Africa

17.00 Governance of the Committee

Messages from:

- María Victoria Alcaraz, Ministry for Culture, Buenos Aires
- Pinar Okyay, Izmir Metropolitan Municipality

17.05 Conclusions

- Ana Francis Mor, Secretary for Culture, Mexico City

17.14. Picture and end of the meeting.

ANNEX 2

2.1. Registered participants

Official members

City, local government or organisation	Name	Surname(s)	Position
Ankara	Efe	Tepeoglu	
Baie-Mahault	Chantal	Lauriette	Culture Department
Baie-Mahault	Jacqueline	Attelly	Culture Department
Bandung	Tita	Larasati	Focal Point Bandung UCCN
Barcelona	Esteve	Caramés	Director of Cultural Programmes, ICUB
Barcelona (Diputació)	Marga	Julià	CERC
Belfast	Christine	Osborne	Partnership Officer, Belfast City Council
Bilbao	Gonzalo	Olabarría	Councillor for Culture
Bilbao	Iñaki	López de Aguilera	Director for Culture
Bilbao	Yasmin	Hawari	Bilbao Internacional
Bogotá	Jorge	Melguizo	Internationalisation Advisor to the District Secretariat for Culture, Recreation and Sports
Braga	Joana	Miranda	Executive Coordinator, Braga, UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts
Buenos Aires	Maria Victoria	Alcaraz	Director of International Cultural Cooperation, Ministry for culture
Canary Islands	Christian J.	Perazzone	Senior Policy Officer in museum, culture, cultural heritage; Vice ministry of culture & cultural heritage
Conakry Region	Mouussa	Berte	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Izmir Metropolitan Municipality	Pinar	Okyay	Deputy Secretary General
Izmir Metropolitan Municipality	Aysegül	Sabuktay	Izmir Mediterranean Academy

Jeonju	Yujin	Lee	Culture Department
Johannesburg	Vuyisile	Mshudulu	Director - Arts, Culture and Heritage
Lyon	Marc	Villarubias	Head of the Lyon Youth Programme
Lisbon	Diogo	Moura	Secretary for Culture of Lisbon
Lisbon	Claudia	Matos	Advisor to the Councillor for Culture
Maricá	Vítor	Ortiz	Director of Fundraising, Partnerships and International Relations
Maricá	Bruno	Mros	Fundraising, Partnerships and International Relations Officer
Mexico City	Luz Elena	Aranda	Director of International Relations at the Secretariat for Culture of Mexico City
Mexico City	Rocío	Lombera	General Coordinator for International Affairs
Mexico City	Michelle	Woolrich	Secretaría de Cultura
Mercociudades	Mariela	Couto	Technical Advisor
Port Elizabeth	Oyama	Vanto	Cultural development manager
Rio de Janeiro	Douglas	Resende	Deputy Municipal Secretary for Culture
Ségou	Attaher	Maiga	Ségou Art 2027, General Delegate; Former FAO Representative
Ségou	Djibril	Guisse	General Delegate of the Ségou Art Festival sur le Niger
Terrassa	Gabriel	Sicília	Head of the Cultural Promotion Department
Terrassa	Susana	Medina	Cultural Promotion Department
UCLG – Africa	Rahmatouca	Sow	Head of Policy
UCLG – ASPAC	Ramona	Lissa Villegas	Institutional Governance Coordinator
UCLG - CEMR	Chine	Venturi	Project Officer

UCLG - MEWA	Beyza	Çetin	Project specialist
UCLG - MEWA	Rumeysa	Yilmaz	Project assistant

Observers

City, local government or organisation	Name	Surname(s)	Position
African Culture Fund	Diarra	Bourama	Expert in the management of the cultural and creative industries
Culture et Développement	Valeria	Marcolin	Co-director
Democracy International	Joe	Matthews	Board member
Fluminense Federal University, Nitéroï	Thaïsa	Regly	International relations specialist and researcher
Ministry for Culture, Perú	María	Almestar	Senior Audit Specialist in Archaeology in the Deputy Directorate
Perfect Link Consulting Group; Thailand Gastronomy Network	Jan	Wisansing	Managing Director and Consultant; Founder
2N2K Deutschland	Ralf	Weiß	President
UN Major Group on Children and Youth	Florencio	Venté	Member of the UCLG Youth Caucus
	Alejandro	Abadía	
	Gerardo Daniel	Padilla	Consultant on governance and cultural rights

UCLG World Secretariat

City, local government or organisation	Name	Surname(s)	Position
UCLG Committee on Culture	Jordi	Pascual	Coordinator
UCLG Committee on Culture	Marta	Llobet	Program Manager
UCLG Committee on Culture	Agnès	Ruiz	Policy Officer
UCLG Committee on Culture	Jordi	Baltà	Expert
UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights; OIDP	Adrià	Duarte	Coordinator

UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights; ODP	Elena	Olivieri	Trainee
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2.2. Apologies

Official members of the Committee

City, local government or organisation	Name	Surname(s)	Position
Ankara	Şenay	Yilmaz	Projects Branch Manager, Ankara Metropolitan Municipality
Barcelona (Diputació)	Laia	Gargallo	Director, CERC
Bogotá	Santiago	Trujillo	Secretary for Culture
Brazzaville	Dieudonné	Bantsimba	Mayor
Brazzaville	Hugues	Ondaye	Socio-cultural Advisor of the Mayor
Buenos Aires	Gabriela	Ricardes	Minister for Culture
Catbalogan	Ador	Hurtado	City Tourism, Culture, Arts and Information Officer at the City Government of Catbalogan
Dublin	Iseult	Dunne	CEO, Dublin City Council Culture Company
Hangzhou	Daoqiao	Li	Deputy director of Hangzhou international relations office
Heidelberg	Nathalie	Schuckert	Mayor's office
Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality	Hüseyin	Sert	Deputy Director, Department of Culture
Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality	Surleyman	Surat	International Relations Specialist
Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality	İsmihan Sümeyra	Pervan	IBB Cultural Activities Directorate
Izmir Metropolitan Municipality	Mert	Turkben	International relations

Izmit Municipality	Burak	Ergelen	EU Project Expert
Jinju	Byung-Hoon	Jeong	Emeritus Professor of the Gyeongsang National University
Karatay Municipality	Fuat	Özcan	Foreign Relations Manager
Konya Metropolitan Municipality	Fatih	Tasdere	International Relations
Lille Métropole	Crisalyne	Gallet	Head of the Culture Department at Métropole Européenne de Lille
Mashhad	Hamid	Isfahanizadeh	Director of City Diplomacy Center
Matera	Claudia	Di Perna	Head of the Secretariat and Executive Assistant, Matera Basilicata 2019
Nairobi	Stellah	Kemunto	Deputy Director City Culture and Arts, Nairobi City County
Namur	Laurence	Beckers	International Relations Manager, Namur2030
Rabat	Hayat	Sami	Head of Cooperation and Partnerships
Ramallah	Jack	Saadeh	Mayor
Ramallah	Sally	Abu Bakr	Director of Culture and Social Development Department
Rio de Janeiro	Marcelo	Calero	Councillor for Culture and Tourism
São Paulo	Aline	Torres	Councillor for Culture
Ségou	Kéba	Daffé	Segou Creative City
Strasbourg	Yves	Zimmermann	Project Director European Green Capital at Strasbourg Eurométropole
Sanliurfa Metropolitan Municipality	Elif Esra	Önal	Head of Foreign Relations Department
Sanliurfa Metropolitan Municipality	Abdurrahman	Kahyaoğlu	Head of Unit
São Paulo	Karine	Alves	Head of Technical Advisory and Cultural Policy of Culture Department

São Paulo	Luísa	Góis	Secretariat for International Relations
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UCLG

City, local government or organisation	Name	Surname(s)	Position
UCLG – ASPAC	Bernadia	Tjandradewi	Secretary General
UCLG – Eurasia	Rasikh	Sagitov	Secretary General
UCLG – MEWA	Ali	Murat Duman	General Coordinator
UCLG – MEWA	Fatih	Gökyıldız	Research, Development and Projects Coordinator

Partners and civil society

City, local government or organisation	Name	Surname(s)	Position
Centre of Social Studies, University of Coimbra	Nancy	Duxbury	Head of Research
Culture Action Europe	Lars	Ebert	Secretary General
Culture pour Tous	Michel	Vallée	Director
Culture et Développement	Francisco	D'Almeida	Co-director
ENCATC	Giannalia	Cogliandro	Secretary General
Eurocities	Julie	Hervé	Head of Culture
ICOM (International Committee for the Collections and Activities of Museums of Cities)	Patricia	Brignole	Board Member
ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites)	Gabriel	Caballero	Focal Point on the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda
ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites)	Ege	Yildirim	Former focal Point on the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda
IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions)	Stephen	Wyber	Director, Policy and Advocacy
IMC (International Music Council)	Silja	Fischer	Secretary General
IFCCD (International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity)	Guillaume	Prieur	President
IFCCD (International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity)	Marie-Julie	Desrochers	Secretary General

Bilgi University, Istanbul	Serhan Ada		Professor; Director of the Cultural Policy and Management Research Center and UNESCO Chair in Cultural Policy and Cultural Diplomacy
On the Move	Marie	Le Sourd	Secretary General
Réseau Culture 21	Christelle	Blouët	Coordinator
Réseau Culture 21	Anne	Aubry	Project Manager
UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights	Johanne	Bouchard	OHCHR, Special Procedures
Universidade Minas Gerais	Jose	Oliveira Jr.	Researcher, and former head of Research, Cultural Department of Belo Horizonte
	Catarina	Vaz-Pinto	Former Co-president of the UCLG Culture Committee as Councillor for Culture of Lisbon
	Enrique	Glockner	Researcher and consultant, Mexico
	Rafael	Mesa	Researcher, former Head of Research, Department for Culture, Mexico City Council

Contact

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