

## CULTURAL POLICIES OF LILLE MÉTROPOLE



network local creativity  
cultural **policies** democracy  
diversity monitoring cross-sectorial

---

### 1. Context

Lille-Métropole is an urban community with 1,108,991 inhabitants, bringing together 87 “communes” of very different sizes (from Lille, with 226,827 inhabitants, to Warneton, with 198 inhabitants) but without a clear central structure around Lille at a historical and demographic level. Lille-Métropole is the result of a polycentric “conurbation” linked to a very rapid urban and industrial development from 1850 to 1950. The

city also has numerous rural centres between more densely populated areas. From 2008 to 2014, the President of Lille-Métropole was Mrs Martine Aubry. Since April 2014, the president is M. Damien Castelain.

Lille-Métropole is an urban agglomeration bordering Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia) for 84 kilometres. It forms part of a diffuse urban, metropolitan and cross-border area of over 2 million inhabitants (Tournai and Courtrai in Belgium, the mining basin, Lens and Douai in the south).

The regional economic development was based on two main industries: mining (coal) and textiles. These two sectors endured a long decline during the second half of the 20th century. The industrial decline has left the city with two challenges: one economic and social (42% of homes are tax exempt, 75% of the income of just over a quarter of residents is subsidised, and unemployment is higher than the national average) and the other urban: half of the disused urban industrial sites in France are located in Lille-Métropole. In fact, the city has mainly developed around factors that have structured the urban space.

The population (2011) is relatively young: 27.7% under 20 (France: 24.5%). For the last 20 years the recovery of Lille-Métropole has been based on several pillars: to be a European and border crossroads, the development of the third sector, and culture and creativity as a condition for industrial recovery.

## 2. Lille and culture

According to a survey conducted in 2011 by the Observatory of Cultural Policies (OPC), residents in Lille-Métropole have intensive cultural practices, closer to those of Paris residents than other French cities. According to the OPC, this intensity is explained by the structure of the population (age, socioeconomic characteristics) and by a long tradition of sociability and community activities (markets, popular festivals, working class movements). It is also explained by a broad range of activities, mainly supported by the public authority, which are also in keeping with the history and practices of the residents and the region.

The range of activities is also characterised by a wide diversity of venues and projects that enable the expression of the institutional and local fabric. The practices of cooperation between cultural actors of all types and actors from the economic, social or educational worlds are also particularly dynamic.



*The practices of cooperation between cultural actors of all types and actors from the economic, social or educational worlds are also particularly dynamic.*

## 3. Goals and challenges

- a) Ensure access for all to culture, including groups most socially, economically or physically distanced from the range of activities.

- b) Develop a range of cultural activities of excellence for all, and attract and retain talents.
- c) Favour cooperation and networking of the cultural actors.
- d) Make culture a lever of development for the territory and for other public policies (economic action, development operations, mobility and transport, environment).
- e) Contribute to expansion and progress in relation to Lille-Métropole.

## 4. Lille Métropole cultural policies

### 4.1. The actors

In Lille-Métropole, the policies in favour of culture are developed by:

- The “communes” (87), which have great autonomy and liberty in the field. They concentrate most of the resources (85% of culture budgets of the intercommunal block; i.e., the “communes” and the urban community together) and are responsible for much of the running of the venues.
- Lille-Métropole, as an urban community, which intervenes to support the large venues of community interest, to foster networking dynamics and to promote major metropolitan events. Lille-Métropole encourages coordination between “communes”, the sharing of good practices and territorial solidarity. Its budget amounts to around 15% of the cultural budget of the intercommunal block.

*Each “commune” develops its own cultural policy.* \_\_\_\_\_

### 4.2. Main action lines

The cultural policy of Lille City Council is based on 3 main action lines:

- a) Support artists and creation
  - by strengthening our major cultural institutions (Opéra, Orchestre National de Lille, Théâtre du Nord, Palais des Beaux-Arts, libraries, music schools, and so on)
  - through strengthened support for associations
  - by developing the resources and venues for artists (e. g.: Les Maisons-Folie, the Centre Eurorégional des Cultures Urbaines, but also the art gallery programme in each neighbourhood).
- b) Increase access for all to culture and develop artistic training for the very young
  - through artistic education plans: reading plan, music plan... so that all Lille students can play an instrument without musical theory
  - by developing the municipal and neighbourhood libraries, the music academy, and the neighbourhood music schools...
  - by favouring access for new sectors of the public (specific fees, cultural support for the underprivileged).
- c) Make Lille a city of art and innovation
  - by strengthening the image of the city, notably through its heritage policy
  - by being a laboratory of the future and the new advances (e.g.: lille3000...)
  - implementing the Agenda 21 for culture in Lille

#### 4.3. Current projects

The names of the **programmes and projects** that illustrate the cultural policies of Lille-Métropole are the following:

- Fabriques Culturelles
- Belles sorties
- Entorse
- Opéra de Lille
- Condition Publique
- LaM
- Lille3000
- La C'Art
- Les Crédits Loisirs
- Lecture publique

*The implementation of the project “Lille 2004, European capital of culture” has made it possible to change the image of the city, both for the world and the residents who are now proud of its cultural identity.* \_\_\_\_\_

#### 5. Lille and culture: which effects, which results?

Lille-Métropole has experienced a major boost with the preparation and implementation of the project “Lille 2004, European capital of culture”. This event has made it possible to change the image of the city, both for the world and the residents who are now proud of its cultural identity. It has also enabled networks to be structured and has favoured cooperation between cultural actors.



The Agenda 21 for culture has contributed to viewing culture from another perspective, that of sustainable development based on the following key concepts: cross-over approach, cultural diversity, participation, sharing, eco-organisation, governance...

## **6. Other information**

Website: <http://www.lillemetropole.fr/cms/home.html>  
<http://www.lillemetropole.fr/cms/home/actualites/culture.html>

Social networks: Facebook and Twitter LMCU Lille-Métropole

This article has been written by Jean-Christophe LEVASSOR, director of culture, Lille Métropole Communauté Urbaine.

Contact: [jclevassor\(at\)lillemetropole.fr](mailto:jclevassor@lillemetropole.fr)