CULTURAL POLICY 2017-2020
City of Aarhus
Aarhus is European Capital of Culture in 2017. This prestigious title is one of the outcomes of a long strategic endeavour in the cultural area, where talent development, infrastructure and new collaborative efforts are the focal points.

The present Cultural Policy is an extension of former cultural policies.

It is the result of an inclusive process where 'new voices' have been heard, for instance through conversation forums involving several municipal departments, and valuable inputs from local cultural players.

The policy looks to the future. The legacy of the European Capital of Culture must be secured with particular attention to 'the lasting impression', which must be incorporated into all initiatives and activities.

Culture enjoys a strong position in Aarhus. Perhaps culture is in a stronger position than ever before. During the budget negotiations in 2016, a lot of money was allocated to culture – not least aimed at strengthening the children’s area.

Rabih Azad-Ahmad
Cultural Mayor, City of Aarhus

Strong support for culture is equally evident among local citizens. When asked to describe what makes Aarhus a good city, 38 per cent of the residents of Aarhus mention culture as the most important aspect.

I would like to extend my special thanks to the many institutions, artists, citizens, enthusiasts and cultural players who have contributed to this policy. Your inputs and dedication have been crucial to the preparation of the Cultural Policy. We look forward to implementing the policy together with the many great people who are dedicated to our city and the continued development of a vibrant cultural life.
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The present Cultural Policy defines the direction for the cultural area in the City of Aarhus from 2017 through to 2020.

The Policy enters into force in 2017. This is a year of commitment to the area of culture and to the city as a whole. The cultural political prioritisations over the coming years will contribute to ensuring that Aarhus – the city’s citizens, visitors, cultural institutions and businesses – can reap the long-term benefits from being European Capital of Culture 2017. The Cultural Policy shall help to ensure that Aarhus continues to be a cultural capital beyond 2017.

The Cultural Policy is one of a number of policies defined by the City of Aarhus that are to unfold “The story of Aarhus”. It builds on and interfaces with all of the City’s other policies – and should be seen in connection with these.

The Cultural Policy is based on close collaboration with the City of Aarhus’ other municipal departments and their policy areas.

The vision for the new Cultural Policy is:

“**Aarhus – an international city where culture sets the agenda**

The vision paints a picture of a city where culture is a key driving force in the city’s development, and where ‘the good life’ is the focal point. The city will benefit from the experience and insight gained from Capital of Culture 2017 in the form of an enhanced level of artistic expertise with strong professional networks, and the innovative art and culture that will be produced and presented in the city in a strengthened environment for cultural productions. Focus must be directed at accessibility in the widest sense, so that art and culture will reach as many people as possible.

The Cultural Policy is the general framework that sets out Aarhus’ ambitions in the cultural area through its visions and objectives. The Cultural Policy’s focus areas define the framework for the efforts that are to support the implementation of the cultural-political objectives.
In the joint task of ensuring that the policy is rooted and converted into practice, the role of the City of Aarhus is to support, facilitate, include and create networks. The Policy will be followed by a number of specific initiatives and measures that will safeguard the work within the focus areas.

**THE STORY OF AARHUS**

The Cultural Policy should be seen as part of the framework story of Aarhus and the City’s overall vision ‘The Story of Aarhus’. It is a vision for Aarhus that expresses what we value, what we want to preserve, and what we would like to develop:

• Aarhus – a great city for all
• Aarhus – a city in motion
• Aarhus – a city with drive and community

Aarhus should be a city with room for diversity and multiplicity with a focus on community. A rapidly developing city with ambitions to secure growth, sustainability and cohesion, promoted by, among other things, new ideas and untraditional forms of collaboration. A business and cultural powerhouse with social cohesion and a focus on active citizenship.

The story of Aarhus focuses on Aarhus as ‘a great city to live in’, and Aarhus as the setting for the good life – liveability.

In brief:

“A city where together we create the framework for the good life.”
Aarhus has experienced immense changes since the last Cultural Policy was launched.

A 'distinctive cultural profile' was one of the goals in the Cultural Policy for 2014 - 2016, which was to prepare the city for being Capital of Culture 2017. Since then, Aarhus has improved its position as a cultural city on many parameters. The number of tourists who visit Aarhus has increased considerably – not least due to the many cultural options that are offered in Aarhus – and the number of visitors to the large, significant cultural institutions is rising.

Aarhus has also received special mention in several foreign media as a city that has something unique to offer. This gives some clear advantages in relation to the branding of the city – and of the city’s cultural life.

Another development is the many networks and collaborative efforts that are characteristic of the cultural landscape in Aarhus, and the establishment of new creative environments, which emerge as possibilities arise – for instance around Godsbanen (the Freight Yard) and Kulbroen (the Coal Bridge). This development should continue, and it should be strengthened – also in the years following European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017.

The process towards becoming European Capital of Culture 2017 has been decisive for the elaboration of the new Cultural Policy. This process has contributed to changing the view of what art and culture are. The culture concept has broadened and can be defined to a greater extent on the basis of what we use art and culture for – for instance to create a vibrant society, life-long learning, life quality, business development, tourism, settlement or growth.

The development of a new Cultural Policy has been based on the framework of the story of Aarhus as a great city for all, the broad concept of culture, the legacy of Aarhus 2017, and a focus on art in cultural politics.

All of the municipal departments have been invited to participate in – and have encouraged – dialogues in a wide collaboration with players, stakeholders, citizens and others across many subject areas. A number of conversation forums
have been held where 'new voices' have been heard, contributing to the process. New networks and collaborations have already begun to grow during the process of developing the new Cultural Policy.

AARHUS – A DEVELOPING CITY

In connection with the stated goal, that Aarhus should be a great city for all, an Epinion survey has been conducted, which shows that culture and nature are the things that citizens of Aarhus highlight when asked:

"What in particular makes Aarhus a great city for you?"

When asked what would make Aarhaus even better, the answer is:

"More culture!"

In other words, culture not only attracts citizens, it also keeps them here, and it is an area with potential for even more growth and development.

The new Planning Strategy for the City of Aarhus through to 2050 keeps close to the concepts of 'the Story of Aarhus'. Once again, the framework for living the good life – liveability and identity – is in play. Aarhus should be a great city with room for all – "a city, where citizens are co-developers of their areas, and a city where we are constantly rethinking possibilities for living in and developing our city together".

The keywords for urban development are dynamics and co-creation, synergy and new communities, urban identity and temporary use. The concept of temporary use covers the exploitation of possibilities and spaces that are not permanent, but which can be used within a limited time frame. For instance, a public building or a disused plot of land, which can be used for cultural activities for a limited period and then be moved or closed down.

These keywords for urban development are essential in a cultural policy context.
The opening ceremony of the European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017

Photo: MKB Communication
The new Cultural Policy is inextricably linked to the general vision for Aarhus 2017, where art and culture should be used to rethink tomorrow’s challenges. It has also been an objective to redefine the City of Aarhus as an international city with culture and creativity as key driving forces.

Aarhus 2017 is a regional project. At the regional level, the Capital of Culture has long since given the municipalities far better knowledge of each other, and it has sparked a whole string of new collaborations. The joint 2017 projects have created inspiration, knowledge and competence development, as well as closer collaboration between the institutions in the region. Together, the Central Denmark Region has a ‘critical mass’ of creative clusters as well as a cultural infrastructure and a scene of upcoming artists and cultural entrepreneurs that can match greater Copenhagen. The strong collaboration in the region must continue and be developed.

The goals for the long-term effects of Aarhus 2017 in the area of culture are a stronger and more diverse cultural sector, and increased cultural collaboration and exchange between organisations in the Central Denmark Region and internationally.

It is also expected that Aarhus 2017 will enhance Aarhus’ identity and image by creating visibility, among other things, both for Aarhus and the region and for the vast number of cultural options in the area.

Targets have been set for culture as a growth generator and as a promoter of active citizenship and activation of citizens as both audience and performers.

At the organisational and political level, the goal is to improve cross-institutional, cross-sector and cross-disciplinary collaboration throughout the region, and for Aarhus 2017 to position art and culture high on the political agenda.

The Cultural Policy is to support the goals for Aarhus 2017.
The Wishing Land: The children’s opening of the European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017
Photo: Children’s Cultural Centre in Aarhus
A NEW VIEW OF CULTURE

The legacy from Capital of Culture 2017 can be seen in the citizens’ use and perception of culture, and in the city’s pride and self-understanding as an international city, where art, culture and creativity are given pride of place. Culture plays a decisive role in relation to the city’s tourism, income, business, settlement, workplaces and growth. New culture consumers have appeared along the way, and this development has created a new view of the significance of culture.

This is evident in the new ways of developing collaborations and networks – also across sectors and beyond city boundaries, both regionally and internationally.

Culture is put into play, supporting the good life across age groups, people groups, interests, subject areas and social backgrounds. Culture creates the foundation for the formation of healthy communities and new relations, and it increases individual well-being.
CULTURAL POLICY GOALS

Aarhus has high cultural-political ambitions. ambitions that do not only concern a narrow cultural sector, but also reflect culture’s growing role in modern social development and culture’s significance for human identity and quality of life.

Based on the cultural-political vision, it is the City of Aarhus’ goal to

1) Strengthen the City’s culture and art production environments and promote artistic quality, talent development and cultural diversity

2) Focus on the City’s strong cultural institutions in the interaction with the cultural environments and the scene of upcoming artists and cultural entrepreneurs

3) Focus on strategic partnerships, regionally and internationally

4) Create space in the City and the local areas for the development of cultural and creative communities

The cultural-political goals are to support a diverse and accessible artistic and cultural landscape with distinctive cultural trailblazers that can embrace culture, right from the individual and local level to the creation of an urban identity, setting the course for the City’s development.

Art and culture are to create an enjoyment of life and be a source for dialogue, reflection and general education. Artistic and cultural options are to serve as a catalyst for identity, social inclusion and increased active citizenship, and as a dynamo for urban development and growth.

The City is to be characterised by creativity and cultural production with a focus on the entire supply chain from upcoming artists and cultural entrepreneurs and talents to professional artists and the established cultural institutions, and as a place where artistic and cultural options of the highest quality are created and presented.

Regional and international collaborative relations and partnerships across culture, business, tourism, education and other sectors are to be maintained and expanded as a natural platform for the development that contributes to strengthening cultural life, financial sustainability and growth.

Art and culture are to be presented in urban spaces – both centrally and locally – and integrated into the strategy for urban development, with a focus on room for expression and space for the unorganised and spontaneous. Culture is to form communities and build bridges between people and environments.
CULTURAL POLICY FOCUS AREAS

Three headings have guided the definition of the Cultural Policy’s themes and processes:

• Holistic thinking and the wide concept of culture
• Legacy of Aarhus 2017
• Focus on art in cultural politics

The three headings serve as arches over the focus areas.

This approach is in line with the City of Aarhus’ focus on integral thinking and thinking across the traditional subject areas where culture can be a driver in many contexts. European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017 is to set a new direction in terms of rethinking collaboration, a new and wider concept of culture, competence development and international focus. In addition to this, a strong artistic and cultural life is decisive for culture to serve as a lever and an agent for change, as well as stressing that culture in its own right has an intrinsic value to individuals and communities.

In order to fulfil the Cultural Policy’s visions and goals, it has been decided to focus on six areas in particular:

• Active environments for cultural production
• Talent development
• Temporary use and life in urban spaces
• Culture as a bridge builder / Culture for all
• Networks and collaboration
• Identity and visibility

The focus areas should be seen in context, and they cut across classical art genres and subject areas. Each of the focus areas contributes to realising one or more of the cultural policy goals. The focus areas are to serve as points of orientation when political prioritisations are made during the period 2017 - 2020.

The Cultural Policy will be followed by specific initiatives that will safeguard the work within the focus areas. A natural part of the continued process will be to consider what should specifically be rooted and passed on from Aarhus 2017 – 'the legacy'. The strategic partnership between Aarhus 2017 and Aarhus University, rethinkIM-PACTS 2017 – the purpose of which is to deliver a research-based assessment of the effects of Aarhus 2017 – will be an important tool in this process.

Prioritisation and continued investments in the cultural area are necessary in order to maintain
the momentum and reap long-term benefits from being European Capital of Culture 2017.

Throughout the period covered by the Cultural Policy, new initiatives can be launched under the individual areas as and when possibilities, wishes or needs arise.

**ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR CULTURAL PRODUCTION**

A vibrant and professional production environment, where artistic and cultural options of a high quality are created and presented, is a prerequisite for improving Aarhus’ position as a city of culture.

The cultural production environment must be characterised by quality and diversity with sustainable supply chains from upcoming artists and cultural entrepreneurs and talents to professional artists and established cultural institutions. It is about attracting artists and retaining talents.

Focus should be directed both at developing existing successful artistic and cultural options and at creating a good framework that allows room for new initiatives to develop. This
venture is highly dependent on local art funding in the cultural area. The competences and facilities of large, established cultural institutions must be brought into play, so that they can contribute to boosting the entire cultural landscape.

The local Art Council’s expert evaluations of the City’s cultural institutions will be used in the effort to strengthen the cultural production environments.

A culture-producing city requires physical settings where art can be produced and displayed, and spaces where the different genres can meet and inspire each other in a social community. A better utilisation of available space in empty public buildings, and a higher degree of self-organisation in the use of existing facilities can help meet the need for facilities for art production. This is the case, for instance, with 'Institute of X' at Godsbanen, Kulbroen at Sydhavnen (the Southern Harbour) and in the street culture environments.

**TALENT DEVELOPMENT**

The foundation for a strong and vibrant cultural environment where performers want to stay is the development and support of artistic and creative talents. People are different, and it is important that a variety of approaches to talent
development are devised and offered in Aarhus. Talent development must be considered in a wide sense, and frameworks and possibilities should be created that support every artistic genre, with due consideration for different forms of creative talent.

Talent is understood as a combination of motivation and the prerequisites for working with creative skills. Efforts must therefore include both discovery and stimulation of budding talents, and it is important to focus on children’s encounter with art and culture of a high quality at an early age, and on a further development of more established talents.

If Aarhus earnestly wants to set the bar high for talent development, it is crucial that collaboration is established between the bodies that work with children and young talents: schools and youth centres, cultural schools, associations, artistic educational programmes, artists and established cultural institutions, and, for instance, in the encounter with the employment system.

A focus on the production environment and business community related to the cultural environment will also be crucial in relation to developing and retaining talent in the city. One example of this is the vision of 'Music City Aarhus', which is characterised by its production, business and urban development focus.
Cultural picnic for senior citizens

Photo: MSO Communication

Upside Down. Aarhus Festival Week
Photos: The Municipality of Aarhus
TEMPORARY USE AND LIFE IN URBAN SPACES

Art and culture must be expressed in urban spaces and form part of the planning and development of the city. This means that the City of Aarhus and the cultural players share the responsibility for entering into a dialogue about the possibilities of creating flexible platforms for artistic and cultural activities, and about the definition and support of new creative areas.

Space must be created for the unorganised, the spontaneous, and the temporary, without too many regulations and with space for surprises in urban spaces. Naturally, this should be done with due consideration for operational challenges and statutory requirements. There should be room in urban spaces for events that gather people in healthy communities, inspiring cultural expression and movement.

Art and culture must move out from the traditional cultural frameworks and offer people something they did not know they were missing.

It is an issue of common interest in the City of Aarhus to direct focus at art and cultural experiences in urban spaces. This can contribute to rooting and raising the profiles of the shared stories across the City and the local area, while at the same time bringing together citizens, the business community, stakeholders etc. in joint projects.

The effort must focus on accessibility for all, which should be understood as physical accessibility and geographic coverage, so that all areas are reached. This can be supported not only in the urban planning work, but also in the housing policy, which is relevant to the work that is being done to create life across the city, by ensuring that many different types of citizens and families live in the various areas. Diversity and variation, in terms of both price and specific cultural options, are also important.

CULTURE AS A BRIDGE BUILDER / CULTURE FOR ALL

Art and culture unite us and bring us together in communities where we can experience, participate and create together. Shared experiences strengthen relations between people and the sense of belonging. At the same time, shared experiences not only strengthen a local sense of identity and individual well-being, they also improve mental health and support the good life by contributing to a better quality and enjoyment of life – throughout life and across generations. It is therefore important that everybody in Aarhus has the opportunity to be part of communities as spectators, participants or performers.

It also means that artistic and cultural options should be available across the city and not be limited to the city centre. For children and adolescents in particular, it is important to encounter...
art and culture in their locality, as a part of every-day life. Activities should be possible, and there should be facilities for pursuing a great variety of interests – for instance through culture schools, associations and citizen centres, and in interaction with schools, clubs and day-care centres.

Culture can help build bridges between different environments and nationalities, and cultural exchange can open our eyes, giving us new knowledge and inspiration as well as creating new communities.

Culture should strengthen bridge-building that brings together people, interests and subject areas in communities where people can support and lift each other on the basis of different abilities. Culture as an agent for change and a lever can be found in many different contexts, where social issues are addressed by means of more creative and artistic solutions. It is partly a case of linking people who face challenges with people who have solutions, and making a difference to vulnerable citizens through tailor-made options and social inclusion.

Partnerships set up between cultural institutions and municipal players to handle tasks that go beyond the purely artistic can benefit other tasks, for instance within the social, health and employment areas.
NETWORKS AND COLLABORATIONS

During the time leading up to Capital of Culture 2017, the agenda has featured a large number of focus areas: partnerships, networks, competence development, development of new work methods, removal of barriers between the traditional sectors in society (culture, business, education, tourism etc.), and the establishment of new collaborative relations and collaboration methods.

This mindset is already well established in cultural and creative environments and in the local arts centres’ work, but it still needs to be supported and facilitated by the City of Aarhus so that networks and synergies can be improved.

The establishment of partnerships and sponsorship agreements between cultural players, the business community, educational institutions, voluntary and public organisations, and educative associations, among others, is to increase quality and commitment. The partnerships are to lead to economic sustainability and cohesive solutions of value to all parties.

International networks and collaborative relations are to be maintained and expanded as a natural platform for the development that contributes to strengthening cultural life and Aarhus as a city of culture. This should take place at all levels, from the individual artist to the large cultural institutions.
The strong collaboration in the region must continue, and it should be developed. In order to support the continued collaboration, a driving force is needed to promote the collaboration when the year as Capital of Culture ends. Work should therefore continue through cross-regional networks and recurring events across municipal borders.

IDENTITY AND VISIBILITY

Focus is directed at a goal-orientated effort to raise the profile of Aarhus, embracing the special 'Aarhus identity'. Aarhus should be known as the creative city – a dynamic city with creativity and inventiveness – a city that hatches people of talent, and a place where they want to remain. Aarhus should also be known for collaboration and networks, which are among the city’s foremost strengths.

Aarhus is a city with large, professional cultural institutions, with the field being led by 'The Big 8' – ARoS Aarhus Art Museum, The Old Town, Moesgaard Museum, Aarhus Theatre, Aarhus Symphony Orchestra, Concert Hall Aarhus, the Danish National Opera, and the Aarhus Festival. In addition to this, Aarhus has a strong international profile within children's theatre, music and modern dance. Combining this with Aarhus’ new library and community centre, Dokk1, the City has gained a place on the global map as an international city of culture, which boosts tourism in Aarhus.

The large institutions attract audiences with experimental and distinctive cultural experiences, opening to the City by serving as social meeting places for the City’s residents and visitors.

Greater visibility for the cultural production environments and the creative clusters is to help define Aarhus as the creative cultural centre that it already is. This story must be incorporated into an international tourism-orientated perspective, while at the same time enhancing the attraction and retention of the creative industries and the creation of jobs.

Aarhus’ identity and image must be shaped by creating exposure, both for the City of Aarhus and for the City’s large number of cultural options.

A focus on communication, marketing and dissemination is necessary to increase the exposure of cultural institutions, cultural options and cultural production environments alike. In this connection, attention must also be directed at promoting across institutions and events in order to reach an even wider audience, both regionally and internationally.
SUMMARY

This is the framework for the Cultural Policy that is to form the basis for political prioritisations in 2017 and the following years as and when changes occur and new needs emerge.

The Cultural Policy is to reflect the fact that the concept of culture has changed and now needs to be understood as encompassing much more. It is not enough that there is an element of culture in everything. Culture is a driving force and a key to resolving many of the challenges that the City – and society in general – are facing.

With its educative and democratic objective, artistic and cultural life is important for the City’s cohesion, and it constitutes a giving and health-promoting element – not least at the individual level and in encounters with other people in healthy communities.

These potentials can only be fulfilled if a strong cultural landscape and a strong artistic foundation with a critical mass of players exist, which is large enough to rise to the challenge.
CULTURAL POLICY 2017-2020
City of Aarhus