



Capitals of Culture Working Together

A programme by:



With the support of:



Capitals of Culture Working Together

FINAL EVENT - WEBINAR 28 APRIL 2026

REPORT

Background

Since 2023, the UCLG Committee on culture coordinates the "[Capitals of Culture Working Together](#)" programme, funded by the European Commission and promoted by the European Parliament, and connects regional and continental "Capital of Culture" initiatives, offering spaces for dialogue, cooperation and innovation.

The programme has been developed with these **4 axes**: **(a)** the support to **the organisation of meetings of Mayors of cities** towards the objective of facilitating the launching of similar "Capital of Culture" initiatives, with specific attention to the **African and Latin American continents**, bringing specific expertise and experiences from the rest of the world, **(b)** the support to the drafting of **adapted structured methodologies**, starting from the "African Capital of Culture" (ACoC), including selection process and impact measurement tools, and analyzing possibilities for similar initiatives in other continental spaces (like Mercosur, Latin America, Middle East or Asia-Pacific), **(c)** the engagement with **a selected number of strategic cities** to localise the SDGs with cultural policies, through "[Seven Keys](#)" workshops, online webinars and a [Culture Capital – Culture Goal report](#), and **(d)** the participation to and animation of "**cultural dimension of development**" discussions within major international "Cities and Regions" Fora and events.

This final webinar

The final webinar of this initiative took place on Tuesday 28 April 2026, with the participation of 31 speakers representing all the organisations involved in the programme as well as other international organisations and networks, and local and regional governments. More than 98 people attended the webinar.

The main elements of the webinar

The main elements of the webinar were the following:

a) Cities in the global conversation on culture and development

- Between 2023 and 2026 the global conversation on culture and development has evolved in two opposite directions. On the one hand, the rise of speeches of hate and anti-scientific evidence and the concentration of power in global media; on the other hand, a broad consensus on the understanding that culture is at the core of human rights (in other words, the intrinsic connection culture-democracy-development), and that it deserves a specific “goal” in any global development agenda.
- Local governments have taken the leadership in the connection culture-democracy-development, and the various “Culture Capitals” programmes are a clear (perhaps the best) illustration of this fact. During the webinar, representatives of the European Commission, which have supported the programme, underlined that this initiative contributed to strengthening the critical connection between the place of culture in global relations and the localization or local adaptation of global agendas. In a similar vein, UNESCO also underlined that local governments had gained a more important position in the consultation process leading to the Mondiacult 2025 international conference, which in turn identified a set of priorities, such as cultural rights or peacebuilding, in which the local level is key. This is in line with “local multilateralism” approach advocated by UCLG.
- UNESCO, UNDP, UNFCCC as well as the European Union (through the new Culture Compass for Europe), the African Union and the Mercosur are clearly positioned to strengthen the connections between culture, democracy, human rights and sustainability.

b) Programme results related to capacity-building, architecture and advocacy.

- The programme has delivered several processes of [Capacity-building in African cities](#) (Nouakchott, Brazzaville, Segou), connecting with European cities (Elefsina, Esch-sur-Alzette), and based on the UCLG tools “[The Seven Keys](#)” and “[Culture 21 Plus](#)” as well as the “Youth Lab” tool developed by [Culture et Développement](#).
- Capacity-building activities conducted in the context of the programme are defined, on the one hand, by involving peer-learning among participating cities and, on the other hand, by fostering community engagement in the identification of needs and the formulation of proposals for local implementation.
- In particular the **Seven Keys** workshops proved to be a very useful exercise to engage and empower local cultural actors, leading to concrete and feasible

actions at a local level. This is a good example of how a common framework enables mutual learning among cities, while also allowing local appropriation and design of tailored solutions – that is, how an ‘abstract’ model becomes alive when you apply it at the local level. Engagement of international bodies and civil society organisations, as well as support provided by experts and facilitators, contributes to identifying synergies with global agendas (such as the Sustainable Development Goals), facilitates networking and supports learning.

- Ultimately, these capacity-building initiatives have led to the adoption of new policy frameworks as well as concrete programmes, schemes and local governance spaces, and informed current or future Capital of Culture activities. During the webinar, this was illustrated by the presentation of activities implemented in [Nouakchott](#), [Brazzaville](#) and [Elefsina](#).
- The programme has delivered the [Terms of Reference for the third African Capital of Culture](#). The ToR cover the various phases of the initiative, including the open call, selection process, visions for the city development, capacity-building, inter-cultural dialogue, visibility, etc.
- The programme has also contributed to designing the **architecture for the Culture Committee of UCLG-Africa**, which has held its two first meetings in [Brazzaville](#) (July 2025) and [Nouakchott](#) (March 2026). This is the first permanent committee within UCLG-Africa. Its structure, including thematic priorities and sub-committees, work programme and activities, including the ACoC programme, were presented during the webinar.
- The programme has delivered a “[Capitals of Culture Engaging for the Culture Goal](#)” report, elaborated by Sylvia Amann, so that cities all around the world can share a common base (and not just those in Europe). The report identifies several opportunities for Capitals of Culture to engage in the call for a standalone Culture Goal in future global agendas on sustainable development, including events for enhanced visibility, multilevel cooperation, and actions for better access to financing and know-how.
- This is closely connected to the Culture 2030 Goal campaign’s proposal for a [Culture Goal](#), which was also discussed during the webinar. Some of the organisations involved in the campaign, including IFLA and the International Federations of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity, underlined the close connection existing between local strategies such as Capital of Culture initiatives, and the aims of the Culture Goal campaign. Cities that have integrated a Culture Goal in their local policies, such as Strasbourg, also presented their activities.

All the outputs are available in [the main page of the programme, here](#), and are listed in the annex.

c) *The specific connections with and among cities holding the titles in 2026, 2027 and 2028, and beyond.*

- The programme has established a solid connection among cities and networks that hold the title of Capitals of Culture in the coming years, including cities in Europe, Africa, Latin America and the Mediterranean.
- The programme has supported the initial steps of Brazzaville as ACoC, whose agenda will be unveiled in June 2026, including both an artistic and an institutional component, and is planned to start by the end of October 2026. Some of the themes and activities foreseen in this framework, including the central attention given to youth, were discussed during the webinar.

- Other presentations of forthcoming Capital of Culture hosts included Córdoba 2027 (Mediterranean Capital of Culture and Dialogue) and České Budějovice 2028 (European Capital of Culture), which underlined their international dissemination as well as how their programmes contribute to local sustainable development.

All the cities show a sincere interest to learn from each other and to strengthen their programmes with components/elements/actions emerging from other cities. Experts and observers contributing to the discussion underlined the importance and potential of this type of collaboration, whilst also warning of some possible challenges, including the risk of increased instrumentalization of culture for economic, tourism or nationalistic purposes in a context of increasing resource constraints and geopolitical tensions. In some countries and regions, the centralization of competences and the limited resources available for local governments also pose a challenge.

d) *The need and possibilities for a second phase of the programme.*

- European, African and Latin American cities, networks and associations as well as other organisations supporting city initiatives (including Mercociudades, ParlaSur, the Anna Lindh Foundation, the European Commission, UCLG, as well as several local governments taking part) expressed the wish to carry the programme forward with a second phase.
- **ACoC** and a possible **Culture Capital of the Mercosur** could be the focus of this second phase, also involving the Mediterranean Capital and exploring an alliance with the Capitals in the East (China-Japan-Korea). In particular the interesting potential of **interaction between the ParlaSur, Mercociudades, other Latin American networks and UCLG World** has been identified as a solid base for the future action.
- Caution: the European Capital of Culture programme (ECoC) has a long history and has evolved over time. It also has a very solid institutionalization and very high budgets. Its cities and networks need to consider not overwhelming cities in other continents, considering their specific, varied contexts and being open to different ways of exchange. At the same time, the experience acquired by the programme in connecting culture with local visions and strategies for sustainable development, and the knowledge generated through successive evaluations of its impacts, is an asset that can inspire initiatives elsewhere.

The next steps

- The final report of the programme to be delivered by UCLG to the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) by 31 May 2026.
- A brief draft document (2 pages) with proposals for the second phase will be initiated also in May on the basis of the webinar conclusions and achievements of the first phase with in-depth involvement of all key organisations and the objective to be finalised before summer 2026.

CONTACT

Please do not hesitate to contact the Secretariat of the UCLG Culture Committee should you need any additional information.

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ANNEX. Deliverables (all available at [the main page of the programme, here](#)).

Capacity-building

- Seven keys in Nouakchott
- Seven keys in Brazzaville
- Culture 21 Plus in Segou
- Culture 21 Plus in Esch-sur-Alzette
- Culture 21 Plus in Elefsina
- Youth Lab in Brazzaville
- Webinar 1: "Working to Boost the Connections between Regional Initiatives and Global Challenges".
- Webinar 2: "Connecting Regional Initiatives and Global Challenges".

Architecture

- First Meeting of the Culture Committee of UCLG-Africa, Brazzaville, July 2025
- Second meeting of the Culture Committee of UCLG-Africa, Nouakchott, March 2026
- Terms of Reference for the African Capital of Culture
- Explanatory note to the Terms of Reference of the African Capital of Culture
- Work programme 2026-2028 of the Culture Committee of UCLG-Africa
- Report: "Capitals of Culture Engaging for the Culture Goal"
- Dossier on the programme and the governance of Brazzaville as African Capital of Culture

Advocacy and events

- Forum of Mayors, Rabat, ACoC 1, May 2023
- UCLG Culture Summit in Dublin, November 2023
- UCLG Culture Summit in Barcelona, September 2025
- Final webinar, April 2026