



culture 21

Agenda 21 for culture

PEER-LEARNING IZMIR

MAY 2018



ACTIVITY

Peer-learning.

DATE

5-8 May 2018.

PLACE

Izmir, Turkey

PEOPLE INVOLVED

IZMIR PILOT CITY TEAM

Funda Erkal Öztürk, Head of Arts and Culture Department
Ayşegül Sabuktay, Director, Izmir Mediterranean Academy
Gökçe Süvari, Programme Manager, Izmir Mediterranean Academy

PILOT CITIES AND LEADING CITIES

Jorge Codicimo, Director, Art and Communication, Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires
Kelly Diapouli, Artistic Director, Eleusis 2021, Elefsina
Alexandra Sabino, Advisor to the Deputy Mayor for Culture
Local focal point Pilot Cities, Lisbon
Manuel Veiga, Director for Culture, Lisbon
Tomás Afonso, Programme Officer, Cultural Management and Planning
Local focal point Pilot Cities, Tenerife
Pietat Hernández, Director for Culture, Terrassa
Imma Vilches, Programme Officer, Culture and Neighbourhoods
Local focal point Pilot Cities, Terrassa

PILOT CITIES EXPERTS

Serhan Ada, Lecturer, Bilgi University / Expert
Clymene Christoforou, Founder member and director, ISIS Arts / Expert
Beatriz García, Director, Institute of Cultural Capital, Liverpool / Expert

CULTURE ACTION EUROPE AND UCLG

Kornelia Kiss, Operations Director, Culture Action Europe
Jordi Baltà, Advisor, Culture in Sustainable Cities, UCLG Committee on Culture
/ Expert

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CONTEXT

The **Pilot Cities Europe programme** is an initiative of the Committee on Culture of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and Culture Action Europe, which aims to foster peer-learning and capacity-building on culture and local sustainable development among European cities. Alongside self-assessment, policy innovation and participatory governance activities implemented in each city, peer-learning activities enabling bilateral and multilateral exchanges are organised on a regular basis.

In this context, a peer-learning visit to Izmir was held on 4-8 May 2018. Aims of the visit included to present activities conducted within **Izmir's work programme as a Pilot City**, as well as broader developments in the city's cultural policies and urban development. Furthermore, as with other peer-learning activities, the visit enabled an exchange of views and experiences with other participating cities, including Buenos Aires, Elefsina, Lisbon, Tenerife and Terrassa.

Particular emphasis was placed on the following topics:

- **Izmir's Pilot City work programme:** general approach and individual experiences
- **Local governance of culture**, including the Izmir Mediterranean Academy and the Izmir Cultural Platform initiative, as well as a presentation of the general framework of local cultural policies.
- **Culture, heritage and urban planning**, with initiatives including the Izmir History Design Atelier and several other local projects.
- **Cultural networking and cities**, with a specific seminar addressing this topic.
- **Culture and social inclusion**, with a specific seminar on the topic as well as some project presentations throughout the visit.

In addition to the aforementioned cities, participants in the peer-learning visit included several experts of the Pilot Cities programme, as well as representatives of Culture Action Europe and UCLG. They were joined by representatives of the City of Izmir, the Izmir Mediterranean Academy, the Izmir Cultural Platform initiative as well as other cultural stakeholders from Izmir.

This report summarises the activities conducted and highlights some of the lessons learned and comments made by participants following the visit. For further information, please visit **Izmir's page as a Pilot City** as well as the **Izmir Governance of Culture and Pilot Projects** document.

PEER-LEARNING ACTIVITIES

This section describes the activities conducted in the course of the visit. It has been arranged in thematic, rather than chronological order, so as to facilitate the understanding of key themes.



GAS FACTORY YOUTH CENTRE / BROTHER-SISTER PROJECT

The first activity of the peer-learning visit included an introduction to the history of Izmir, the city's key milestones and its recent cultural policies, by Ayşegül Sabuktay, Director of the Izmir Mediterranean Academy, and Serhan Ada, Lecturer at Bilgi University and an expert of the Agenda 21 for culture. This took place in the premises of the **Gas Factory Youth Centre**, a former gas plant that the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality turned into a public facility a decade ago. Since then, the Gas Factory hosts cultural and educational activities, mainly for young people aged 18-27.

The venue provided an excellent setting to present the **Brother-Sister Project**, a municipal initiative which involves university students as volunteer mentors of teenagers, particularly in disadvantaged areas of Izmir. Since it was first established in 2007, it has involved over 18,000 participants, in activities that enable both university students and younger participants to discover Izmir, stress the value of volunteering, foster cooperative skills, broaden educational opportunities for disadvantaged young people, and raise awareness about social and cultural issues. The project was introduced by Burcu Önenç, Head of the Social Projects Department at the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, as well as by several of the young volunteers involved in the project.

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LOCAL CULTURAL POLICY, GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE AND THE PILOT CITIES PROGRAMME

In the course of the visit, several sessions enabled participants to gain an understanding of the organisation of Izmir's cultural policies as well as some of the key actors involved in them, including the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, the Izmir Mediterranean Academy and the Izmir Cultural Platform Initiative. This was placed in the broader framework of local policies towards sustainable development, which were also addressed.

LOCAL CULTURAL POLICY

A presentation of Izmir's local cultural policies was led by Funda Erkal, Head of the Arts and Culture Department at the **Izmir Metropolitan Municipality**, and involved the directors of several of the policy areas in the Department. The Arts and Culture Department is one of 34 Departments in the municipal structure, and includes 6 Directorates (in charge of the Ahmed Adnan Saygun Art Center; the City Archive and Museums; Culture and Arts; the Kültürpark; Libraries; and the Mediterranean Academy). Its geographic scope covers the 33 districts that make up the Izmir metropolitan area.

The Izmir Culture Workshop held in 2009 set the basis for the development of contemporary cultural policies, with three areas of focus: the strengthening of Izmir as a city of art and design; as an active member of the network of Mediterranean cities; and the enhancement of participatory cultural policies and practices. Several major projects, including the setting-up of the Izmir Mediterranean Academy, and the implementation of the Izmir Sea Project and the Izmir History Project, result from that event.

This initial presentation was followed by others covering specific policy areas, including the music and performing arts programmes offered by the **Ahmed Adnan Saygun Art Center**; the festivals, exhibitions, venues, competitions, and children and family programmes managed by the **Culture and Arts Directorate**; the research, curatorial and dissemination activities conducted by the **City Archive and Museums**; the several venues grouped at the **Kültürpark**, a park designed after the major fire of 1922, and which has become a symbol for the city, hosting several major fairs and other events; and the activities of the **Libraries Directorate**, including the recently-opened library service in the ferry which crosses the gulf of Izmir, which participants in the peer-learning visit could experience first-hand.

THE IZMIR MEDITERRANEAN ACADEMY AND THE PILOT CITIES PROGRAMME IN IZMIR

The presentation of the **Izmir Mediterranean Academy** was conducted by Ayşegül Sabuktay and Gökçe Süvari, respectively the Director and the Programme Manager in charge of culture and art at the Academy. The 2009 Culture Workshop served to identify

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the lack of communication and coordination among public, private and non-profit stakeholders as a weakness, and led to the setting up of the Academy as a structure aimed at strengthening dialogue and networking. In the four thematic areas that the Academy covers (History; Design; Culture and Art; Ecology), the role of the coordinators is very important – among them is Serhan Ada, the coordinator for Culture and Art and one of the experts of the Pilot Cities programme, who was also involved in the visit. The Izmir Mediterranean Academy is part of the municipal structure but its work involves members of the independent sector, somehow fostering dialogue and connecting developments of many different organisations – ultimately, its aim is to ‘facilitate the action’ in Izmir.

The Izmir Mediterranean Academy coordinates the implementation of the **Pilot Cities work programme** in the city. In line with the guidelines provided, the work programme was designed by taking into account the results of the **self-assessment Radar**. Among the areas addressed have been the promotion of transversal work between culture and social inclusion, and between culture and education (the latter has led to the **kültürLab** initiative, see below), and the diversification of funding sources for the cultural sector (although private financial institutions continue to show limited interest in this area). In this context, a **mapping of cultural venues** across the city has also been conducted by the Izmir Cultural Platform Initiative (IKPG, see below), and the Basmane Environmental Design Project has involved a consultation with the community on the needs and potential improvements in urban design and cultural activities in this area.

KÜLTÜRLAB

Following the **self-assessment exercise** conducted in 2016 in the context of Pilot Cities, several local stakeholders launched the **kültürLab initiative**, which aims to foster synergies between the fields of culture and education. Particular emphasis is placed on the educational programmes of museums, art centres and the educational departments of cultural organisations, involving public, private and non-profit organisations, enabling participants of all ages to encounter cultural activities in formal and lifelong learning. A range of activities including guided tours, children programmes, workshops, conferences, professional training, social projects and publications have been conducted. **KültürLab** is **one of the pilot measures** implemented in the context of the Pilot Cities programme in Izmir, and was introduced by Gökçe Suvari, the Pilot Cities focal point in Izmir.

IZMIR CULTURAL PLATFORM INITIATIVE (IKPG)

A presentation of the **Izmir Cultural Platform Initiative (IKPG)** was conducted by some of its members, including Borga Kantürk, Sarp Keskiner and Elfin Yüksektepe Bengisu.

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This network of civil society artists, culture professionals and activists aims to foster an independent space for debate and action, by bringing together individuals and by recording, collecting, mapping and delivering projects, focusing on the Izmir of today. The Platform takes a constructive approach, regularly organising meetings where new participants can introduce their views and join the network, and currently includes 170 members. Thematic seminars and workshops have also been organised, and the first Summer School was held in 2017, providing a training, networking and action-oriented space.



IZMIR HISTORY DESIGN ATELIER AND OTHER PROJECTS LINKED TO URBAN REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Over the past few years, several initiatives have aimed to balance regeneration processes in Izmir's historical centre, the heritage of this area, and the voice of local communities. **Izmir Tarih** (Izmir History Project) provides the banner under which the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality works with other agents to ensure that heritage and cultural interests are protected and promoted. Some of the major archaeological sites and places of historical interest, including the Kadifekale historical fortress, the Agora excavation house, and the Kemeralti historical market, and a number of schemes developed under this framework were visited on 7 May. Among them is the **Izmir History Design Atelier**, which promotes participatory activities involving the local communities and experts, as well as educational programmes for children and young people. Other projects implemented in this context

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include the **Agora Co-existence Life Center**, which provides psycho-social support, training and intercultural dialogue support for migrant communities and other residents in the area, with particular emphasis on broadening opportunities for women.

Meanwhile, **TARKEM** (Historical Kemeralti Renovation Investment Project) is a public-private partnership set up in 2012, and a rather unique example in Turkey, which aims to contribute to the development of Izmir's historical centre. TARKEM's 2012 Design Strategy Report set out a vision in which the local population in Izmir could strengthen their relation with their history, while preventing decline in the area. Initiatives conducted thereafter include an architectural archive, the promotion of historic routes, the restoration of ancient buildings and the setting-up of an interpretation centre.



BROADER LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

In the course of the visit, participants were also introduced to several other aspects of local policies in Izmir, overall providing a comprehensive understanding of the place of cultural policy in broader development challenges and strategies. Among these, the Assistant Secretary General of the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, Aysel Özkan, presented existing **strategies on rural development**, highlighting the fact that 28% of Izmir's land is rural. In this context, community values have been mapped and seen as core aspects in efforts towards sustainable development. Particular efforts are also being made in capacity-building and employment opportunities for women.



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This presentation was held at the **Vocation Factory**, a facility established by the Metropolitan Municipality in 2014 in a renovated building. The centre provides a wide range of vocational training courses, in areas including art and design, crafts and fashion, and has reached 70,000 trainees since it was set up. A 'fablab' for innovation was also created in 2017.

SEMINAR “CULTURAL NETWORKING AND CITIES”

Given the Pilot Cities programme's aim to foster peer-learning and collaboration among cities, and Izmir's interest in broadening opportunities for local artists and cultural professionals to engage in international cultural networking, one session in the peer-learning visit addressed forms of cross-border cultural collaboration, with a particular emphasis on cities. This was held at the Ahmet Piriştina Izmir City Archive Museum on Monday 7 May.

In this context, Clymene Christoforou, founder member and director of **ISIS Arts (recently renamed D6: culture in transit)** and one of the experts of the Pilot Cities programme, presented two examples of networking and collaboration in the cultural field. Among them was **Corners**, a EU-funded project involving 10 European partners, which aimed to make the work of artists valuable outside their most traditional spaces. Set in communities based in the 'corners' of Europe, several artists were commissioned to produce pieces which could be relevant to individual communities but could also have resonance across the continent. Secondly, the project **Forage** carried out by artist Henna Asikainen with refugees and asylum-seekers in Newcastle-upon-Tyne was also presented. The initiative, which involved the National Trust and other partners, aimed to address participants' relationship with their new environment, and also served to highlight that local landscapes have developed through the exchange of plants, species and knowledge coming from different places.

Speaking next, Kornelia Kiss, Operations Director at **Culture Action Europe**, presented this platform, which is the largest European cultural network. She highlighted that, among the motivations for networking in the cultural field, are sharing ideas and ways of working, learning from good practices and from failure, avoiding the need to 'reinvent the wheel', etc. She presented several theme-specific cultural networks and some tools that can facilitate networking, including **On The Move** and the **IETM Fund-Finder**, as well as Culture Action Europe's **Beyond the Obvious** annual conference, which operates as an excellent networking space.



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Finally, members of the **Izmir Cultural Platform Initiative (IKPG)** presented their work, with particular emphasis on the strengthening of the local network as well as the Mediterranean dimension. One of IKPG's aims has been to break barriers among individuals and cultural sectors, ultimately facilitating collaboration. Recent years have also seen a progressive relocation of professionals from across Turkey towards Izmir, contributing to a more diverse and rich local platform. There is also an aim to establish horizontal relations with other cities in the Mediterranean, and this has inspired some of the publications and projects conducted so far.

SEMINAR “CULTURE AND SOCIAL INCLUSION”

With an aim similar to the seminar on cultural networking held the previous day, this session aimed to exchange views and present examples of the links between culture and social inclusion in cities. The seminar took place on Tuesday 8 May at the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality Awareness Center, a public facility which aims to raise awareness about disability issues.

Opening the proceedings was Beatriz García, Director of the **Institute of Cultural Capital** in Liverpool and an expert in the Pilot Cities programme. Drawing particularly on the examples of Glasgow 1990 and Liverpool 2008, she presented evidence of how European Capitals of Culture had fostered social inclusion in their programmes. Among the positive outcomes identified were the increase in confidence and entrepreneurship in community groups and a change in the perception about the value of the arts for deprived communities. Key to achieve this was the design of flexible, inclusive processes, the integration of socially-inclusive projects in mainstream arts budgets, and the confidence that culture can bring benefits to other sectors, coupled with humility to learn from other sectors.

Jordi Baltà, an advisor in the UCLG Committee on Culture, presented a range of views and examples on the interaction between culture and social inclusion. In line with the **Culture 21 Actions** toolkit, local policies should recognise the potential of active participation in cultural life to enhance social inclusion, and recognise that cultural factors can either promote or obstruct access to key social services that enable inclusion. He went on to present some good practices drawn from the **Agenda 21 for culture OBS database**, placing particular emphasis on projects from Bogotá, Lyon and Vaudreuil-Dorion.

The work of the **Siyah Pembe Üçgen Association**, presented by Erdem Gürsu, focuses on LGBTI rights and gender equality. Despite political polarisation and many difficulties, the LGBTI movement is growing in Turkey and there have been positive changes in the

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media's approach to the issue. Siyah Pembe Üçgen Association fights to raise awareness about existing forms of discrimination, lobbies to change and revise discriminatory legislation and, thanks to EU funding, has taken part in a programme aimed at raising awareness and training local government staff in two districts of Ankara and Izmir.

Finally, Ercan Ergiçay presented the work of the [Association of Bridging People](#), a volunteer-based NGO established in 2014 in the context of the migration and refugee crisis. The organisation involves nearly 1000 volunteers, as well as 100 doctors, nurses and other medical professionals, who overall have provided support to over 100,000 refugees and medical treatment to over 6000 of them. An art and culture group organises events for adults and children. The Association of Bridging People has very critical views of the EU-Turkey agreement, for its negative effects on migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers.



OTHER CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS AND PROJECTS

This section briefly presents several other cultural organisations and projects that were presented in the course of the visit.

K2 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTRE

The [K2 Contemporary Art Center](#) provides working, meeting and exhibition space for artists in various disciplines, as well as training rooms and an extensive library and

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documentation centre specialising in contemporary art. The private-run space has developed extensive international connections, broadening the opportunities for Izmir cultural professionals to network with artists and professionals elsewhere.

Furthermore, in order to gain visibility among local audiences, K2 promoted the **Port Izmir** programme of art in public space, first launched as a triennial but which has become a permanent initiative. Participants in the peer-learning visit had the opportunity to discover K2 on 5 May and visit the final exhibition of Port Izmir 2017-18 the day after, and were introduced to both initiatives by K2 founder Ayşegül Kurtel.



ARKAS ART CENTER

The **Arkas Art Center** is a private-run museum and exhibition space established in the premises of the French Honorary Consulate building in Izmir. It provides access to an extensive visual art collection. Participants could visit the temporary exhibition **Color Light Vibration – Turkish Impressionists**, as well as discuss the background to the Art Center thanks to an introduction by Ayşe Beşikçi, from the Arkas Art Center.

DARAGAC ARTIST INITIATIVE

In the last couple of years, a group of artists have established themselves in former garages and workshops of the Daragac area in Izmir, which has become the site of public

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art works and **an annual exhibition of art in public space**. Progressively, this has drawn the attention of other contemporary artists in the city and elsewhere. A visit to this area and a discussion with some of the artists leading the project took place in the context of the peer-learning visit.

URLA DESIGN LIBRARY

On 8 May, a visit was organised at this reading room, which opened in 2017 in a **deserted 16th-century school**. The library builds on the book collection of late Turkish sociologist Faruk Tabak and has been founded by Prof. Tefvik Balcio lu, a renowned scholar in architecture and design, with strong links in Izmir. With strong connections to prominent scholars, the centre aims to broaden access to books, literature and knowledge, and regularly organises public events and training activities for both children and adults.



WHEELCHAIR DANCE PROJECT

Closing the peer-learning visit, participants had the chance of attending a rehearsal of the **Wheelchair Dance Project** led by choreographer Bibi Banu Da cıo lu Türkeli. The dance company, involving both people with disabilities and dance students, has been rehearsing together for four years, and had recently presented a new choreography in public. Participants in the peer-learning visit could observe the rehearsal and take part in some of the practices themselves.

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Following the visit, and thanks to the participation of the City of Buenos Aires in it, a [dedicated video](#) involving internationally-renowned dancer Paloma Herrera, currently the artistic director of the Ballet of Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires, was produced, highlighting the work of the Wheelchair Dance Project.



OTHER PEER-LEARNING ACTIVITIES

In the course of the visit, participants had the opportunity to exchange on the developments of the Pilot Cities programme and other ongoing processes in their respective cities. For further information, please refer to the pages of [Buenos Aires](#), [Elefsina](#), [Lisbon](#), [Tenerife](#) and [Terrassa](#) on the Agenda 21 for culture website.

A presentation was also done by **Culture Action Europe**, addressing current projects, the [1% for Culture Campaign](#), which focuses on the future EU budget for culture; and the recent publication [The Value and Values of Culture](#), which presents evidence on the impact of culture across a wide range of policy areas.

The UCLG Committee on Culture also informed of current projects, including the recently-closed 3rd edition of the [International Award 'UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21'](#), which recognises both cities and individuals that have contributed to the link between culture and sustainable development; and preparations for the [3rd UCLG Culture Summit](#), due to be held in Buenos Aires in April 2019.



LESSONS LEARNED

As the visit came to an end, participants were invited to reflect on the conclusions they had extracted. Here are some of their views:

We thought that the governance model was very interesting: the creation of an autonomous institute and two parallel lines of work with different experts, one for reflection and another one for implementation.

We also liked the on-site visits to initiatives such as the Gas Factory Youth Center, including the Brother-Sister Project, KültürLab, the meeting with members of the Izmir Cultural Platform and the visit to Agora and its surroundings (heritage recovery).

We were surprised by the diversity of projects and their clear desire to focus on the innovation and modernity of the city. The projects with which we are surely most connected are those that address the social and cultural transformation of neighbourhoods.

We would also like to emphasize the importance of being able to have "non-academic" spaces of relation, connectivity, exchange of experiences, methodologies and professional expectations.

Pietat Hernández and Imma Vilches, Terrassa

I was much impressed by the scale of volunteer engagement in the Brother-Sister Programme, and the pride the young people had in taking part. Their participation in our event was not preplanned, and their enthusiasm the stronger for it. I would have liked to hear a little more about the sociologists' preparation for the students and graduates going in to these homes which are economically and perhaps culturally different from their own.

Izmir Tarih: How good to see a historic and multicultural development in the heart of the city. How nice to see a project which grows from the place itself. I was pleased to see the Agora Women's project operating so widely. I would have liked to explore a little more the potential disconnect between the history and people-led approach of the Tahir project, and its 'anti gentrification' ambition, and the desire to make a place fit for visitors.

From the perspective of the artist or cultural organisation, I was pleased to see the neighbourhood project, the K2 developments and to hear about the platform. I did not however get the impression that the artists themselves manage to make a living from their work. The IKPG Platform, as an initiative is excellent, and I loved their summer school. It was interesting to hear the relationship between the cultural operator/artists and the municipality. The new grant scheme is a positive step, and more mobility grants would benefit the "Mediterranean" agenda.

My overall impression was of a city looking out to the world, wanting to connect to the rest of the Mediterranean and its northern neighbours.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Press release published by the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality: <http://www.izmir.bel.tr/en/News/%E2%80%8Bizmir-hosted-culture-in-sustainable-cities-event/37674/162>
- Video of the visit produced by the Izmir Mediterranean Academy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8pq3j1_ex8&feature=youtu.be

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