

BOOSTING UP CULTURE AS A KEY FOR RESILIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT



AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

- 2. HERITAGE, DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY
- 5. CULTURE AND ECONOMY

**RESILIENCE, STRATEGY, MANAGEMENT, HARMONY,
SOLIDARITY, CREATIVE INDUSTRIES, HEALTH, DIGITAL,
COVID, CRISIS, GOVERNANCE**



1. Izmir and culture

Izmir (Turkey) counts 4,4 million inhabitants and is a port city between Asia and Europe preserving its importance as a centre of trade for centuries. For 8500 years, different cultures left a rich cultural heritage in Izmir, especially assets that are on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Accordingly, Izmir has become one of the most developed and visionary cities in terms of trade, innovation, industry, and tourism. This development has provided the city with a unique atmosphere, where traditional values remain preserved while modernity thrives in every aspect of Izmirian's life. Culture always inspires and enhances creativity, innovation, and the spirit of solidarity, which has a multicultural social mosaic, rich cultural diversity, and an open society.

Cultural vitality is essential for a healthy and sustainable society. Culture is essential to the accomplishment of social equity, environmental responsibility, and economic sustainability for Izmir. Therefore, Izmir has taken an important role in creating harmony in consideration of all inhabitants living in equality, participating in the cultural sector, and feeling the spirit of solidarity in the city of Izmir during and after the pandemic era. Believing that the achievement of harmony is the key to overcoming all types of crisis/problems, IMM conceptualized and adopted "circular culture" regarding culture as the link connecting economy, nature, social justice, and history.

Izmir's cultural life was drastically influenced by Covid-19 and this endangered local culture and other sectors of city life. As a response to the pandemic crisis, Izmir Metropolitan Municipality has developed and conducted comprehensive and innovative policy named "Crisis Municipalism" offering new models for delivery of local services, budget allocation, and governance in many policy areas. Culture was regarded as the most essential component of the Crisis Municipalism Policy, and "Izmir's Project on Boosting up Culture as a key for Resilience and Development" was designed and put into action for combining new mechanisms to encourage cultural access, cultural production, and interaction among inhabitants.

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2. Project goals and implementation

2.1. Main goal and specific objectives

The general aim of the project is to create a sustainable cultural environment that preserves and proceeds with the production of culture under any challenge for ensuring city resilience and sustainable development. With this project, Izmir aims to preserve the sustainable character of culture as well as economic, social, and environmental dimensions in any crisis period in line with "circular culture" approach and implemented comprehensive actions for supporting and preserving culture by ensuring active participation and triggering solidarity to keep the society alive.

2.2. Project development

The project includes multi-dimensional integrated actions to reach these goals. Main actions are as follows:

- **Culture and Art Meetings** have been organized in order to bring all actors together and to define road map in the culture sector.
- **Adoption of Izmir Culture and Art Strategy for the Covid-19 phase**, putting strategies for the cultural production to stay alive and including an action plan for reviving cultural activities.
- **Financial and Social Supports for Fostering Culture Production and Accession:** With the cancellation of public performance events at the beginning of the pandemic, IMM took the liberty of sparing the budget, TRY 1,5 million (€73 000), for public events to the cultural actors. IMM financially supported local artists, especially the ones who are freelancers with no stable income and social security, as well as the local theatres, the music industry, and cinema, plastic art and book sectors.
- **Digital Platforms as Culture Venues and Promotion of Cultural Activities:** IMM creates digital platforms to ensure variety of cultural activities: İzmirArt, Bizİzmir, IzmirTube and Chateau Library.
- **Adaptation of Regular cultural events** to Lockdown measures by digital and mobile versions: To raise cultural expression and participation, regular events, festivals, and contests are revitalized as a hybrid; with the performers on platforms with a limited number of audience in accordance with COVID-19 precautions and online broadcast.
- **Cultural Solidarity and Volunteerism:** The project integrates the culture sector into the "We are here" campaign which is the solidarity campaign of Crisis Municipalism policy in order to foster solidarity and volunteerism while keeping the ancient element of Anatolian culture, collective work, alive. This activity created unique practices as EL Ele (Hand-in-Hand) Music Orchestra; and the Voluntary fruit harvesting program (to meet the labor requirement of the agricultural producer, who has difficulties in finding seasonal workers due to the Pandemic).

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3. Impacts

3.1. Direct impacts

Within the scope of the project, IMM created Izmir Culture, Art and Support Fund to provide financial support. Many digital cultural events have been organized with 900 artists until the first months of 2021. Likewise, approximately 91 digital plays were exhibited on the IzmirTube digital platform that has been supported and



theatre groups were allowed to express themselves with the SOFITA Izmir project. Until now, IMM allocate more than 10 million liras (€490 000) for cultural actions in the context of Covid-19 and post-pandemic period. During the crisis, the continuity of cultural production was ensured.

3.2. Assessment

All activities carried out within the scope of this policy will be regularly controlled by the expert staff who plan and perform these activities, and the teams to be formed will be continuously evaluated by meeting with each other once a month and with cultural actors every 3 months.

IZMIR CONCEPTUALIZED AND ADOPTED “CIRCULAR CULTURE” REGARDING CULTURE AS THE LINK CONNECTING ECONOMY, NATURE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND HISTORY.

3.3. Key factors

Some key factors of the project are:

- IMM as local government has taken responsibility, especially in vulnerable times with the awareness of leverage role in terms of mobilizing culture, providing new possibilities to maintain cultural production.
- Conforming digitalization for cultural activities that facilitates to access cultural content for all citizens;
- Being multidimensional and emphasizing circular culture elements and paving the way for living in harmony with ecological elements of the city as well as the local culture with all sub-sectors;

- Sustainability which ensures and establishes resilient platforms and mechanisms, even in crisis times;
- Spirit of solidarity and cooperation which are necessity for providing engagement between cultural actors and the city.

3.4. Continuity

IMM has adopted the idea that “an understanding of a city that is resistant to the crises presented and realizes economic and ecological transformation is possible by protecting culture and education”. This motto refers to incorporate the cultural theme into all plans and mechanisms, and ensuring everyone’s cultural rights in inclusive way, while interiorizing non-discrimination. In this sense, annual funds will continue to be provided to promote the continuity of culture and art production; in 2022 year, 1.5 million TL (€73 000) have been allocated to Izmir Culture, Art and Support Fund.

4. Further information

Izmir was a candidate for the fifth “UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21” International Award (February – June 2022). The jury for the award drew up its final report in September 2022, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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