



UCLG CULTURE SUMMIT

CULTURE IS ALWAYS IN THE ANSWER

**From local solutions to global
actions for today and tomorrow**

BARCELONA

26-28 SEPTEMBER 2025



THE SUMMIT

The 6th UCLG Culture Summit will be held in Barcelona from 26-28 September 2025. The Summit is the **main meeting point at global level** of cities, local governments and organisations that are committed to the effective implementation of policies and programmes on culture and sustainability.

Today, the world faces several critical challenges, ranging from the climate crisis to social exclusion, limited access to basic services and human rights for many citizens, severe inequalities between countries and regions, endangered rights and freedoms, disruptions and unprecedented transformations brought about by technology, armed conflicts, and political debates that frequently incite polarization. While this context can easily generate uncertainty and fear, across the world local communities also demonstrate energy, creativity and commitment to imagine and build a more just, caring and sustainable future.

Development will only be sustainable if it is linked to culture, to our citizens and present in all our actions. Culture has an important role to play in bridging the gap to bring societies closer together.

Daithí de Róiste, Lord Mayor of Dublin, host of the UCLG Culture Summit in 2023.

It is frequently in cities, towns and other human settlements, at the local level, where communities and local and regional governments act to tackle today's challenges and bring about a systemic transformation – one that bridges local actions and global trends, cares and guarantees equal rights for us all, is driven by well-informed, critical and empowered communities, and is based on solidarity.

Another culture is possible, based on harmonies: with nature, with the past, with each other and, last but not least, with change. Not only possible, also urgent.

Tunç Soyer, Metropolitan Mayor of Izmir in 2021, host of the UCLG Culture Summit.

The UCLG Culture Summit is designed to host these discussions and send evidence-based and clear messages to the international community. Sustainable development that ignores culture is impossible. Crises that do not acknowledge their cultural dimensions will never be overcome. Policies and programmes that do not fully involve cultural actors and aspects fail. In fact, UCLG and its members have continuously shown the crucial importance of local cultural policies and



programmes. The UCLG Pact for the Future of Humanity, adopted at the UCLG World Congress in Daejeon in October 2022, and the Local Social Covenant, to be released in November 2025, as the roadmaps for local public policy-making, both go in this direction. And so does the adoption of Culture 21 Plus (April 2025), which effectively invites active cities to go even one step further in this exercise, linking cultural rights, sustainability, care and transitions. UCLG frameworks are rights-based. Cultural rights are essential to leave no-one and no place behind.

Local and Regional Governments need to shout their positive practices, engage with national governments, go beyond the national framework and come to the international level and tell us about your successes and challenges.

Alexandra Xanthaki, UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights

The Summit will discuss progress and evolving engagement of the international community on the intersection between culture and sustainability. Engagement was very noticeable in Mondiacult 2022, the global Conference on Cultural Policies organised in Mexico City, where UNESCO referred to culture as a global public good, promoted cultural rights to be the foundation of cultural policies and endorsed the need to advocate for a stand-alone Culture Goal in the SDGs. UNESCO and many national governments explicitly and eloquently supported these 3 elements. But... it is also true that the battle to include culture in the global agenda is not yet won, with some actors still hesitating on the agency of cultural policies, and with some nations still doubting on the need for a Culture Goal.

The absence of a Cultural Goal within the 2030 Agenda is more felt than ever, having important consequences on its effective implementation. Culture can no longer be ignored as a key driver of sustainable development.

Ernesto Ottone, Assistant Director General for Culture, UNESCO.

This is why the 6th UCLG Culture Summit is called “**Culture is Always in the Answer**”.

AN EXCEPTIONAL SUMMIT

The Summit takes place in Barcelona, in recognition of the city's outstanding work on the relationship between cultural rights, public spaces and democracy.

This 2025 Summit will be somewhat exceptional, as it will be held on 26-28 September 2025, back-to-back and within the framework of **Mondiacult 2025**, the UNESCO Conference of Ministers for Culture (29 September – 1 October 2025).

It is also exceptional that the Summit is connected to the **Civic Agora**, a 5-day programme of public debates on culture and development, organised by the City Council of Barcelona, the Barcelona Provincial Council (Diputació), the Government of Catalonia, and Spain's Ministry of Culture, in the context of Mondiacult 2025 and in close cooperation with UNESCO. Participants in the Summit will be able to register for the sessions of the Civic Agora.

THE MAIN THEMES OF THE SUMMIT

- **A Culture Goal in the SDGs.** Why it is necessary and how you can be involved.
- **Economies of Care and Wellbeing.** Preparing the UCLG Local Social Covenant and the 2026 UCLG world Congress.
- **Culture, Equality and Gender policies and Sustainability.** Cultural actions towards more equal and more democratic cities and territories.
- **Culture and Climate Action.** Culture as a strategic approach to climate action and ecological transitions, and how actors are preparing for COP 30 in Belem and beyond.
- **Creative Cities and Cultural Policies.** How local programmes place people at the centre of policies.
- **Heritage, Identity and Communities.** Heritage, as a key enabler of cultural empowerment.
- Opening of the Call for the 7th edition of the **International Award UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21.**

THE SESSIONS

The Summit is a forum for knowledge-sharing, peer-learning and networking among cities and local governments. It is expected to gather approximately 150 participants from all world regions. Over three days, the Summit will combine plenary sessions, smaller and thematic parallel sessions, project presentations and networking spaces. Participants will also be able to take part in other segments of the Civic Agora, including speeches, debates, workshops and arts events.

Dates and times indicated here are as accurate as possible but subject to change.

PLENARIES

The plenary sessions will promote culture as an essential dimension of sustainable development and discuss actions towards a future Culture Goal in the global agenda for development.

WORKSHOPS

The Summit is also underpinned by the aim to foster in-depth learning on a wide range of issues related to culture and sustainable cities.

THE DRAFT PROGRAMME

Care, Wellbeing, Creativity and Sustainability. Friday 26 September, afternoon.

Workshop with the Night Czar of Barcelona at UCLG Global Headquarters.

Friday 26 September, evening.

Global Networks on Climate and Culture: Towards COP30, and beyond.

Saturday 27 September, morning.

Why We Need a Culture Goal. With all the global leaders of the Culture 2030 Goal campaign.

Saturday 27 September, morning.

Mondiacult 2025 is here: the key messages. With UCLG Leading Cities on cultural rights, sustainability, care and transitions.

Saturday 27 September, afternoon.

World Heritage, Local Identities and Communities.

Saturday 27 September, evening and Sunday 28 September, morning.

PACT FOR THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY

PEOPLE • PLANET • GOVERNMENT •



UCLG CONGRESS
WORLD SUMMIT OF LOCAL
AND REGIONAL LEADERS

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CULTURE IN UCLG: BACKGROUND

The mission of the world association of **United Cities and Local Governments – UCLG** is to be the united voice and world advocate of democratic local self-government, promoting its values, objectives and interests, through cooperation between local governments, and within the wider international community.

UCLG has been promoting the role of culture in sustainable cities since 2004 in:



In 2004, UCLG adopted the **Agenda 21 for culture**, a declaration with 67 articles that describes the relationship between local cultural policies and human rights, governance, sustainable development, participatory democracy and peace. In 2015, UCLG approved **Culture 21 Actions**, a toolkit with 9 Commitments and 100 Actions: it is the most complete and practical document on the relation between culture and sustainable development in cities and allows self-evaluation, policy innovation and peer-learning.



In 2010, the Executive Bureau of UCLG approved the document “**Culture: Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development**” in its World Congress held in Mexico City. This document engages local governments to explicitly include culture in a development model that ‘meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.



Since March 2013, UCLG’s role as facilitator of the **Global Taskforce** has included culture in local and regional governments’ inputs to the UN 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda. The **Statement of the 2nd World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments** resulting from this work, adopted in Quito in October 2016, establishes a commitment to ‘Integrate culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development and take action to foster heritage, creativity, diversity and peaceful co-existence’. In 2022, the Global Taskforce adopted a **Statement** calling UNESCO’s Mondiacult global conference on cultural policies to call for a dedicated Culture Goal in post-2030 global development agendas.



The document “**Culture in the Sustainable Development Goals. A Guide for Local Action**”, published by UCLG in 2018, presents information on each one of the 17 Goals, helps to understand why cultural issues are important and provides relevant examples.



The **OBS**. The Committee has developed a database containing almost 400 good practices on culture, cities and sustainable development. The tool allows





searches according to 3 criteria: the SDG, the Commitments of Culture 21 Actions, and keywords.



The **#culture2030goal campaign** includes global cultural networks. It advocates for a stronger place for culture throughout the implementation of the current global development agenda (the UN 2030 Agenda), and for the adoption of culture as a stand-alone goal in the post-2030 development agenda. In 2022, the campaign launched a concrete proposal for the Goal.



The **Rome Charter** was adopted by the UCLG World Council in November 2020 as a contribution to the global conversation on culture and development. The Charter describes the right to participate “fully and freely” in cultural life as vital to cities and communities, and promotes the cultural capabilities: Discover, Create, Share, Enjoy and Protect.



The zero draft of the **Culture Goal proposal** was launched by the #Culture2030Goal campaign in Mondiacult, UNESCO’s global conference on cultural policies, held in Mexico City in September 2022. The necessity of a Culture Goal for post-2030 sustainable development agendas was recognised and included in the Mondiacult final declaration. A revised draft will be presented in 2025 and will be discussed at the 6th UCLG Culture Summit in Barcelona.



The **UCLG Pact for the Future of Humanity: for the People, for the Planet, for the Government**, was adopted by the UCLG World Congress celebrated in October 2022 in Daejeon (Republic of Korea), as a key contribution towards the UN SDG Summit to be held in 2023 and the UN Summit for the Future to be held in 2024. The Pact embeds local and regional governments visions and aspirations and serve as the strategic vision for the World Organisation in the coming years. It promotes a sustainable local development based on communities and cultural rights, and advocates for cultural policies at a local, national and global scale to be explicit and operational.



Culture 21 Plus, the new frame of UCLG on culture was approved on 2 April 2025 by the Executive Bureau. It is the result of a 2-year wide co-creation process and it is structured around six fields: rights, communities, prosperity, territories, nature and governance.

The UCLG Committee on Culture is a unique platform, which gathers cities, associations and networks that foster the relationship between local cultural policies and sustainable development. The Committee is co-chaired by Buenos Aires, Lisbon and Mexico City, and is vice-chaired by Barcelona, Bilbao, Bogotá, Brazzaville, Izmir and Jeju. It has members and partners across all continents.



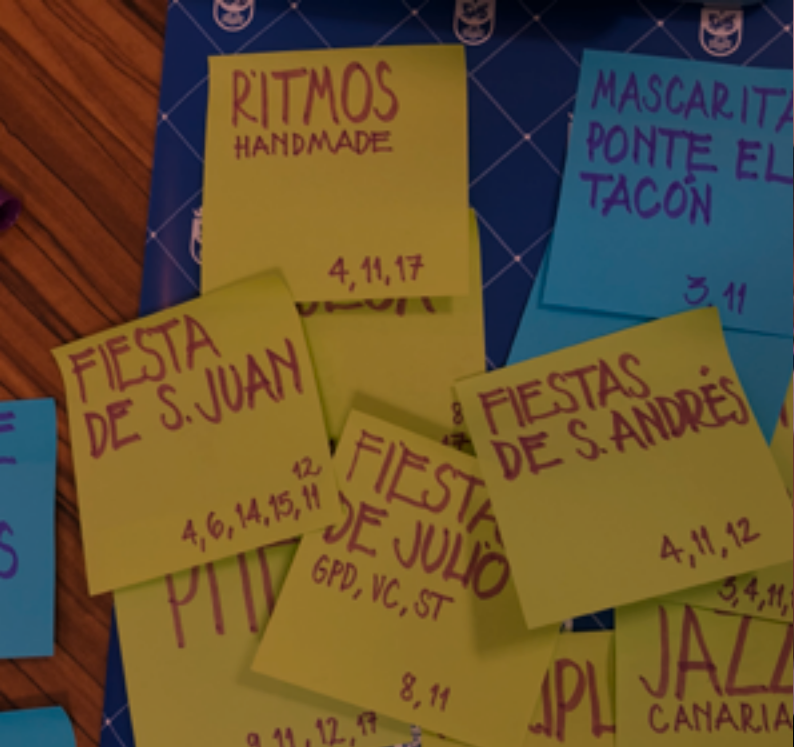
OUR PROGRAMMES ON “CULTURE IN SUSTAINABLE CITIES”

In the last decade, the UCLG Committee on Culture has established a set of capacity-building and peer-learning programmes. In particular, a wide range of cities in different world regions are currently participating in the following programmes:

- The **Seven Keys** is a workshop to integrate a cultural dimension in the localisation of the SDGs. Participants learn the cultural relevance of the SDGs, share knowledge and agree on a concrete list of achievable actions, the local “Seven Keys”, that will contribute significantly to the localization of the SDGs through culture policymaking. As of June 2025, Brazzaville, Bulawayo, Burgos, Concepción, Izmir, Lilongwe, Lisbon, el Puerto de la Cruz, Saint-Louis, Xi'an and Yoff have taken part in this programme.
- **Culture 21 Lab** is a short workshop on “Culture in Sustainable Cities”. It enables cities to self-evaluate their work in this field. It provides key basic information on the place of culture in sustainable development, and it is a useful way to raise awareness of this field among local stakeholders. As of June 2025, the programme has been completed in Greater Dandenong, Kaunas, Makati, Sant Cugat del Vallès and Santo André.
- **Pilot Cities** is our most complete programme and includes local awareness-raising, international peer-review, capacity-building, pilot local projects, public seminars and elaboration of good practices. As of June 2025, the Pilot Cities programme has supported the work of, or currently involves: Baie-Mahault, Chignahuapan, Córdoba, Cuenca, Elefsina, Escazú, Gabrovo, Galway, Konya, La Paz, Leeds, Mérida, Muriaé, Namur, Nova Gorica, Peñalolén, Santa Fe, Sinaloa, Swansea, Tenerife and Timisoara.
- The **Leading Cities** programme gives support to cities that have experience in the implementation of culture and sustainability, through measures in the areas of Cooperation and Learning (technical assistance, capacity-building, good practices), Leadership and Advocacy (participation in international events and processes) and Communication (website, social media). As of June 2025, the Leading Cities programme includes Abitibi-Temiscamingue, Barcelona, Bilbao, Bogotá, Buenos Aires, Concepción, Dublin, Esch-sur-Alzette, Izmir, Jeju, Jinju, Lisbon, Malmö, Mexico City, Porto Alegre, Rome, Terrassa, Vaudreuil-Dorion and Washington DC.

The Committee on Culture of UCLG also works with other cities, local and regional governments and the UCLG regional sections in order to tailor specific capacity-building and peer-learning programmes to their needs.

After the 6th UCLG Culture Summit, a **new wave of capacity-building and peer-learning programmes will be offered to UCLG members, based on Culture 21 Plus and its modules**. The Summit will be the place to finalise the shape of these programmes.



CULTURE 21 PLUS

Culture 21 Plus is the new frame of UCLG on culture in sustainable cities and communities. It builds on the Committee on Culture's previous and ongoing programmes and initiatives, including its learning and policy implementation activities. It is the natural evolution of the Agenda 21 for culture (2004) and Culture 21 Actions (2015).

Culture 21 Plus also considers other research, learning and advocacy initiatives implemented in this field, as well as the wealth of knowledge and good practices on culture and sustainability implemented by cities and local governments around the world, and other relevant research and expertise in the relevant areas.

An **extensive process of consultation and discussion** took place between May 2023 and March 2025, with workshops, seminars and webinars in Jinju, Mexico City, Lisbon, Elefsina, Esch-sur-Alzette, Puebla, Segou and Bogotá, the networks of cities and culture professionals in Thailand, Indonesia and France, as well as with the regional sections UCLG-MEWA and UCLG-Eurasia.

Culture 21 Plus is a dual-purpose tool that allows to (1) conduct a self- assessment of the current state of local cultural policies from the perspective of sustainability, and (2) design local cultural strategies based on cultural rights and sustainability.

Culture 21 Plus is also structured around **six main fields: rights; communities; prosperity; territories; nature; and governance**. Each one of the fields is further structured into a set of thematic areas.

Culture 21 Plus will be implemented through a set of modules, enabling participatory self-assessment, learning, and policy design and implementation. At this stage, the following modules are foreseen:

- Culture 21 Plus: the essentials.
- Culture 21 Plus: extended.
- The Rome Charter.
- Culture and Gender Equality.
- Culture and Climate Change.
- Cultural Heritage.
- Culture, Freedoms and Technology.
- Culture in Metropolitan Areas.

The flexible framework provided by Culture 21 Plus means that other modules may be devised in the future, at the request of partners or groups of cities, or in response to emerging needs.

The modules will be released in 2025 and 2026.



BARCELONA

Barcelona, with an area of 102 km², was founded by the Romans 2,000 years ago and has historically been a strategic point in the Mediterranean. Today, the city is home to more than 1.7 million inhabitants (3.2 million in the metropolitan area), and stands out among the cultural capitals of southern Europe for its international character, with residents born in more than 180 countries. The language of Catalonia is Catalan, which shares official status with Spanish.

Internationally recognised for its avant-garde creativity across various disciplines, Barcelona has been home to renowned artists such as Dalí, Miró, Picasso and Gaudí. One of the treasures of the capital of Catalonia is the modernist style, which includes nine sites declared World Heritage by UNESCO. The city also has 61 museums and major exhibition centres; 55 performing arts venues; 3 large auditoriums and 52 live music venues; 152 screens across 21 cinemas; a network of 11 public “creative factories” and 41 libraries in the public network, not including those belonging to other public and private entities and institutions. In 2024, performing arts venues received 3.1 million spectators, the library network 5.6 million visits, and museums and exhibition centres nearly 25 million visitors.

Culture is one of the city’s main assets. Barcelona cannot be understood without considering the role that cultural expressions play in its institutional, economic, and social spheres. Moreover, culture in Barcelona has historically been linked to the struggle for freedom and democracy, and the defence of language, which has been promoted by all sectors of civil society.

Barcelona is undoubtedly a city of talent and creativity par excellence, and multiple creative sectors thrive there. From the creative industries concentrated in the city—which include areas such as audio-visual, fashion, video games, technology and innovation, and account for 13% of employment and 12.2% of the city’s business fabric—to the fields of music, audio-visual and publishing, in which Barcelona has consolidated its strong leadership in recent years: UNESCO City of Literature since 2015; Guest of Honour at the Guadalajara International Book Fair (FIL) 2025; Barcelona participates in and leads major international projects with the support of a strong and active publishing sector.

Barcelona, aware of the new urban model and with the horizon set for 2035, is undergoing a period of major urban transformations. In many of these, culture is expected to play a central role, whether through the redesign of existing facilities to improve access to culture and foster collaboration with cultural agents and territories, or through the improved governance of the city’s major cultural institutions.



The cultural policies of Barcelona focus on guaranteeing access to culture in a decentralised way, through its public programmes, always in close coordination and collaboration with its network of centres at neighbourhood and district level, as well as the centres for artistic education. All these centres become cultural hubs across the territory, where artistic excellence drives change in this highly demographically diverse city. Barcelona also implements solid policies to support innovation, research and cultural production, and maintains consistent work lines with international networks, in which the city plays a key role.

Since its creation in 1996, the municipal Barcelona Institute of Culture (ICUB) has been the main driving force behind the city's cultural policies. With a budget of €165 million, it promotes support for the city's cultural sectors; participates in the governance of Barcelona's cultural institutions; directly manages various cultural facilities; works to decentralise culture in neighbourhoods; and organises and produces a programme of cultural festivals in the city.

The Barcelona City Council, through the ICUB, is a founding member of the UCLG Committee on Culture, where it has worked to promote Culture 21 as a founding principle for cultural development in cities.





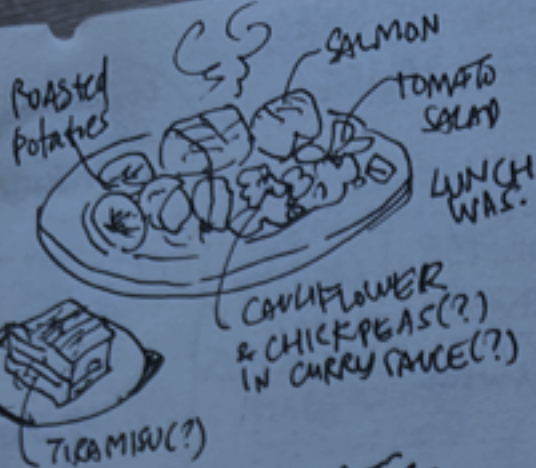
UNESCO'S MONDIACULT

The city of Barcelona will host the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development, Mondiacult 2025, from 29 September to 1 October 2025. Throughout three full days, the Centre de Convencions Internacional de Barcelona (CCIB) will welcome this intergovernmental meeting, held every four years, to address and discuss critical cultural policy priorities of our time.

UNESCO is shaping Mondiacult 2025 “in a context marked by growing inequalities, the climate crisis, conflicts, and rapid digital transformation, among others”. The Conference Mondiacult 2025 seeks “to strengthen multilateral collaboration and solidarity among countries while advancing culture’s role in the global development agenda through inclusive and constructive dialogue.” The Conference will focus on six priority domains outlined in the **Mondiacult 2022 Declaration**: cultural rights, digital technologies in the cultural sector, culture and education, the cultural economy, culture and climate action, and culture, heritage, and crisis. It will also pay attention to two focus areas: culture and peace, and artificial intelligence and culture, while highlighting key policy enablers such as data production and management tools, policy frameworks and standards, and models for multilateral cooperation.

The Conference Mondiacult 2025 will be based on the legacy of the Mondiacult 2022 Declaration, and will also include the key contributions on culture and development raised in the period 2022-2025 in other global forums such as the G20, the Brics, the G7, and the COPs 27, 28 and 29.

UCLG has been present in all the regional pre-conference events, organised by UNESCO between December 2024 and March 2025, in order to discuss initial priorities for Mondiacult 2025. Our messages were clear: the need to place cultural rights at the centre of cultural policies, the need to connect cultural policies with all the dimensions of sustainability and the transitions, as well as the crucial contribution a stand-alone Culture Goal would have to the post-2030 UN development agenda. This paragraph is also a word of gratitude for all those members and partners of UCLG that have joined these events.



OLYMPIC & PARA-OLYMPIC @PARIS

SHAPING A CULTURE GOAL

FOR EVERYONE

WORKING W/ SCHOOLS

ARTS & SPORTS

CULTURAL OLYMPICS

IMPACTS WORLD-WIDE

REINFORCING POLICIES

DEMOCRACY & SOCIETY ↔ IMAGES & PERCEPTION of IMAGES

CITY

"GOAL 18"

CULTURAL POLICIES for BOOKS STRASBOURG UNCAPITAL OF BOOK 2021

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FOR STUDENTS

↓ Refilled every 6 mos.

CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

EXPANDING to ELDERLIES

CHALLENGE!

[FRUSAL INNOVATION]

CIRCULAR CULTURE IZMIR 2021

[FIGHT FAKE NEWS] ecology & other issues

CITY OF CHILDREN

RAMALLAH ACTS UNDER OCCUPATION

BOGOTA LEARN HOW to CARE GENDER POLICY

INDEPENDENT CULTURE POLICY

CULTURE = RIGHTS

HUMAN RIGHTS CLIMATE

SDG

to ADDRESS challenges



DATA INFO SYSTEM

CITY SOCIETY

IMPACT MEASUREMENT

PROPER ASSESSMENT

ECONOMY POLITICAL SCIENCE

VISIONS OF CULTURAL RIGHTS



THE CIVIC AGORA

The Civic Agora is the result of a collective agreement between four public institutions: the Government of Catalonia, Barcelona City Council, Barcelona Provincial Council and the Spanish Ministry of Culture.

The Agora will discuss the key topics of Mondiacult in different venues of Barcelona between 26 September and 1 October, open to local and international audiences. The aims of the Agora include influencing Mondiacult debates, promoting civic engagement and fostering connections between local and international cultural actors. The Agora will also contribute to global discussions on the role of culture in building sustainable cities and defining a post-2030 Agenda that includes a stand-alone Culture Goal dedicated to culture.

The programme of the Agora will comprise sessions around six thematic axes:

- a. Cultural rights
- b. Cultural and linguistic diversity
- c. Technologies and artificial intelligence
- d. Culture and peace
- e. Cities and a Culture Goal in global agendas
- f. Cultural ecosystems

The UCLG Culture Summit will integrate two of its most important sessions into the Agora's programme, namely the workshop on culture and climate and the release of the full proposal of the Culture Goal.

All participants to the UCLG Culture Summit are invited to consider attending the Civic Agora.

Registration to the Civic Agora is free of charge.



ATTENDING THE SUMMIT IS ESSENTIAL TO

- Learn from Barcelona, a city with an exceptional cultural life and a very well-established cultural policy framework.
- Discover Culture 21 Plus and use the modules on self-evaluation and policy design.
- Learn about the UCLG Local Social Covenant and learn how you can use it to shape the future of your city with a comprehensive cultural perspective.
- Prepare your contribution to the UCLG World Congress in 2026.
- Be ready to candidate your city in the International Award UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21.
- Find out how to implement cultural rights at the local level.
- Deepen the relationship between cultural policies and gender equality.
- Make an explicit connection between cultural policies and the climate emergency.
- Balance the challenges of heritage, identity and wellbeing in sustainable tourism.
- Connect with the global cultural networks leading the campaign #Culture2030Goal.
- Engage in the advocacy for a Culture Goal and be vocal in the next steps, in 2026 and 2027.
- Take advantage of the events taking place in Barcelona around Mondiacult and its Civic Agora.

BUT ALSO, IF...

- You don't know enough about the issues listed above, and you are ready to learn!

REGISTRATION

Due to the exceptional coincidence of the UCLG Culture Summit and the UNESCO Mondiacult Conference, registration will close on 31 August 2025.

Registration is here: agenda21culture.net/summit/6th-uclg-culture-summit-2025.

#CultureSummit

www.agenda21culture.net

UCLG Culture Summit 2025

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