



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Creative Cities  
Network

# UNESCO CREATIVE CITIES NETWORK (UCCN) “BUILDING A COLLECTIVE VISION FOR THE FUTURE” STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



2017

# UNESCO CREATIVE CITIES NETWORK (UCCN) “BUILDING A COLLECTIVE VISION FOR THE FUTURE”

## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

*This strategic framework represents the collective vision of the whole UCCN Network, shared by both UNESCO and UCCN member cities, and carries a global message on ways in which culture and creativity can serve cities' development. The document was prepared following the request formulated by member cities in the 2016 Östersund Annual Meeting. The first draft was discussed during an Expert Meeting which took place in Enghien-les-Bains from 3 to 4 April 2017. Following the consultation process, the final version will be presented at the 2017 Annual Meeting to be held in Enghien-les-Bains (France) from 30 June to 2 July 2017. This document builds on the collective achievements overtime on the basis of discussions at different levels within the Network, as well as a series of initiatives undertaken by the UCCN Secretariat and its member cities since its creation in 2004. The framework particularly relies on the conclusions of the previous UCCN Annual Meetings, the expansion of the expert pool, the study project “Maximizing the potential of the UCCN”, the Second UNESCO Creative Cities Beijing Summit, the scientific conference “Valuing and evaluating creativity for sustainable regional development”, the UCCN Membership Monitoring Exercises, Network-wide data and best practices collecting and analysis. It also comes in line with UNESCO’s strategic vision as part of the implementation of the Culture Conventions, the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the New Urban Agenda, as this international framework opens up new opportunities for the Network. The strategic framework covers a four-year period of 2017-2021 and touches on a variety of dimensions from governance mechanisms to growth and sustainable finance. The implementation of a collective vision, including activities in the fields of research, communication, capacity-building, or any part thereof in this document should be supported by an adequate accompanying budget.*

### 1. UCCN today: an active, expanding network

#### 1.1. A UNESCO programme, part of UNESCO’s strategy towards sustainable cities

**The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) is a UNESCO programme initiated in 2004** and managed through UNESCO’s governance mechanisms, in accordance with the Organization’s mandate to establish a culture of peace and sustainable development. As an intergovernmental agency, UNESCO is governed by its Member States through two main decision-making mechanisms – the Executive Board and the General Conference – which approve its programme and budget. UNESCO programmes are funded under contributions by the Member States and additional contributions by external donors and partners. As the only UN agency with a specific mandate in culture, UNESCO notably delivers its programmes through the implementation of normative instruments – the Culture Conventions and Recommendations – which frame national policies by providing a set of principles, standards and guidelines.

**Sustainable cities have historically been a strategic target across all UNESCO Culture programmes and strategies.** By creating the Network, UNESCO acknowledged the key importance of cultural and creative industries in sustainable urban development, a vision which has been confirmed and consolidated through the implementation of the Culture Conventions, notably the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and, subsequently, through the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the New Urban Agenda. The Network demonstrates the implementation of UNESCO's mandate and vision at the city level and integrates the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda at the urban level. Moreover, this role and impact of the Network are further strengthened thanks to its collaboration with partners of different areas, ranging from the public to the private sector, from institutional organizations to civil society associations.

## **1.2. A growing and attractive network, source of innovation on culture-engaged urban policies**

**Since its creation as a UNESCO-branded Network, UCCN has strongly asserted and demonstrated on the ground the power of cultural and creative industries** for local development policies. Through their respective activities, member cities have developed and experimented innovative ways to include creativity at the core of their territorial strategies and enhance the impact of culture on urban development. Networking activities and city-to-city partnerships within the Network have also helped to promote this vision of culture and development at the urban level. As a UNESCO flagship city programme, the Network has contributed to strengthening advocacy efforts towards the integration of culture in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**The UCCN, now composed of 116 cities, has become increasingly attractive** as the Network is gaining traction. The number of cities applying to each call for applications is also rising accordingly, because of the Network's increasing relevance for sustainable development. This development has helped to improve the geographical balance of the Network, although cities from African countries and Arab States remain under-represented. The Network is also integrating a variety of cities, from small-sized settlements to metropolises, within various economic, social, political and environmental settings; this diversity in city profiles allows the emergence of a large variety of practices at the urban level aimed at facing common challenges.

**Member cities are strongly committed to the development of the Network** and have enshrined its founding principles in their local development strategies and policies. They are requesting to develop cooperation further across the Network. In some countries, member cities are developing national sub-networks to coordinate their activities and further stimulate national cooperation. In view of this increasing attractiveness, the UCCN has been receiving a growing number of requests for partnerships from other networks or institutional partners.

## **1.3. A renewed mission statement and a reshaped governance mechanism**

**Over the last years, the Network has significantly reshaped its governance mechanisms.** UNESCO's leading role as the Secretariat of the Network has been

consolidated, covering notably the promotion of research, awareness raising and communication activities, the management of the designation process and membership monitoring, the organization of the annual meetings and the selection of host cities. A Steering Group was established at the 2014 Chengdu Annual Meeting to ensure interface between UNESCO and member cities. It is composed by representatives of the seven creative fields, chosen by the cities on a revolving basis every two year. Its missions, as further specified in the 2015 Kanazawa Annual Meeting, include the coordination of activities within each creative field (notably creative field meetings), participation in the evaluation process of member cities, evaluation of the membership monitoring reports and communication between cities and the Secretariat on activities concerning the creative sub-fields.

**The mission statement of the Network has also been consolidated through its revision in 2014.** This document defines the core mission, objectives and areas of action of the Network. It underlines the necessity for member cities to place creativity at the core of their sustainable urban development policies, acting both at the local level – through policies and strategies aimed at integrating creativity in urban development – and at the international level through cooperation activities. It puts forward knowledge sharing, pilot projects, professional and artistic exchange, research, assessment and measurement as key areas of activity. The Network and its member cities thus embody the collective expression of creativity at the local level.

## **2. The international development agenda: a favorable context**

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda has created a favorable setting to reframe the strategy of the Network.

### **2.1. Culture is a key part of the international development agenda**

**The role of culture is recognized within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.** Ratified by 193 countries in September 2015, this international framework sets 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and 169 targets. These “17 Goals to transform our world” are intended to frame development programmes and policies by 2030. As part of this momentum, UNESCO and other stakeholders have been actively advocating for the integration of culture and creativity in the international development agenda; culture is now taken into account particularly within Sustainable Development Goal n°11 to “Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”. UNESCO will monitor progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through its programmes and activities, particularly through the UCCN, and include it in the report to the UN General Assembly.

**The contribution of culture to urban development is also acknowledged in the New Urban Agenda.** The United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), organized in October 2016 in Quito (Ecuador) confirmed the need for a paradigm change in urban development strategies to face the challenges of sustainable urban development. Countries have committed to implement a New Urban Agenda, which

provides an action-oriented mechanism to implement Sustainable Development Goal 11. UNESCO strongly encourages decision makers to leverage culture and creativity towards sustainable urban development strategies. The UNESCO Global Report on Culture and Sustainable Urban Development entitled *Culture: Urban Future* included a selection of case studies from the UCCN member cities. UNESCO is also committed in aligning its strategies and programmes to the New Urban Agenda and reporting on its implementation every four years.

## **2.2. Local authorities are sources of innovation for sustainable urban policies towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

**The New Urban Agenda clearly acknowledges the key role of local authorities in innovating urban policies towards sustainable cities.** Much of the innovation across different policy areas – transportation, energy efficiency, social inclusion, education – is happening at the local level. In a context where cities are facing critical issues – including social and spatial inequalities, urban violence, environmental challenges and urban sprawl – local stakeholders and decision makers design new solutions to meet these challenges. Capturing this local innovative power and bringing it to the international level to be integrated in policy-making mechanisms, is an essential endeavor.

**Many local authorities and their networks have reshaped their strategies and programmes to meet the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and the New Urban Agenda. They seek to align their activities with specific SDGs through their global strategy and programmes or local field activities. Among other policy areas, those networks address emergency efficiency (Eurocities), gender equality (UCLG), youth employment (Eurocities), sustainable tourism (Interreg Europe), social inclusion (Urban Transformations), climate change mitigation (C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group), resilience and disaster risks management (UCL City Leadership Laboratory). UCLG has also strongly committed towards culture-engaged urban policies through the Agenda 21 mechanism. The 2030 Agenda is therefore a strategic frame of intervention for most urban networks.

## **3. A collective vision for the future: (a) strategic objectives of the Network**

### **3.1. Showcasing member cities' innovative power on an international platform, in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

Focusing the Network's activities towards programme implementation and innovation is a major objective. In line with its core mandate, the Network should experiment with culture-engaged policies on the ground, collect data to advocate for the integration of culture in urban development strategies, provide practical instruments and data to measure the impact of culture on sustainable development and foster the development of a research agenda. These activities should build on knowledge and experiences within member cities and be in line with UNESCO main line of activities and with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda.

Indeed, focusing on creativity for sustainable urban development, the UCCN's mandate constitutes a unique positioning, enabling substantial contribution to international discussions

on culture-engaged urban development paradigms, as part of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the New Urban Agenda. The Network thus provides member cities with an international stage to showcase their innovative solutions in dealing with global challenges reflected in the international agenda. This new strategic focus should help to improve the Network's impact and outreach, and build strategic partnerships, in a context where a growing number of stakeholders express their interest in collaborating with the Network, including local authorities' networks, international organizations and cultural organizations.

### **3.2. Managing sound growth of the Network**

Due to the growing interest in UCCN activities expressed by cities around the world, the number of member cities significantly increased in the 2015 call. This growth has increased the visibility of the Network and raised the interest from a variety of partners. It also helped increase the geographical balance of the Network and the representation of cities from the Global South, which is a priority for the Network in the future. An extended network can be a strategic asset to work towards a collective voice and take part in international discussions on sustainable urban development. However, the pace of this growth brings about financial and operational pressures for both the Secretariat and the member cities. It is important that the growth remains compatible with the available resources and the operational capacities of both the Secretariat and member cities. In that perspective, a maximum of two designated cities per country may apply for each call as of the 2019 call.

### **3.3. Improving the Network's geographic representativeness**

Building partnerships and sharing practices lies among the key principles of the Network. However, despite significant effort to improve the geographical balance of the Network, cities from the Global South are still under-represented. Ensuring equitable representation from different regions is a strategic objective to ensure the sustainability of the Network through inclusiveness as well as its capacity to demonstrate the power of creativity for sustainable development in diverse social and economic contexts, in line with the core values of UNESCO. Opening up the Network to cities from the Global South also offers the opportunity to explore new dimensions of creativity, often more intimately linked to local development, which is also a source of mutual learning for member cities.

### **3.4. Ensuring financial sustainability**

The management and development of the Network have been mainly ensured, since its creation, through the allocation of UNESCO's special account(s), funded by external partners, as well as voluntary contributions from a couple of member cities, including Beijing, Shenzhen (China), Fabriano (Italy) and Santa Fe (United States of America), that have all generously supported the functioning of the Network with amounts over 10.000 USD. A more sustainable funding mechanism is needed to support the current expansion of the Network and to implement the new strategy. Ensuring financial sustainability is indeed of strategic importance to strengthen the Network's innovation potential, enhance good practices and improve the quality of the information shared by members. It will also facilitate the

participation of the Network in strategic events at the international, regional or local level to ensure visibility of the programme and of the member cities, as well as the development of partnerships with other networks.

## 4. A collective vision for the future: (b) priorities and action plan

### 4.1. Proposed activities

In order to achieve the afore-mentioned strategic objectives, UNESCO and member cities propose to commit to the following joint activities:

- **gather the experience of member cities** in implementing programs and activities and, in that perspective, tap into the existing material provided by member cities, notably through the periodic report, and facilitate its dissemination, particularly through the UNESCO website. Analytic documents could be provided online to synthesize key outcomes and strategies and ensure visibility for member cities. Case studies highlighting the innovative solutions from member cities will be identified. Building on these materials to enhance the communication strategy across the Network is key to UCCN's outreach. Good practices are a driving force for member cities and can prove inspirational for other cities worldwide, regardless of the creative field concerned.
- **develop guidelines, strategies and operational instruments** on culture-engaged urban policies to further demonstrate and measure the impact of creativity on urban development, building on the potential of member cities to act as "laboratories" for urban policies as well as on UNESCO's standard setting expertise. Member cities expect guidance on the local level implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, frameworks for advocacy and practical instruments, with a view to stimulate local development plans and fundraising.
- **implement pilot projects** to demonstrate the impact of creativity on urban development and conduct practical experimentation on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda and the New Urban Agenda. This exercise could be part of a monitoring process and a reporting mechanism of the 2030 Agenda at the local level. The co-partnering cooperation framework (see below) could also be extended to the research agenda by encouraging partnering cities to share and mutually adopt best practices. Some member cities can also act as laboratories to experiment recognized good practices.
- **elaborate training modules and/or activities** to address capacity building needs of member cities, notably cities from the Global South, by partnering with universities and other training institutions and fostering the exchange of experience within the Network. Capacity building would be planned for member cities as well as upstreaming for cities aspiring to join the Network.

### 4.2. Communication activities

Communication and promotion will be given a greater focus through the following activities:

- The publication of **communication and information materials**, including a “UCCN Courier” (issued on a quarterly basis) and a collection of thematic “Papers”. These publications will increase the member cities’s visibility through case studies and best practices, build on their respective networks and resources (experts, universities, professionals and cultural centres) and foster the attractiveness of the Network and exchanges on ongoing activities.
- The **promotion of the Network’s activities at the international level**, through facilitating the participation of member cities in international events closely related to the scope of activity of the Network, to facilitate participation of member cities, and sharing of information.
- A more **action-oriented and interactive website** including a comprehensive knowledge management platform, to enhance the experience of member cities and facilitate data sharing.

The development of these activities will depend on the consolidation of the financial sustainability of the Network (see below).

## 5. A collective vision for the future: (c) implementation modalities

### 5.1. Building on the existing governance mechanisms

UNESCO and member cities’ efforts over the last years have resulted in an improved efficiency of the Network’s governance system. Selection and evaluation procedures have been standardized and refined.

The **Secretariat** of the Network is hosted by UNESCO, which not only reflects the strategic importance attached by the Organization to the Network but also allows the Network to benefit from UNESCO’s international reputation and influence. Member cities acknowledge and support this essential leading role. They encourage UNESCO to provide a vision and strategic guidance, propose thematic initiatives and joint projects as well as enhance monitoring mechanisms and research activities to further promote the visibility of the Network. Indeed, the Network associates its member cities with global perspectives and integrates them into the big UN family, giving member cities visibility on a global platform.

The **Steering Group** created in 2014 has also proved an effective coordination mechanism to ensure liaison between the Secretariat and member cities and constitutes a valuable asset for the Network. The scope of activities of the Steering Group could be expanded to incorporate data collection, or pilot programme implementation, co-partnering and capacity building in member cities. As suggested by some cities, organization and coordination mechanisms within each cluster would be adjusted, notably through a rotating coordination mechanism as suggested by some cities, so as to be more equitable and inclusive.

The **seven creative fields** provide an anchor to characterize each city, ensure their visibility and facilitate fundraising to support their programmes. The categories also reflect the identity and strategic positioning of the Network and constitute an added value for its visibility. Although adding new creative fields is not a priority in the short term, it could be considered in the long run, especially to encompass new expressions of creativity that are not taken into

account in the current categories. More transversal cooperation between member cities regardless of their creative fields should also be encouraged, notably through thematic or geographic cooperation, to foster integrated, territorial approaches across different creative sectors, in the spirit of the overall approach of the New Urban Agenda and better leverage the Network as a genuine international network.

The **periodicity of the Call for Applications** – now launched every two year as decided in 2015 – allows smooth integration of new members and a more sustainable growth of the Network. The two-year cycle is also more coherent with the operational capacities of the Secretariat, as an annual call would entail excessive workload at the expense of other core activities; it gives more space to the development of projects, partnerships and networking activities within the Network and thus contributes to the innovation potential.

The **Annual Meetings** and the Selection for Host Cities also greatly contributes to the achievement of the Network's objectives. Annual meetings allows to consolidate working relationships between member cities as well as with the Secretariat and facilitate the integration of new members.

The **evaluation and selection process** has been streamlined over the last few years, based on a rigorous process involving a set of criteria. Activities pertaining to the implementation of the evaluation procedure and the designation of member cities remain the responsibility of UNESCO, completed by internal and external consultations in parallel with UNESCO-designated independent experts, non-governmental organizations, independent institutions, and the member cities that are organized by creative field. Based on recommendations provided by external experts and the Steering Group, the final decision on designation remains the prerogative of the Director General of UNESCO, who is accountable to the Executive Board, the General Conference and the Member States. As a UN agency, UNESCO shall ensure the participation of all countries and an equitable representation of different regions. In line with the Network's integrated vision of creativity, it is important that evaluation mechanisms and selection criteria remain comprehensive and applicable across the creative fields.

## **5.2. Setting up a new funding framework**

In order to ensure the financial sustainability of the Network, a more efficient and sustainable funding framework will be developed. UNESCO remains committed to contributing a substantial amount to ensure the Network's daily management and its basic functioning, including the management of calls and projects, organization of the Annual Meetings, implementation of monitoring and reporting exercises, gathering best practices and developing guidance and capacity building material. However, more financial resources must be mobilized to fulfill the Network's potential, particularly for the implementation of the new strategic framework. These additional funds must be raised through sources external to UNESCO. Therefore, the contribution of member cities to the funding of the Network's activities should be enhanced and encouraged through the implementation of a voluntary contribution system based on UNESCO's special account(s). To initiate the mechanism, a nominal annual lump sum contribution by member cities of 2.000 USD has been brought forward. The financial contribution remains voluntary and the amount flexible in proportion of

each city's financial situation. In addition, member cities may also consider allocating a portion of the funds raised at the local level for the implementation of their action plan to international transversal activities of the Network. Given that a 2.000 USD voluntary contribution per city will not cover all the anticipated expenses related to the implementation of the strategy, additional contributions beyond this amount are encouraged.

### **5.3. Implementing a co-creative partnership mechanism**

A more systematic, better structured cooperation mechanism will be implemented by UNESCO's Secretariat to facilitate partnerships between applicant cities and current member cities in the preparation of their application, but also in the implementation of their action plan in case of their designation. This mutually beneficial cooperation mechanism has been introduced on the occasion of the 2017 Call for Applications and has benefited Africa, for this first edition, as it is one of the most under-represented region. A number of member cities actively participated in this year's cooperation framework, and even more have expressed their interest in taking part in this initiative in the future. Building on this first experience, it could be established as an integral part of the Network's governance mechanisms in the future and be expanded to other regional groups. This mechanism could also be a way to provide assistance over a longer period of time (2 or 3 years), to allow applicant cities to gradually improve their vision, strategy and action plan and enhance their implementation capacity.