

## TWINNING FOR A CULTURE OF SUSTAINABILITY, HANNOVER



**CROSS-SECTORIAL INTERCULTURAL COOPERATION**  
**CULTURAL EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES PARTICIPATION**  
ATTRACTIVENESS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
CITIZENSHIP DIVERSITY **ENVIRONMENT**

### 1. Context

Hannover, the capital of Lower Saxony with about 520,000 inhabitants, is amongst the top 15 cities in Germany. It is a "green city" with the largest urban forest in Europe and numerous green spaces on the banks of the Leine river. It is known internationally for its Hannover and CeBIT fairs taking place since 1947. The county borough is part of the Hannover region and of the metropolitan region of Hannover-Braunschweig-Göttingen-Wolfsburg. Hannover is home to several universities. It is an international city, where people from 178 nations live, is characterised by a welcoming culture and it takes immigrants responsibly. Hannover has experience and expertise in the field of sustainable technologies as well as environmental and climate protection and is characterised by a vibrant civil society with a high level of citizens participation. The city aims to be 100% carbon-neutral by 2050.

Since the end of the 1990s, the Agenda 21 Office of Hannover included cultural aspects in numerous projects such as exhibitions, festivals, in the project "Migrants for Agenda 21" with the association of "Wandelwerte e.V. Thus, the important role of culture in the awareness-raising work for sustainable development was recognised and strengthened and a larger target group was reached.

These experiences were put together and expanded in cooperation with the Cultural Office in 2010 with the **aware&fair** project. This marks the start of the **Twinning for a Culture of Sustainability** programme which makes the cultural processing of global issues of the future the central pillar of twinning cooperation. The aware&fair project disseminates the knowledge and spreads the awareness about fair trade and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) through education work in the fields of media, design, theatre and music in Hannover and the involved cities.

As for the development policy in the city of Hannover, it is worth noting that in the aware&fair project, it was worked for the first time together with the partner city of Blantyre in Malawi in an international project team on an equal footing, thus developing a mutual understanding of the local situation and needs. In the project team and at public events, the understanding of "development" was also discussed with partners from North, South, East and West. With this project, the Council order to implement the MDG in the city of Hannover was carried out successfully. A number of cultural institutions and stakeholders in Hannover and the partner cities (the Junge Schauspiel, Blantyre Art Festival) were made aware of the topics and roped in for further cooperation. The Friends of Malawi and twinning of Hannover and Blantyre existing for more than 50 years could also be used. Through the establishment of networks and the positive experience from the professional and personal work with partner cities, the two follow-up projects, namely the **International Youth Theatre Festival fairCulture** and the **KlimaKunstStädte** symposium were developed in 2013.

IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT IN THE AWARE&FAIR PROJECT, IT WAS WORKED FOR THE FIRST TIME TOGETHER WITH THE PARTNER CITY OF BLANTYRE IN MALAWI IN AN INTERNATIONAL PROJECT TEAM ON AN EQUAL FOOTING, THUS DEVELOPING A MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE LOCAL SITUATION AND NEEDS.

## 2. Hannover and culture

A comprehensive securing of basic cultural needs with the goal of "culture for all!" is a guideline for Hannover's cultural policy ([www.hannover.de](http://www.hannover.de), AktivPass Art, Culture and Education). Through a balanced funding policy, the city reliably provides broad sections of the population with a cultural offer in the various fields of arts at affordable prices and with low access thresholds. In the process, the promotion of culture would aim at maintaining the diversity of the cultural landscape in Hannover and enriching the quality of the cultural events offered at the same time. The priority is the promotion of free, innovative, contemporary artistic expression that has wide range and diverse manifestations.

To this end, the city grants institutional funding for over a hundred cultural institutions, and advises, coordinates, organises and promotes musical clubs, choral groups and choirs, theatre artists, film-makers, artists, literary associations and organisers and writers through financial assistance. Special emphasis is placed, among other things, on promoting the high-quality museum landscape as well as on the cultural children and youth education or the district and social culture. The current application as a UNESCO City of underscores Hannover's special qualities as a music city with an outstanding jazz and choral scene. Among other activities, the expansion of the creative industry of Hannover is promoted by the "KreHtiv" network. In 1995, the Council committed itself to the objectives of Agenda 21. For the coordination of the Agenda process in Hannover, there is an own Agenda 21 and Sustainability Office in the municipal administration since then. Principles of Agenda 21 for culture are also found in the cultural and political policy and culture funding practices of Hannover. With **Twinning for a Culture of Sustainability**, the contents of the Agenda 21 for culture were explicitly included.

Twinning, as a "municipal foreign policy", contributes to the important socio-political developments of their time. They are a field of international relations, in which the non-governmental institutions and civil society act politically at regional and local level. Twinning experiences a new life: Challenges to be globally solved and their strategies for living in communities are increasingly becoming the center of attention. Think globally, act in a networked way: The special potential of twinning is to work at the

local level with global issues: education, diversity, sustainable development, migration, democratic participation, human rights, peacekeeping.

The **Twinning for a Culture of Sustainability** programme also considers culture as the fourth pillar of sustainability and thus refers explicitly to the Agenda 21 for culture. It does not only include culture on an equal footing, but also focuses explicitly on the artistic and cultural cooperation of the partner cities. Thus, the specific potential of arts and culture for education and creative innovation in the society, in general, and sustainable development, in particular, were taken into account. The local cultural policy and the local cultural landscape benefit from the programme through international exchange, interdisciplinary integration and the expansion of the target groups.

### 3. Aim, goals and implementation of the project

#### 3.1. Aim and specific goals

Objective of the **Twinning for a Culture of Sustainability** programme is to use the potential of twinning through interdisciplinary project work on topics such as education, cultural diversity, sustainable development, migration, democratic participation, human rights and peacekeeping, to make a contribution to an equally responsible and globally accessible as well as free, innovative and creative social development. Here, the aesthetic, artistic expression plays a central role in the reflection, communication and innovation for sustainable development.

THROUGH A BALANCED FUNDING POLICY, THE CITY RELIABLY PROVIDES BROAD SECTIONS OF THE POPULATION WITH A CULTURAL OFFER IN THE VARIOUS FIELDS OF ARTS AT AFFORDABLE PRICES AND WITH LOW ACCESS THRESHOLDS.

#### **Short-term goals**

- Promotion of personal encounters between cultures
- Promotion and networking of cultural workers, mediators, initiatives and associations
- Creation of international networks within the town twinning and beyond

#### **Long-term goals**

- Promoting inter-cultural learning and reflection of cultural identities
- Socially relevant and forward-looking cooperation in the area of local politics
- Promotion of social inclusion, sustainable development and cultural diversity

The **Twinning for a Culture of Sustainability** programme focuses on the topics of sustainable development, North-South dialogue, inter-cultural and creative city development. Here, culture is understood both as an engine of development and a medium for social dialogue as well as a location factor. The artistic disciplines receive key functions for project development within professional and interdisciplinary collaborations. The program intensifies its involvement in thematic networks, the expansion through new cooperation partners in existing partner cities and the addition of new twinning or friendships. Within the **Twinning for a Culture of Sustainability** programme, three flagship projects have been carried out since 2010.

#### 3.2. Aware&fair - South-East-West dialogue for the MDGs

The MDG, were adopted by the United Nations in 2000. Not only should the signatory states actively contribute, but also the urban society. On this occasion, the project aware&fair was started by the agenda 21 Office and the Cultural Office of the City of Hannover with support from the European Union, together with the Fair Trade Town networks in Germany and Poland and the cities of Blantyre (Malawi), Poznań (Poland), Miskolc (Hungary) and Litomerice (Czech Republic) in March 2010. Due to the various project activities, (video training for the so-called MDG reporters, concerts, seminars, school projects, cooperation with the Faculty of Design, theatre workshops and city games), many people were made aware of the MDG in the South-East-West dialogue and motivated for responsible

consumption and the purchase of fair trade products. The project comprised the following phases: Preparation and research, communication and dissemination, implementation of activities, visualisation, evaluation and follow-up. Key barriers in the project were to coordinate and implement a large number of project activities in a short time frame in very different local conditions. Key results of the project were the first-time collaboration with Blantyre in an international project team on an equal footing. With this project, the Council order to implement the MDG in the city of Hannover was decisively carried out. During the project, a number of cultural institutions and stakeholders in Hannover and the partner cities were made aware of the topics and roped in for further cooperation. The associations of aware&fair e.V. and Friends of Malawi and twinning arrangement of Hannover and Blantyre jointly work towards achieving the project goals.

## TWINNING EXPERIENCES A NEW LIFE: CHALLENGES TO BE GLOBALLY SOLVED AND THEIR STRATEGIES FOR LIVING IN COMMUNITIES ARE INCREASINGLY BECOMING THE CENTER OF ATTENTION.

### 3.3. International Youth Theatre Festival *fairCulture* – The world of tomorrow

Young student-theatre groups from Hannover, Poznań, Blantyre, Ghana, Palestine and Turkey met at the international youth theatre festival *fairCulture* and exchanged ideas about a fair future using the medium of performing arts. The most important link was the numerous national and inter-school drama and dance workshops before and in between the performances. New contacts and interactions could take place here. In the symposium "Theatre Network Impact Development" that was held simultaneously, theatre professionals and students of performing arts from the University of Accra, Ghana and the University of Leibniz in Hannover, reflected on the proceedings. What do these projects contribute towards the discussion on fairness and participation? The special approach of the conference was the discussion of the interfaces between artistic and social work as well as a close integration of theory and practice. The international theatre event was organised by the Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft (BAG) Spiel&Theater, by the Youth theatre of Hannover as well as the Agenda 21 and the Cultural office of Hannover in collaboration with national and international partners. As an outcome of the festival, a declaration was signed in which the organisers make an appeal to improve the global conditions for the development of the human, artistic and scientific qualities of the people. The project went through the following phases: Preparation in the project council and working groups in Hannover and with the international partners, simultaneous initiation of the exchange program between Accra and Leibniz Universities, conducting the festival and the conference follow-up. A significant obstacle in the project was the collaboration problems between the organisers due to the difference in institutional interests and requirements, and sometimes lack of support for the project from their own institution. An important outcome was the interaction between the youth in host families and on the stage, which resulted in intense debate on the topic and many warm friendships in a short duration. Another successful result is that the festival was a motivation to organise a partner festival in the partner city of KlimaKunstStädte Symposium.



In view of the increasing change in climate, the KlimaKunstStädte symposium, attended by more than 120 participants from Hannover and renowned guests from Bristol, Poznań, Blantyre and

Rouen, examined the extent to which artistic approaches can contribute towards changing the present life styles, the basic conditions required for cultural projects and how an aesthetic approach to the sustainability issue should look like. The symposium was organised under the master plan "100% for climate protection" of Hannover and largely supported. Adrienne Goehler, former President of the School of Fine Arts in Hamburg, and Janek Müller, curator of the "Über Lebenskunst" festival at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, were invited to talk. Individual aspects (how to organise a sustainable cultural event? What are the global dimensions of sustainability?) were addressed in table discussions and tested in workshops. Examples for implementation were already given, e.g. by decorating the venue creatively using recycled materials and by providing local and organic food in the interactive kitchen. A meeting was held only with the guests from the partner cities, in which initial ideas were developed for an international practical project (2015-2017). The project was undertaken over a year by a local artist, a local environmental activist and a Hannover agent and coordinated with partner cities involved and local partners. A major obstacle was the awareness of the topic was internationally different, which resulted in difficulty in understanding during the preparation or while looking for speakers from the partner cities. An important result was both the target groups of cultural professionals and environmental initiatives were addressed and, thanks to the high quality of the presentations and the new discussion formats, a lot of interest was generated on the topic and a dialogue has been started for future collaboration.

OBJECTIVE (...) IS TO USE THE POTENTIAL OF TWINNING THROUGH INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECT WORK ON TOPICS SUCH AS EDUCATION, CULTURAL DIVERSITY, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, MIGRATION, DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION, HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEACEKEEPING, TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO AN EQUALLY RESPONSIBLE AND GLOBALLY ACCESSIBLE AS WELL AS FREE, INNOVATIVE AND CREATIVE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.

## 4. Impacts

### 4.1. Impact on the local government

The council of Hannover is increasingly accepting partnerships between cities in its socio-political importance. At the beginning of 2014 it was decided to develop a concept for another partnership with one or two partner cities in Turkey. For promoting Hannover as the UNESCO City of Music, the intensification of the partnership with Blantyre plays an important role. After the aware&fair project, Hannover's award as the capital of fair trade has been renewed.

### 4.2. Impact on culture and its local workers

The local artists discover the partner cities as an extension of their own opportunities and thus as an indirect promotion of culture. New contacts and interdisciplinary networks are formed between players from the field of art and those of sustainability. The African city of Blantyre is also becoming increasingly interesting for the collaboration and is "getting closer".

### 4.3. Impact on the territory and on population

The rising demand of citizens for thematic projects shows a change is taking place in understanding partnerships between cities, where the significance of these partnerships are increasing and their options for inter-communal networking and shaping the future jointly will be used fully.

### 4.4. Cross-sectorial impacts

Partnerships between cities are formed as a mainstream task and can affect a wide range of issues and target audiences through the international exchange. The projects under the **Partnerships between cities for a culture of sustainability** have specifically helped in increasing the willingness to collaborate between the fields of culture and environment. This is demonstrated by the inter-departmental collaboration for planning a practical project **KlimaKunstStädte**. The project also

extends to civic associations, e.g. the umbrella organisation of the allotment gardens in Hannover. In addition, there are numerous other civil society initiatives, like the culture of change initiative, that are getting more and more involved. By integrating the project into the master plan 100% for climate protection of Hannover, partners in the business and other areas of administration are also accessed. Gender aspects were also addressed in the performances at the **International youth theatre festival fairCulture**.



#### 4.5. Continuity

Partnerships between cities are long-term agreements between cities and hence provide the ideal framework for continuous collaboration. Annual funds are provided in the city budget for partnership exchange projects. The **Partnerships between cities for a culture of sustainability** project is therefore continued for a long-term. For larger, multi-national projects, external funds are acquired. In collaboration with the cultural office, the climate protection department and agenda 21 and the sustainability office of the city of Hannover and six other European partner cities, a project application has been submitted for a follow-up project of the **KlimaKunstStädte** symposium.

The capital city of Hannover is intensifying the **Collaboration with the partner city of Blantyre** and is funding the **Cooperation between cultural professionals from Hannover and Blantyre** especially as part of the promotion UNESCO-City of Music, the KlimaKunstStädte project and in preparation for the 50th anniversary of the partnership between Blantyre and Hannover in 2018. In the summer of 2014 a theatre production took place with two freelance groups from Blantyre and Hannover in Hannover. The project is, among other things, funded by the federal cultural foundation. Other projects in the collaboration are in preparation.

## 5. Other Information

The City of Hannover was a candidate to the first edition of the “International Award UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21” (January-May 2014). The Jury of the Award elaborated its final report in June 2014 and requested that the UCLG Committee on Culture promotes this project as a good practice of the implementation of Agenda 21 for culture.

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Social networks:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Fair-Culture-Die-Welt-von-Morgen/154235374741404>

Youtube: aware&fair: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1koz1fRvIO8>

FairCulture: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PB7sZv6M8I>