



IZMIR

Pilot City 2015-2017 • culture 21
EUROPE

Pilot City 2015-2017 for Agenda 21 for culture
United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT: IZMIR AND CULTURE



CITY DESCRIPTION

POPULATION AND TERRITORY

Izmir is a metropolitan city in the western extremity of the Anatolian Peninsula, at the side of Aegean Sea in Turkey. It is the third most popular urban area in the country, after Istanbul and Ankara, and one of the most westernized cities in Turkey. In 2014 it had an area of 7,340.00 km² and a population of 2,847,691, while Izmir Province counted an approximate total of 4 million people. As one of the oldest port cities of the world, Izmir has always been recognised as an important meeting point for people with different cultures, languages and religions.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Izmir combined its western culture, developed through this location advantage and its outward-oriented structure, with Anatolian culture and traditions. It has integrated and strengthened its culture tourism with deep-rooted history and ancient civilisations; faith tourism with its hosting of different beliefs; thermal tourism with the geothermal resources and facilities; and eco-tourism with its nature, sea, sun, sand assets. Izmir is also a metropolis suitable for convention tourism with its high-standard facilities, and expositions and festivals held throughout the year.

IZMIR CULTURAL PROFILE

METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY AND CULTURE

In the field of culture in Izmir, it should be pointed out the work of the Department of Culture, and Arts in the Metropolitan Municipality, which encourage artistic creation and support contacts between different social groups, and also the Izmir Mediterranean Academy. The history of the Izmir Mediterranean Academy started with the meeting of the Izmir cultural Workshop in October 2009.

Some relevant cultural initiatives taking place in the city are the Izmir Festival organised by IKSEV (Izmir Foundation for Culture, Arts and Education) and the Izmir Marionette Festival. Other important actors include the Izmir History and Design Atelier, which foster access to culture and a dynamic view on cultural heritage, and the work of the Izmir Mediterranean Academy and of the Department of Culture and Arts of the Metropolitan Municipality. Besides, some support mechanisms exist in the areas of cultural training and creativity, but these tended to be temporary rather than permanent.

CULTURAL STRATEGY

THE BASIS: IZMIR CULTURAL WORKSHOP

The Izmir Cultural Workshop (October 24th 2009), organized by Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, was the first and utmost important step towards to a new cultural vision and a cultural strategy to be built in Izmir. The vision regulated in this workshop with its outlines and the suggestions will be scored in more comprehensive long-term works thoroughly. Simultaneously 'the Example of Izmir' would provide an important example for Turkey, where many different cultural debates are going on.

TOWARDS A IZMIR CULTURAL STRATEGY

Discussions and evaluations along with the suggestions from the study groups in the workshop have proven that common perspectives and visions, which can lead to a consensus for the cultural life in Izmir and its future, exists.

Participants of the workshop have reached an agreement that the present level of cultural production and consummation is insufficient and beyond a metropolitan standard. Many of the participants reflected that the cultural vividness, as whether the rich cultural legacy from the antiquity, revealed by the present archeological excavations and sites, or existing during the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, cannot be observed today. Albeit, it has been emphasized that the inherent urban cultural corpus is the utmost reassurance favorable for Izmir becoming a cultural metropolis.

It can be defined in three main axes within these evaluations:

- **A Metropolis of Culture – Arts and Design:** Highlighting of the cultural institutions, productions and consummation as an elevator of urban revival and social empowerment. Introducing an urban mission, which stands out not only with its cultural legacy but also with its steps in favor of contemporary arts. Supporting and enhancement of creative industries,

especially design, with the awareness that the cultural dynamism can only be sustainable by being a part of economic development.

- **An Efficient Member of Mediterranean Cities Network:** Transforming Izmir an active center of the cultural re-Renaissance in the Mediterranean. Establishing Izmir as a center of an interactive network within Barcelona, Venice, Marseilles and Thessalonica, cities, which have, came into prominence through their progress, especially during the last 10-15 years.
- **A Cooperative Cultural Policy and Implementations:** Realizing of cultural breakthroughs with the support and contribution of the broader scale of the citizens, placing emphasize on the children and youth in all of the events and activities to be realized, and overseeing the aspect of education, workshop and related experiences for capacity building.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology, foreseen to realize this vision consisted of a constitution of an inventory composed of material and immaterial cultural assets, institutions, actors and activities in Izmir; an implementation of the study for the inventory, by means of consistent exchange of ideas with the correspondents, rather than a static approach, and the organizations of meetings with the cultural producers and operators in the city, about course of actions relevant to their field of expertise.

The impetus for the cultural breakthrough in Izmir will be the Metropolitan Municipality of Izmir, who has embedded this vision as one of the main agendas of its scheme. However an establishment of an Izmir Cultural foundation involving the civil society representatives, private organisations, universities and art operators in Izmir, supported by the long-term pioneering of the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, in order to secure the sustainability of the planned strategy is recommended.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITY PLAN

It would be possible to utilize some of the substantial suggestions as the outcomes of the cultural workshop, in the Cultural Action Plan. Essentially these can be list as follows:

- **Agora-Kadifekale Culture Track:**
A plein-air museum to reclaim the historical and cultural value of the region between the Agora site and Kadifekale and to open it as a tourism course. Advancing the academic, educational and museology studies, publications and such, which can highlight the pioneer role of Izmir on cultural legacy and tourism with the cooperation of the relevant groups in Izmir.
- **Izmir Urban Academy:** Establishment of an urban academy to provide a center for the research, archiving, resource and capacity building on culture, arts and design as well as education for both the youth and adults.
- **Artists Exchange Programme:** Izmir's being a part of an artists' exchange and residency programme, primarily providing artists, from Mediterranean Cities, to live and to work in different environments.
- **Street Arts:** Improvement of the public squares, parks and the bay as artistic expressional areas in Izmir as a Mediterranean City. Studying to establish a programme, in which citizens from different age groups can take part and enjoy, public space is provided for arts and where street arts can develop in Izmir. Establishing of an 'International Street Arts Festival'.
- **Izmir Arts and Culture Rewards:**
Awarding people or institutions in the cultural sections, to be decided by an independent jury each year, by determining the successful fields each year.
- **Independent Supporting Fund For Culture:** Supporting independent and sustainable cultural projects.
- **Book Cabins in the Parks:**
Establishment of book and reading cabins and sessions with the writers in various parks to encourage the children and youth of reading.
- **Presentation:** Generating projects to disseminate, intensify and to simplify the audience' reach to the tickets of cultural events, municipality's regular, publishing of a cultural and art events journal in the city and dissemination of it.
- **Publications of City Culture:**
Maintaining of Izmir Municipality's publications on urban history and culture.
- **Temporary Art Spaces:** affording options to create possibilities for the public meeting with temporary art spaces.
- **Evaluation of Kulturpark:** Assessment of Kulturpark in usage of culture and arts department after the new area for fair.
- **Culture Managers:** educate public executives and cultural personnel in the field of cultural management.