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UCLG Committee

# PEER-LEARNING VISIT ELEFSINA

JUNE 2023



2023 ΕΛΕΥΣΙΣ  
EUROPEAN CAPITAL  
of CULTURE  
2023ELEUSIS.EU



## ACTIVITY

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Peer-learning visit

## DATE

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8, 9 and 10 June 2023

## PLACE

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Elefsina, Greece

## PEOPLE INVOLVED

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### European Pilot and Leading Cities

Linda Devlin, Head of Creative Engagement, Dublin City Council Culture Company

Çiçek Ş. Tezer Yıldız, General Coordinator, İzmir Mediterranean Academy

Zekeriya Arabacı, Director, İzmir Mediterranean Academy

Lisa Turney, Principal Officer Culture Programmes, City Development, Leeds City Council

Emma Beverley, Creative Director, Leeds 2023

Pam Johnson, Leeds City Council

Ramona Laczko-David, Coordinator Proiect, Timisoara 2023 ECoC, Centrul de Proiecte

### Pilot City Expert

Clymene Christoforou, Director, D6: Culture in transit / Expert, UCLG Culture Committee

### Eleusis 2023 - Pilot City Team

Angeliki Lampiri, Director of Cultural Training

Athina Pavlidou, Head of Cultural Training and European Programmes  
Cultural Mediators Group

### Culture Action Europe and UCLG

Lars Ebert, Secretary General, Culture Action Europe

Kornelia Kiss, General Operations, Culture Action Europe

Natalie Giorgadze, Communication, Culture Action Europe

Marta Llobet, Learning and Advocacy Officer, UCLG Committee on Culture

PEER  
LEARNING





# PEER LEARNING VISIT IN ELEFSINA

## INTRODUCTION

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.

The city of Elefsina is a Pilot City of the UCLG Committee on Culture since 2019. As an activity within the **Elefsina Pilot City programme**, the first peer learning visit hosted by Elefsina was held from 8 to 10 June 2023. During three days, representatives of four Pilot and Leading Cities, Dublin, Izmir, Leeds and Timisoara, were invited to meet and exchange in Elefsina, European Capital of Culture 2023 alongside the cities of Timisoara and Veszprém, on the occasion the celebration of two relevant cultural events:

- a) the conference **BEYOND THE OBVIOUS 2023 HANDLE WITH CARE | CULTURE FOR SOCIAL WELL-BEING** (7-9 JUNE 2023),
- b) the **9th CULTURE NEXT Meeting** (10-11 June 2023).

'Beyond the Obvious' (BtO) is the annual conference of **Culture Action Europe**, the major European network of cultural networks, organisations, artists, activists, academics and policymakers, and partner of the UCLG Committee on Culture for the **Pilot Cities Programme – Europe**.

**Culture Next** is a network dedicated to mutual support and collaboration between European cities currently or formerly in candidacies for the European Capital of Culture title.

## OBJECTIVES

The visit to Elefsina addressed the progress of the ECoC 2023 policies and programmes, as well as the relationship of culture, health and the UN 2030 Agenda, and its implications at a local level, this being themes relevant to the work programmes of all invited cities.

More specifically, aims of the visit included the following:

- To present and discuss the general context of cultural policies in Elefsina, in the framework of the Pilot Cities programme and the Capital of Culture initiative, and how they relate to local sustainable development.

- To become familiar with key cultural agents and projects in Elefsina, including the Eleusis 2023 team and the Cultural Mediators Group, which was created specifically to support the implementation of the Pilot Cities programme by citizens and cultural actors.
- To learn more about the role of culture in the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, including positive and negative interactions.
- To address the place of culture in well-being in cultural and health policies and in local sustainable development, as exemplified by some projects in the context of the CultureforHealth initiative developed by Culture Action Europe.
- To provide an informal networking space for participating cities and other stakeholders to meet and exchange views.

The visit involved participants from the Pilot and Leading Cities of Dublin, Izmir, Leeds and Timisoara, as well as the host city, including the Eleusis 2023 team and the Cultural Mediators Group, the expert involved in the programme, and representatives of Culture Action Europe and UCLG. 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 the [page](#) of Elefsina as a Pilot City.

## PEER LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The main activities in which participants of the peer learning visit participated, which were combined with some other activities of Beyond the Obvious and the Culture Next meeting, were the following:

### Day 1 – 8 June 2023

Pilot Cities City Tour. Members of the Elefsina Pilot Cities programme invited guests to take a tour around the city in the evening of 8 June (18-19.30h). Participants enjoyed a gentle guide to the city, its people and the cultural programme as a first step of the visit, which allowed for the discovery of local cultural assets and EcoC 2023 activities, and the reunion with local and international cultural actors. The tour mixed with the special guided tour of Mystery 139 Alienation by the local photographer Vangelis Gkinis, Leonidas Kanellopoulos Exhibition Centre Indoor Space.





### Day 2 – 9 June 2023

In the morning of 9 June, representatives from the invited cities attended some activities of the **Beyond the Obvious** Conference. Among others, those included the **presentation of the CultureForHealth project** and the presentation of the “CultureForHealth Report. Culture’s contribution to health and well-being. A report on evidence and policy recommendations for Europe”, by Culture Action Europe and other organisations. Mayor of Elefsina, Argyris Oikonomou, and the Vicepresident of the European Commission, Margaritis Schinas, addressed the audience with two speeches.

After that, participants from Dublin, Izmir, Leeds and Timisoara were invited to have lunch together with members of the Eleusis 2023 team, Angeliki Lampiri and Athina Pavlidou, the Cultural Mediators Group, including Voula Androni, Stavroula Baloka, Aspasia Stavropoulou, Thanasis Lakrintis, Katerina Marinaki, Yannis Syleounis, Yannis Tsiatsianis, Panagiotis Gkiokas, Sofia Laskou, Maria Mitropoulou and Eirini Giovanou, as well as expert Clymene Christoforou and Culture Action Europe and UCLG Committee on Culture representatives, Lars Ebert, Kornelia Kiss and Marta Llobet. The gathering provided an informal space for participants and hosts to meet and learn from their experiences in the framework of the Pilot and Leading Cities programmes.



In the afternoon, participants joined the workshop “**Care-cities: Strategies for Enhancing Urban Well-being through Culture**”. This activity was devoted to learning from policies, programmes and activities related to arts, culture, health and well-being. Representatives from Pilot and Leading Cities were invited to introduce themselves and share related local initiatives. The workshop took place from 14.30h to 16.30h at the Workers’ Union.







In the evening, participants enjoyed the **Mystery 49 Symposia in Kalympaki** neighbourhood, Sant Demeter Church Square, with the rest of participants and organisers of the BtO Conference and Culture Next cities. That activity brought to an end the BtO Conference, amidst traditional folklore dances and local gastronomy.

### **Day 3 – 10 June 2023**

In the morning of the last day of the visit, participants joined some of the activities of the **9th “CULTURE NEXT” Meeting**, including presentations about this network of cities, to which some of the visiting cities belong, and their interests, such as the legacy of the ECoCs over time and the measurement of the impact of cultural activities in terms of their relationship with the achievement of the SDGs.

In the afternoon, and following the previous activities, the visiting cities participated in the workshop “**A cultural boost to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**”, which took place from 15h to 17h at the Workers’ Union. In this session, Marta Llobet from the UCLG Culture Committee presented the interlinkages between culture and the SDGs, deepening the role of culture as an enabler of sustainable people-centred development. An innovative analysis on the positive and negative interaction of cultural elements with the SDGs was showcased as well, as an approach for the design and implementation of rights-based sustainable cultural policies, but also to





show, synthetically, how strongly cultural actions, programmes and policies influence the achievement of the SDGs. During the workshop, participants had the opportunity to discuss exchange initiatives related to the topic in groups and in plenary. Finally, Marta Llobet recalled that in the UCLG Culture Summit in Dublin, to be held from 28 November to 1 December 2023, after the UN SDG Summit, the topic would be further expanded and discussed, and invited participants to the Summit.





After the official activities of the third day of the visit, an informal gathering with some members of the Cultural Mediators Group, including Voula Androni, Stavroula Baloka, Aspasia Stavropoulou, Thanasis Lakrintis, Katerina Marinaki, Yannis Syleounis, Yannis Tsiatsianis, Panagiotis Gkiokas, Sofia Laskou, Maria Mitropoulou and Eirini Giovanou, as well as expert Clymene Christoforou and UCLG representative Marta Llobet allowed to discuss next steps within the Pilot Cities programme and the legacy of ECoC 2023 for the city of Elefsina.





# REFLECTIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

As the visit concluded, participants were invited to reflect on the conclusions they had extracted. Here are some of their views:<sup>1</sup>

— **Linda Devlin, Dublin City Council**

This was a very worthwhile trip, despite a long journey time (took a full day, with some delays at Athens airport) which unfortunately led to me missing the city walking tour on Thursday evening.

On Friday there was a presentation on the CultureForHealth report (Nov 2022) by some of the research team. This report synthesises existing evidence on the positive effect of arts and cultural activities on health and well-being. It was insightful to learn of the work going on around policy development on Culture and Health and Wellbeing at an EU level, and heartening to hear the VP of European Commission strongly indicate that the EC are committed to policy developments and large-scale funding in the area. The evidence presented in the report is also useful as an advocacy tool and to inform our work in Dublin and assist with grant applications and further learnings.

Having lunch together with the pilot cities was a lovely way to begin connections. For me, it was my first time to meet everyone, and doing this over food is very effective. It was great too to meet some of the local Cultural Mediators group and hear their perspectives on what ECoC means to them. The connections made at lunch became a good foundation for the rest of the visit.

At the 'care-cities' workshop it was really interesting to hear more detail about the work of Leeds, Izmir and Timisoara. I also got to share a little of our work on 'AWE' and our Tea & Chats programme in Dublin. I felt it was beneficial to have this exchange of experience and hear some success stories from across the EU related to culture for well-being and health.

Marta's workshop on Culture and the SDGs was excellent. It was exciting to get a first look at this brand-new work which attempts to map out the relationship between culture and each of the 17 SDGs. This will be published soon. I also had an opportunity at this workshop to share basic information on the Dublin UCLG Culture Summit.

Overall it was beneficial to connect with so many cultural agencies/organisations from across Europe. I was able to meet and identify potential future project partners and find out more about Pilot Cities, and the Culture Next mobility fund. It was also a great opportunity to strengthen links and the European dimension of our work, and to tell lots of people about the Dublin Culture Summit and share contact details.

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<sup>1</sup> Contributions have been edited slightly, for the sake of brevity.

— Lisa Turney, Leeds City Council

This peer learning visit in the context of the BtO Conference and the Culture Next meeting was a great experience to meet cultural sector colleagues from all over Europe. Having an overlap between the two networks enabled a wider opportunity for networking and relationship building. These will really support Leeds, when considering our position on the international stage. The CN agenda differed from the BtO agenda but with a good cross-over of delegates for both.

Reflections

- Opportunity to make new contacts and deepen working relationships beyond the conference themes was welcomed
- More time with the SDGs considering the respective influences of SDGs and culture
- Elefsina Manifesto – a great opportunity to see if and how the manifesto might consolidate the progress made in the field of arts and health
- Experiencing Elefsina, its heritage, contemporary stories and future ambitions was a sincere privilege.
- Let's not forget to promote art/culture for itself as well as what arts/culture can do. Rooting the conference in a place with lots of opportunity to experience art and appreciate artists and creative communities was fabulous.

To tie in the opportunity for a city walking tour and visit a photographic exhibition (Mystery 139 'Alienation' by local photographer Vangelis Gkinis) on the ailments and workplace accidents in Elefsina, was a great privilege. The building itself was also of historic importance, and the tour provided by Elefsina, European Capital of Culture (ECoC) hosts and the artist themselves was a unique experience. This was followed by further visits to the amphitheatre and port, where the rich history of Elefsina was shared.

The workshop "Care-cities: Strategies for Enhancing Urban Well-being through Culture" was a great opportunity for Leeds to talk about successful initiatives, such as: the Leeds Arts Health & Wellbeing Network (LAHWN)<sup>2</sup>, the Social Progress Index (SPI)<sup>3</sup> our recent launch of becoming a Marmot City<sup>4</sup>. For Leeds, becoming a Marmot City means working with colleagues from the Institute of Health Equity (IHE) to be part of a Marmot programme of work with the aim of reducing health inequalities. Hearing what other cities are developing, for example, Oulu's development of a Cultural Wellbeing Plan, to increase the well-being and health of the population through culture, was of great interest and insight.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lahwn.co.uk/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.inclusivegrowthleeds.com/leeds-social-progress-index>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/new-marmot-places-work-announced-in-leeds>

Named after Professor Sir Michael Marmot, Director UCL Institute of Health Equity, The Marmot Review into health inequalities in England was published on 11 February 2010 and proposed an evidence-based strategy to address the social determinants of health – the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age and which can lead to health inequalities.

The Parallel workshop 'Pushing the policy and practice in your country' moderated by Mafalda Damaso and Polona Torkar was a particularly interesting workshop which helped me to contextualise the practice of arts health and wellbeing in relation to nearly 40yrs in the industry. It highlighted the relatively slow progress that 'arts in health' and 'arts for health' has made over the last 20years. The session provided some excellent examples of research being undertaken and the robust approaches to evidence gathering and diverse impact measures across a range of projects.

The Working Group "A cultural boost in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals" session involved considering progress made in evidencing the potential for culture – the analysis of the interactions between culture and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The session provided invaluable opportunity to discuss culture and SDGs with other European cities confirming the importance and relevance of SDGs across the continent. I would welcome more time to focus on this – including opportunity to consider how SDGs influence the language we use about culture in our city policies and promotional activities.

Leeds is keen to maintain and develop our working relationship with UCLG and will explore potential to do this. It should be noted however that, like many other UK cities, Leeds is experiencing significant financial challenges which might reduce our ability to travel. Opportunities to connect, learn and engage with cities in diverse ways e.g., online, would be very welcome.

**— Ramona Lackzo-David, Timisoara 2023 ECoC**

Participation in day 1 of the conference BEYOND THE OBVIOUS 2023 HANDLE WITH CARE | CULTURE FOR SOCIAL WELL-BEING:

The purpose of this was to assimilate information about the report made by the Culture Action Europe team on the contribution of culture to people's well-being and health. I had active discussions with a number of organisations that are included in the compendium of good practices in the Culture for Health Report, namely: the non-profit organisation Eyes of Light - Arts in Health Hub, Arts on Prescription (AoP) - a programme in the Baltic region, bringing together 7 different countries, the non-profit organisation Athens Museum for Children.

During the guided tour of the city we got to know better the cultural program proposed by Elefsina 2023 - European Capital of Culture and initiatives that discuss the contribution of culture to the well-being of the citizens of the city, were also valuable in making connections to similar initiatives happening in Timisoara in the framework of the ECOC year.

Participation in day 2 of the conference BEYOND THE OBVIOUS 2023 HANDLE WITH CARE | CULTURE FOR SOCIAL WELL-BEING:

The networking lunch with member cities of the Pilot Cities network and the Secretary General of Culture Action Europe, Lars Ebert, was a great opportunity to

have an open dialogue about policy initiatives of Culture Action Europe which could help the management team of Timisoare European Capital of Culture programme to identify projects and programmes that are relevant for the development of the Legacy strategy regarding the ECOC Programme as well as the cultural strategy of the city.

I actively participated in the workshop “Strategies for Enhancing Urban Well-being through Culture” with the Pilot Cities Dublin, Izmir and Leeds. During the panel I presented concrete projects from the Timisoara 2023 Cultural Programme that contribute to this goal.

The CultureNext Conference included a keynote speech by European Capital of Culture programme monitoring expert Beatriz Garcia, who presented best practices in monitoring and evaluating the impact of ECOC programmes. It was the chance to have again an open dialogue on how to measure the impact of an ECOC programme on the cultural development of the city holding the title and which are the best strategies to follow in this regard, from the way the evaluation framework is designed to the interpretation of the data and results.

The workshop “A cultural boost in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals” was led by UCLG Culture Commission representative - Marta Llobet, presenting the relationship between culture and the Sustainable Development Goals. On this occasion I was able to identify a number of projects from the Timisoara ECOC programme that clearly contribute to the sustainable development goals, especially to Goal 11.Sustainable Cities and Communities, namely the construction of a vertical green garden in the city centre of Timisoara called **Tree Nursery. 1306 Plants for Timisoara**, which has become a platform to discuss about the future of the city with regards to its environment and people’s role and experience in shaping the urban development of the city.

— **Çiçek Ş. Tezer, İzmir Mediterranean Academy**

Workshop Care Cities: Strategies for Enhancing Urban Well-being through Culture

The workshop provided a good opportunity to share the ideas about the relation between culture, health and well-being upon concrete examples and experiences. The form of the workshop including participants without formal presentations and use of stage, aiming to gather all the participants on the same floor was encouraging to share and be a part of the discussion.

The main question of the workshop about the urban well-being through culture opened for me the way to question the practices we have within this perspective and to notice the indirect relations of our work with the context, while hearing about specific works conducted in different parts of the continent. On the other side, because of the time limitation of the organisation, the time of the workshop was not enough for the participants to share the experiences in relation to the context of their organisations in a proper way. For the same reason, the discussion could not broaden and deepen, although it had the potential to.

### Workshop\_ A Cultural Boost in the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

The topic of this workshop was much more related to our working experience in İzmir, comparing the first workshop. SDGs have been an important factor for the Mediterranean Academy, especially during the Leading City project development process, however, the workshop gave us the chance to re-evaluate past and present cultural activities in this context. It was good for us to reconsider the goals, led by the workshop questions developed at the city scale.

Like the first workshop, this workshop had the disadvantage of time limitation. If we could have more time to discuss deeper about developed answers of the working groups, we could create the ground to talk about specific problematics or examples related to the goals. In this way, we could maybe unveil sustainability related cultural problems with the help of SDGs and UCLG could provide mind-opening feedbacks from various places' experiences.

### Pilot-Leading Cities Lunch

The lunch was the best social meeting within the program which brought us together as the Pilot-Leading Cities' representatives following similar paths. The group in the lunch had ideal amount of people in order to connect all the participants around the same topic in conversation, besides the moments in which smaller groups had small conversations provided good opportunity to build closer relations with each other. This meeting strengthened the feeling of being a part of a community as the Pilot-Leading Cities. Knowing each other better, opens the way for possible collaborations and sustain the possible dialogue in near future. In addition, learning from the ECoC Elefsina experience and knowing the representatives of Culture Action Europe closer were also very good for us as the representatives of İzmir.

### Pilot Cities City Tour

This tour was a gentle introduction for us to the dense program in Elefsina. With this tour, it was good to learn about the city and its industrial, economic, social, spatial, and cultural background. The event provided the opportunity to learn about the approach the Elefsina team built while creating the ECoC program, because we visited a selection of various parts of the program with different characteristics like interactive activities including the audience and critically developed project with a photo exhibition.

This walk, as well as the Culture Next City Walk were fruitful events to experience and learn while being a part of a physical activity in the place. I think, increasing the number of activities inviting participants to move through the place and using different spaces enrich cultural programs. In this way, people start to feel a part of the place and the program itself.



# CONTACTS

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