



CIUDAD DE MÉXICO
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7th EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL AWARD
UCLG – MEXICO CITY – CULTURE 21

PEER-LEARNING EXERCISE AND AWARD CEREMONY
7-9 OCTOBER 2026, MEXICO CITY

PROGRAMME

INTRODUCTION

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

The Award reaffirms Mexico City's leadership in the relationship between culture and sustainable development, as well as UCLG's commitment to positioning culture as a fundamental dimension of sustainable cities.

To mark the conclusion of this edition, a peer-learning exercise will be held in Mexico City **from 7 to 9 October 2026**. The programme is structured around the two thematic axes of the 7th edition:

- Cultural rights and care.
- Cultural policies and gender equality.

Both themes will be explored over the three days, drawing on the experiences of the winning candidatures, the special mentions, the two award-winning personalities, as well as other cities participating in this edition and members of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) network. Echoing the vision of the global Feminist Municipal Movement, this edition will spotlight the leadership practices of locally elected women and feminist leaders who are transforming their territories by advancing local cultures of equality and democracy – expanding meaningful participation in public decision-making, and placing care at the heart of local governance. It speaks to the ambition, through the WYDE Women's Leadership initiative, to challenge and transform the social norms that continue to shape women's political participation and care responsibilities.¹

¹ The WYDE Women's Leadership Initiative is part of the EU-funded Women and Youth Democratic Engagement (WYDE) Programme. It is led by UN Women and implemented together with UCLG, International IDEA, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

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A working group of approximately 40 people is expected to attend, including representatives from cities and local governments participating in this edition of the Award, award-winning figures, members of the Jury, as well as representatives from the host city and local cultural organisations and stakeholders. This group will work over two and a half days, during which they will take part in discussions, present their projects, compare their experiences with those of other cities, and establish professional contacts that will underpin future collaborations.

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THE TWO AXES OF THE AWARD

a) Cultural rights and care

Care, understood as the collective organisation of life and the relationships that underpin it, is increasingly present in local cultural policies. From this perspective, culture is conceived as a space for reconfiguring the bonds between people and with nature, generating new forms of coexistence, well-being and justice. Cultural policies, programmes and projects based on cultural rights and care recognise the value of creativity, diversity and heritage as resources for regenerating community life. Linked to local strategies on health, inclusion and wellbeing, they address social, economic and environmental justice in an integrated manner and redress the legacies of discrimination and exclusion. In this sense, these cultural policies, programmes and projects can be understood as a care infrastructure when they give concrete form to the relationships that underpin community life.

b) Cultural policies and gender equality

Gender equality is a common, yet still urgent, cross-cutting responsibility across local public policies and services. Cultural policies, programmes and projects can help to re-examine gender-based norms, narratives and barriers from a feminist perspective and incorporate an intersectional approach that advances equity in political leadership, inclusive governance and local democracy. These cultural policies, programmes and projects contribute to creatively transforming the narrative and collective imagination of cities and territories, so that they reflect the history, identity and values of the populations that inhabit them in a diverse, inclusive, pluralistic and representative manner. Taking cultural factors into account – and how these facilitate or hinder the exercise of human rights – is essential to understanding that cultural representations, and in turn social norms and behaviours, can be at the root of gender inequalities and the inability for women and girls to fully enjoy and exercise their rights – or can help reshape local public and political life around a culture of equality and democracy, recognising women as legitimate political actors and creating the conditions for their participation and leadership.

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OBJECTIVES OF THE PEER-LEARNING EXERCISE

This peer-learning exercise aims:

- To inspire and foster learning amongst the winning cities, those that have received a special mention, and other candidate cities in this edition, by putting into perspective policies, programmes and projects that place cultural rights, care and gender equality at the heart of local public action.
- To bring international experience into dialogue with the reality of Mexico City, involving people from the host city as active participants in the exercise and not merely as organisers.
- To identify potential avenues and synergies for collaboration between the participating cities and to document specific commitments for follow-up.

METHODOLOGY

This peer-learning exercise combines plenary sessions, breakout group work and a shared programme of field visits.

The sessions will combine presentations by Mexico City, the winning cities, special mentions and/or good practices, alongside visits to key sites within the local cultural ecosystem, group work exercises and discussions on the Award's two thematic areas.

Mexico City proposes visits to UTOPIÁS, facilities, programmes or project sites linked to care, gender equality and territories.

With the aim of decentralising the programme, it is hoped that some of the working sessions will be held at the venues visited. Each visit may include a contextual presentation, a guided tour, city presentations and a structured dialogue or working session linking the local experience with the practices of the participating cities.

Cities' presentations

During the visits to the different venues, participants will be asked to present their city's candidature submitted to the Award.

The presentations will be brief, between 5 and 10 minutes. They are intended to introduce the city's local context, share concrete experiences and challenges, and provide a basis for discussion and exchange. Cities are invited to follow the suggested structure below:

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1. **Background:** General context and objectives
2. **Implementation:** What did you do? How (policies, resources, mechanisms)? Who was involved?
3. **Impact and evaluation:** What was achieved? How was it measured?
4. **Challenges and lessons learned:** Key factors for success, obstacles that were overcome (and how) and replicability

Within this structure, cities may wish to address some of the following themes, which are aligned with the two axes of the 7th edition of the Award:

- **Cultural rights, gender equality and care** in local policies.
- The **right to culture** as a pillar of inclusive, diverse, caring and democratic societies.
- Cultural policies, programmes and projects understood as a **care infrastructure**.
- The relationship between **cultural rights, care and policies such as health, inclusion and wellbeing**.
- Experiences in **addressing social, economic and environmental justice** in an integrated manner and redress the legacies of discrimination and exclusion, from the perspective of cultural rights and care.
- Gender equality as a cross-cutting approach in cultural policies.
- The role of **local governments and public policies** in transforming cultural narratives, imaginaries, representations, and in turn social norms and behaviours, towards gender equality, including by advancing women's political participation and representation in local decision-making.
- Cultural factors as enablers or hinders to women's and girls' rights and leadership.

The following questions, organised by axis, may also help to guide the presentations and the discussion with other participants following presentations:

Cultural Policies & Gender Equality

- *How does the initiative aim to strengthen gender equality through cultural policies?*

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- *How has women's leadership and/or participation helped drive the initiative? Or how has the initiative fostered and facilitated women's leadership?*
- *What impact has the initiative had on transforming social norms, including gender stereotypes, gender roles and inequalities?*

Cultural Rights & Care

- *How does the initiative understand the linkage between care and cultural rights?*
- *How has women's leadership and/or participation helped drive the initiative? Or how has the initiative fostered and facilitated women's leadership and/or public engagement?*
- *What impact has the initiative had on transforming social norms, including gender stereotypes, gender roles and inequalities?*

The structure, themes and questions are indicative, cities may feel free to focus on the experiences, initiatives and questions that are most relevant to them. Given the length of the presentations, cities are not expected to cover every theme or answer every question. **Concrete examples, challenges and lessons learned** will be particularly valuable for the peer-learning dimension of the exchange.

The afternoon of Thursday 8th is set aside to allow for preparation, travel and attendance at the Award Ceremony. Friday 9th will be devoted to summarising what has been learnt, including the identification of potential collaborations and bilateral contacts organised between cities, as well as to preparations for the next edition of the Award.

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AGENDA

7 OCTOBER 2026

Time	Venue	Activity
07:30 - 08:00	Hotel lobby	Registration
08:00	Meeting point (hotel lobby)	Departure from the hotel Zócalo Central
09:00 - 09:30	UTOPIA Elena Poniatowska Amor	Official opening. - UCLG Culture Committee - María del Rocío Lombera González, General Coordinator for International Affairs at the Mexico City Government (TBC) - Eleonora Betancur González, Representante de ONU Mujeres en México (TBC) - Ana Francis López Bayghen Patiño General, Secretary of Culture for Mexico City (TBC)
09:30 - 09:45	Traditional Mexican Sweet Bread Tasting	
09:45 - 11:30	UTOPIA Elena Poniatowska Amor	Session 1. From experiences to action: cultural rights, care and gender equality. Towards a new generation of cultural policies. Chaired by Luz Elena Aranda, Directora General de Gestión Institucional y Cooperación Cultural. <i>09:45–10:00 — Opening round of introductions</i> <i>10:00–10:45 — City presentations:</i> - <i>Ramallah, Winner (Living Heritage for a Resilient Future) – 10 min + 5 min of initial reactions from participants</i> - <i>São Paulo, Winner (VAI Program) — 10 min + 5 min of initial reactions from participants</i> - <i>Munich, Special Mention (#FemaleHeritage) - 10 min + 5 min of initial reactions from participants</i>

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Time	Venue	Activity
		<i>10:45–11:30 — More Q&A, time for further reactions to the presentations and open debate.</i>
11:30 - 12:00	UTOPIA Elena Poniatowska Amor	Coffee break
12:00 - 13:00	UTOPIA Elena Poniatowska Amor	Visit 1. Itinerary and presentation of the project. - Visit and presentation of the <i>UTOPIA Elena Poniatowska Amor</i> project by the host team - Q&A, time for reactions from cities and open debate.
13:00 - 14:30	UTOPIA Elena Poniatowska Amor	Lunch
14:30 - 16:30	UTOPIA Elena Poniatowska Amor	Session 2. Cultural rights and care. Chaired by Tita Larasati, member of the Jury. <i>14:45–14:50 — Brief recap of the morning.</i> <i>14:50–15:50 — City presentations:</i> - <i>Salvador, Special Mention (The Salvador Capital Afro Movement) - 10 min + 5 min of initial reactions from participants</i> - <i>Maricá, Good Practice (Culture of Rights) - 10 min + 5 min of initial reactions from participants</i> - <i>Puebla, Good Practice (Cultural Nodes: Territorial Cultural System for Cultural Democracy) — 10 min + 5 min of initial reactions from participants.</i> - <i>Hidalgo, Good Practice (Living Fabric: Cultural Decentralisation for Transformation) — 10 min + 5 min of initial reactions from participants.</i> <i>15:50–16:15 — More Q&A, time for further reactions to the presentations and open debate.</i> <i>16:15–16:25 - Nancy Duxbury (final reflections - 10 min)</i>



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Time	Venue	Activity
		<i>16:25–16:30 — Closing of the session and group photo of Day 1.</i>
17:15 - 18:45	Floating Garden Tlalipan / University of the Arts (Tlaxcoaque Square). Murals	Visit 2.
18:45 - 20:00	The Museum Archive of Photography	Welcome cocktail
20:00 - 20:15		Return to the hotel (walking distance)

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8 OCTOBER 2026

Time	Venue	Activity
08:00	Meeting point (Hotel lobby)	Departure from the hotel Zócalo Central
10:00 - 11:00	UTOPIA Centli in Topilejo	Visit 3. Itinerary and presentation of the project. <i>10:00–10:45 — Visiting the UTOPIA and presentation of the UTOPIA Centli project by the host team.</i> <i>10:45–11:30 - Q&A, reactions and open debate.</i>
11:00 - 11:30	UTOPIA Centli in Topilejo	Coffee break
11:30 - 13:30	UTOPIA Centli in Topilejo	Session 3. Cultural policies and gender equality. Chaired by Yarri Kamara, member of the Jury. <i>11:30–12:15 — Presentations:</i> - <i>Recife, Special Mention (Free Play: Recife for Women's Right to a Carnival without Violence) — 10 min + 5 min of initial reactions from participants.</i> - <i>Pichincha, Special Mention (The Pichincha Urban Art Festival) — 10 min + 5 min of initial reactions from participants.</i> - <i>Toluca, Good Practice (Collective Living Culture: Transformation in Toluca) - 10 min + 5 min of initial reactions from participants.</i> <i>12:15–13:10 — More Q&A, time for further reactions to the presentations, and participatory exercise: key takeaways and open reflection.</i> <i>13:10–13:20 - Amareswar Galla (final reflections - 10 min)</i> <i>13:20–13:30 — Closing of the session and group photo of Day 2.</i>
13:30 - 14:15	UTOPIA Centli in Topilejo	Lunch

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Time	Venue	Activity
14:15 - 16:15	UTOPIA Centli in Topilejo	Return to the hotel Zócalo Central
From 16:15		Free afternoon to prepare for and organise the Award Ceremony.
18:30	Meeting point (Hotel lobby)	Departure from the hotel Zócalo Central
19:00 - 21:00	José Luis Cuevas Museum	Award Ceremony for the 7th edition of the UCLG International Award – Mexico City – Culture 21
21:00 - 21:20	José Luis Cuevas Museum	Return to the hotel Zócalo Central

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9 OCTOBER 2026

Time	Venue	Activity
08:40	Meeting point (Hotel lobby)	Departure from the hotel Zócalo Central (walking distance)
9:00 - 10:00	The Foyer, Esperanza Iris City Theatre	Visit 4. Itinerary and presentation of the project <i>9:00–10:00 — Welcome words by the host team, visiting the Esperanza Iris City Theatre and presentation by the host team.</i>
10:00 - 10:20	The Foyer, Esperanza Iris City Theatre	Coffee break
10:20 - 12:20	The Foyer, Esperanza Iris City Theatre	Final working session. Chaired by Jordi Pascual, Coordinator of the UCLG Culture Committee. <i>10:20–10:50 — Open floor: from individual projects to shared lessons by all participants and members of the Jury.</i> <i>10:50–11:20 — Dynamic: collaboration matching (identifying potential collaborations and bilateral contacts between cities).</i> <i>11:20–12:20 — Preparation for the next edition of the Award: open floor for suggestions, priorities, etc.</i>
12:20 - 12:50	The Foyer, Esperanza Iris City Theatre	Closing of the exercise and group photo.
12:50 - 13:10	The Foyer, Esperanza Iris City Theatre	Return to the hotel (walking distance)

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VENUES

UTOPIA Elena Poniatowska Amor (Coyoacán)

UTOPIAS – Units for Transformation and Organisation for Inclusion and Social Harmony – are a project proposing a profound social transformation with social and urban impact: a space for encounter and wellbeing for families and communities. This UTOPIA takes its name in recognition of one of the most important authors in contemporary Mexican literature, and of her lasting commitment to social causes, historical memory and the defence of the most vulnerable sectors of society.

Floating Garden Tlalipan (elevated pedestrian walkway)

Grounded in everyone's right to public space, Floating Garden Tlalipan is a safe pedestrian corridor that reclaims Calzada de Tlalpan, one of the city's most important thoroughfares, alongside the La Gran Tenochtitlan cycle path.

University of the Arts

A new public, tuition-free institution built on the historic Plaza Tlaxcoaque, offering 19-degree programmes with no entrance exam, including Restoration, Dance, Theatre and Music.

This University is a project shaped by the voices of artists, communities and young people who understand that art also transforms and educates for freedom.

The Museum Archive of Photography

Housed in a building popularly known as “La casa de las ajaracas”, the MAF museum collection includes more than 100 years of photographic images. The MAF of today has the mission of organizing, conserving, administering, and disseminating the graphic memory that represents a reunion with our predecessors and reinforces the identities of the residents of the city. The collection consists of about two million photographs, attesting to paving works, the construction of buildings and monuments, parks and gardens, street lighting, the organization of festivities, and events linked to the uses and customs of the people.

UTOPIA Centli in Topilejo (Tlalpan borough)

This venue honours the cultural, food and environmental value of maize, as well as the Indigenous peoples of San Miguel Topilejo in the south of the capital.

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It forms part of the Peace and Equality Territories (Territorios de Paz e Igualdad) strategy – a total of 32 territories across the city – which develops four pillars that strengthen citizen participation, promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts and drive coordination among Mexico City Government agencies, with the aim of building communities with greater wellbeing.

José Luis Cuevas Museum

The former convent of Santa Inés is today home to the José Luis Cuevas Museum, dedicated to the work and collections of the artist of the same name. The building dates back to 1600 and was reconstructed at the end of the eighteenth century. It currently houses around 1,860 works of art, mostly by twentieth-century Latin American painters and illustrators.

Esperanza Iris City Theatre

Built in the early twentieth century at the request of the renowned actress and singer Esperanza Iris, who asked architects Ignacio Capetillo and Federico Mariscal for a venue resembling La Scala in Milan. For over a decade it was considered Mexico's foremost theatre, staging world-class artists such as Enrico Caruso, Anna Pavlova and Titta Ruffo.

Today, the venue hosts the finest productions in theatre, dance and interdisciplinary performance – high-quality stagings that have established it as an essential stage.

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