

GREAT DREAMERS



2030 AGENDA - SDGS



CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

1. CULTURAL RIGHTS
6. CULTURE, EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCUSION
9. GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE

**SOCIAL, COMMUNITY, EMPOWERMENT, PEER-TO-PEER,
GOVERNANCE, PARTICIPATION, CITIZENSHIP, STRATEGY;
INNOVATION; INFORMAL**



1. Esch-sur-Alzette and culture

Esch-sur-Alzette is the second largest city in Luxembourg, despite its size (14.35 km²) and its 36,220 inhabitants. Esch is a mixed community, with 57% of its inhabitants of 130 nationalities, half of whom work across the border. As a veritable “melting pot of cultures”, Esch hosts 50 socio-cultural associations, a theatre, a library, a municipal conservatory, a cultural centre, a national museum, a concert hall where international groups perform, galleries and, since 2022, a third cultural venue that houses an artists’ residence and that also serves as an exhibition space for contemporary art.

Esch-sur-Alzette was a Pilot City for Agenda 21 for Culture and a Leader City between 2022 and 2025. In 2022, Esch-sur-Alzette, along with 18 other municipalities, won the title of European Capital of Culture. Formerly seen as a post-industrial city in decline, Esch now promotes creative culture as a pillar of society’s socio-ecological transition.

2. Goals and implementation of the project

2.1. Main and specific goals

The overall aim of the Great Dreamers project is to support and contribute to the success of the cultural development strategy [Connexions], creating favourable conditions for its implementation and ensuring its long-term success. Hence, the project contributes to the success of the city’s cultural strategy and policy, and reflects the commitment to putting those who make and live in the city at the centre of the development of cultural projects.



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2.2. Development of the project

The idea is to enable all local residents to play a part in the preparation and implementation of the city's artistic and cultural projects. The majority of the population, as in most European cities, is not particularly keen on official cultural events, and even distrusts them. So, we need to go out and meet them, listen to them and build on their individual wishes to create a welcoming and collective territory. Involvement can be on an individual basis, or via a group: an association, a school, a company, a seniors' club, a club of members of a cultural organisation, etc. It is aimed at local residents and is built over time.

On the other hand, Great Dreamers aims to create a local community, neither partisan nor united around an ideology, other than the promotion and construction of artistic and cultural projects. Through its actions, this community strengthens the long-term basis of the strategy.

The project is based on inclusion and respect for all, accessibility and adaptability. Registrations can be made via the Embassies and Home Embassies, which aim to:

- » Provide information.
- » Keep citizens well informed so that they can pass on the information to their circle of friends, networks or colleagues, host a House Ambassador and take advantage of the proposals made by the institutions. Each ambassador will receive a promotional item (window sticker, flag, badge, t-shirt, email signature or any other tool to distinguish them from their neighbour).



- » Taking part in artistic events: A diary of projects that could involve local residents is being set up to present all the possibilities and make it easier for people to sign up for them at a large and publicised meeting.
- » Involving local residents from the beginning in the design and organisation of events or cultural spaces:
 - Projects planned by the institutions.
 - Projects resulting from regional meetings.
 - Projects based on meetings and individual projects, which can also be pooled.

With what tools?

- » Home Embassy: A meeting in the home of the resident (especially those who feel apart from official cultures) to discover their neighbourhood and their district, their concerns and mistrusts, but also their know-how, and their desires and dreams.
- » Embassy: Former Eschois living outside the area, mainly in Europe, can open an embassy in their home, university or association and declare their pride in the city in order to spread the word and the spirit of the projects and the area.
- » Great Dreamers: Every registered resident naturally becomes a Great Dreamer, proud of his or her city and of what it has to offer.

The project is based on:

- » A graphic charter and communication tools dedicated to the Great Dreamers project.
- » Two people in charge of relations with residents to ensure the implementation, monitoring and constant adaptation of the project and projects.
- » A network of institutional, private and/or public partners from all disciplines to ensure effective action and outreach across the region.
- » A long-term approach to sustainability and growing action, with a view to ensuring complete coverage of the region.

3. Impacts


3.1. Direct impacts

Cultural actors are better informed about what's going on in the city. They are more aware of cultural issues and the socio-ecological transition, and they are trained and supported in strategic projects. Also, when it comes to financial support for projects, decisions are more transparent and geared more towards pooling skills, know-how and resources.

Residents are better recognised, integrated and listened to, they take a greater interest in cultural policy and are more aware of the difficulties encountered when creating projects.

The municipal departments and private and public partners affected by the decisions are invited to collaborate, which makes it possible to build more intense connections and facilitate work, with more constructive exchanges.

The [Connexions] strategy, and therefore the local governance work on which the project is based, was a *sine qua non* condition for obtaining the European Capital of Culture Label, for its continuity with the launch in 2024 of the "Esch Cultural Capital" Label, and for its first biennial event, which was completely conceived through co-construction.



IT'S ABOUT REACHING OUT TO PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT PARTICULARLY KEEN ON OFFICIAL CULTURAL EVENTS, OR EVEN DISTRUST THEM, BY LISTENING TO THEM AND CREATING A WELCOMING AND COLLECTIVE TERRITORY.

3.2. Evaluation

The project is being evaluated through:

1. A study based on questionnaires carried out by a researcher in collaboration with the University of Luxembourg (in progress).
2. An evaluation of each project with the residents involved. This evaluation led to an assessment at the end of 2022.
3. Facilitating opportunities to listen to the actors involved in projects, in order to draw conclusions and adjust variables: Participatory workshops, project support, discovery of places in the landscape, businesses or cultural institutions, site visits, creation of embassies at various events, convivial moments of gratitude, etc.
4. Gathering testimonies and stories from various local actors and Great Dreamers involved in 2022, which have been brought together in two books featuring two artistic approaches.

3.3. Key factors

Various key factors contribute to the success of the project:

1. Writing a framework and objectives for the project while maintaining a constant flexibility of action allowing each person to find their place, to readjust certain actions, to accompany creations, to adapt to the needs and characters of each person, to respond to and manage daily crises, climatic hazards, political adjustments, etc...



2. Hiring two full-time staff and the training of two students each year in this method, focusing entirely on the relationship with residents;
3. The city's financial investment to support Great Dreamers' projects, which represents almost €5 million since 2018, and its inclusion in the local governance project and cultural policy strategy.
4. Including all the sectors that make up the city in the approach and encouraging them to take account of our objectives in their own proposals.

THE PROJECT TOOLS ARE: AN HOUSE EMBASSY, AN OUT-OF-TOWN EMBASSY AND GREAT DREAMERS.

3.4. Continuity

The time devoted to the project since 2018, from its launch to its inclusion in the [Connexions] cultural strategy, as well as the city's new major projects, in particular that of asserting its status as a Cultural Capital, have ensured the project's long-term future. Even today, the entire team incorporates the Great Dreamers into the very basis of every project. No project can be born without integrating the dimension of territorial development through culture.



4. Further information

Esch-sur-Alzette was selected as a Special Mention for the sixth UCLG - City of Mexico - Culture 21 International Prize (November 2023 - March 2024). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June 2024, and requested that the Committee on Culture also promoted this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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