



PUBLIC EVENT, IZMIR

12 MARCH 2016



IZMIR

Pilot City 2015-2017 • culture 21
EUROPE

In the context of the initial visit to Izmir, a public event to present the Pilot Cities Europe programme and Izmir's activities was held at the Ahmed Adnan Saygun Art Center on Saturday 12 March.

The event was introduced by Elfin Yüseketepe Bengisu, Cultural Management Expert and a member of the Izmir Mediterranean Academy Advisory Board of Art and Culture. She explained that Izmir had become one of the Pilot Cities of the programme launched by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and Culture Action Europe and that an initial workshop to assess Izmir's standing with regard to culture and sustainable development had been held the day before.

Speaking next, Funda Erkal Öztürk, Head of the Izmir Municipality Art and Culture Department, welcomed participants on behalf of the Mayor of Izmir. In her talk, she recalled the richness of Izmir's culture and the innovative work done since 2009, including the setting-up of the Izmir Mediterranean Academy and the Peninsula project. She also highlighted the importance of collaboration between all local stakeholders.

Catherine Cullen, Special Advisor to the UCLG Committee on Culture, introduced the Agenda 21 for culture and Culture 21: Actions. These documents are meant to help cities in developing policies that integrate culture and sustainable development, assuming that culture is the fourth pillar of sustainable development.

The expert designated by UCLG and Culture Action Europe to advise Izmir in the context of the Pilot Cities Europe programme, Jordi Baltà, explained that the programme is based on the perception that cities in different parts of the world face similar challenges. To this end, peer-learning activities enabling cities to exchange experiences will be organized.

Finally, Serhan Ada, Associate Professor at the Bilgi University Department of Arts and Cultural Management, and Coordinator of the Izmir Mediterranean Academy Art and Culture Department, referred to the progress made by Izmir in recognising the importance of culture in recent years, which placed it as a leading city in Turkey. In his view, Izmir could find inspiration in other cities that had acknowledged that development required not only financial investment and social inclusion, but also strengthening cultural life.

Following the initial addresses, participants could raise questions and discuss the implications of the programme. Among the issues discussed were the need to promote more participation of citizens in cultural activities, the importance of communication between cultural actors in the city, the relation with the central government and with other towns in the metropolitan area of Izmir and some examples from cities like Barcelona, Belo Horizonte, Bogotá or Lille that could provide inspiration.

