

City of Aarhus Cultural Strategy 2021 ——— 2024

Aarhus -
Culture in our
Heart, our Eyes
on the World



KULTUR OG
BORGERSERVICE
Aarhus Kommune

Preface



Photo: Per Bille

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This strategy aims to support and to strengthen every aspect of our cultural life – from the established culture to the grassroots. It builds on the foundation of previous strategies and is the result of a joint process where numerous stakeholders from our vibrant cultural sector have contributed. It has been truly amazing to witness the level of engagement from the cultural stakeholders in Aarhus, who have provided valuable input and set their mark on the final strategy. But this has also been a very different process. The cultural strategy has been shaped in a point in time of a pandemic and subsequent lockdown of society and the cultural sector in Denmark and the rest of the world. This has left a mark on the strategy. And the absence of culture has made us aware of how much we miss a vivid culture and how essential a role culture has in our lives. In Aarhus we are blessed with a vibrant and creative cultural sector who has skillfully adapted their practice to the changing restrictions. However, moving forward we will focus on re-opening, recovering, and re-igniting culture in Aarhus. During the lockdown we have focused on emergency funding – now we will restart.

Next year we will celebrate Music City Aarhus 2022. It will be a whole year dedicated to music. Music City Aarhus 2022 will drive the restart of culture and cultural tourism across the city and thereby also support several other areas – not least the business sector. The work within climate and sustainability is an important beacon in this strategy. All the city's strategies support the realization of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and culture has a specific strength and role in working with sustainability. Culture can provide new perspective and communicate difficult subjects to a broad audience. I wish to acknowledge the big effort and the many contributions shaping this strategy – not least from Kultursamvirket, the cultural committee and the Arts Councils. I also wish to express my gratitude for the great support for our cultural life. Covid has been an unexpected setback for our society, but we have a history of being strong by standing united. Over the recent years Aarhus has transformed into a city of culture on an international scale – a journey which continues with this strategy and with the collaborative spirit of our city.

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Photo: Cultural Department

Introduction

The cultural city of Aarhus

The fact that Aarhus can pride itself of being a city with a strong cultural profile is the result of a long and determined culture-political effort and strong collaboration between the city's cultural players and the municipality. As the Arts Councils indicate in their evaluation, both the independent artists and the city's cultural institutions work at a high level with strong connections to both the national and the international art world.

The most recent Cultural Strategy took effect with the Capital of Culture year 2017 and included a vision of Aarhus as an international city where culture sets an agenda. We are now pleased to be able to say that by and large, we have achieved the ambitions that were phrased.

Aarhus is connected internationally at many levels. During this period, new partnerships have been set up, and we see an ever-increasing interest from other cities wishing to learn from Aarhus' experience.

The artistic ecosystem is strengthened through various efforts such as three-year basic courses in visual arts and performing arts (BGK and SGK), along with the creation of the studio community Corporum at Godsbanen (The Freight Yard). Youth culture and growth layers are flourishing in a number of places across the municipality. Ungdomskulturhuset (The Youth Culture House) has found a permanent home at the former County Hospital in Tage-Hansensgade, Institute for (X) continues its work as a creative powerhouse in Aarhus K, and at Sydhavnen, a new urban area is developing on a strong foundation of industrial cultural heritage, creative business players, and educational institutions.

The regional cultural collaboration created as part of the European Capital of Culture has carried on as European Region of Culture, continuing to strengthen European cultural collaboration as well as development possibilities for cultural players across the region.

Background for the new Cultural Strategy

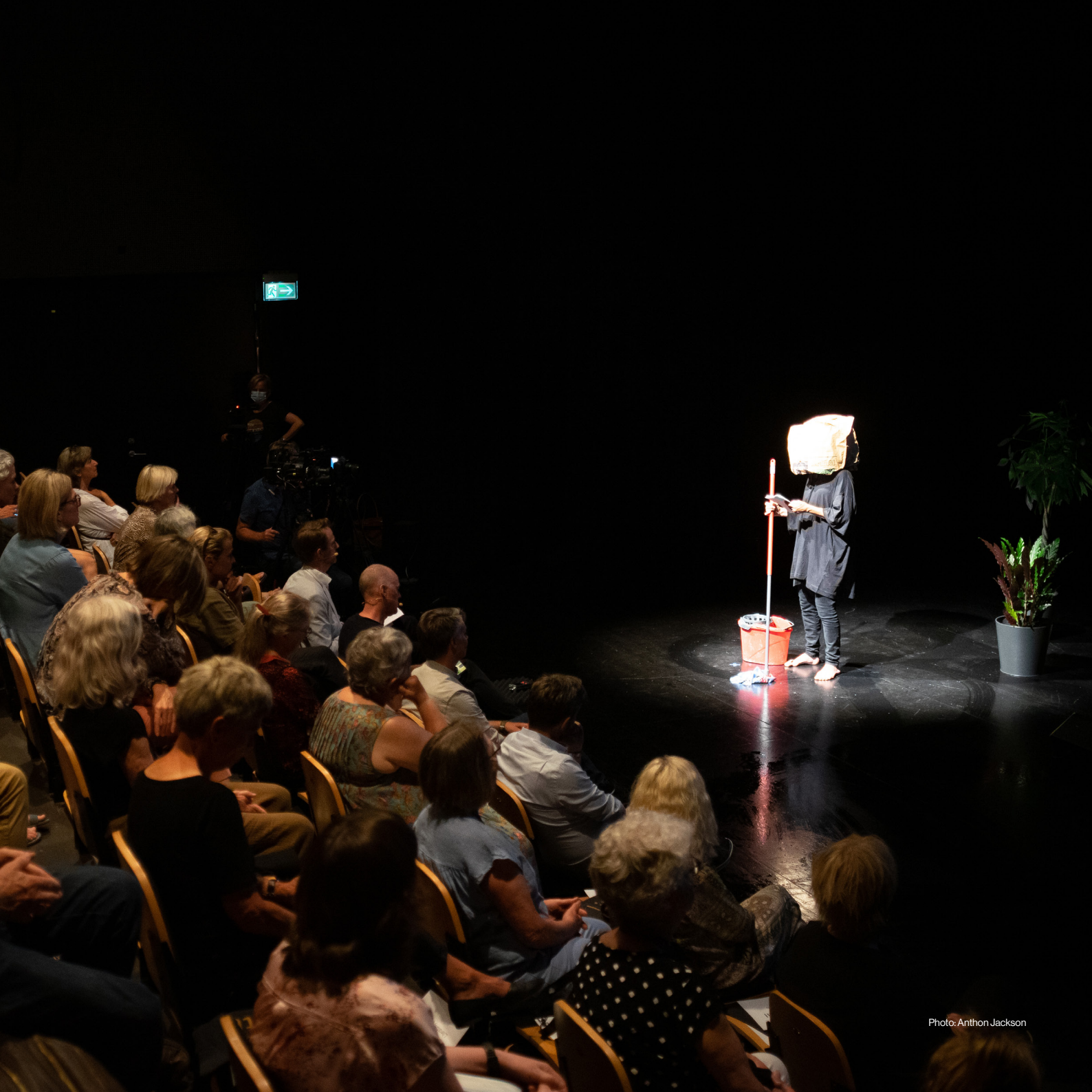
The good collaboration with the business sector has also continued. Business and Culture Forum Aarhus gathers culture, business and city council in joint agendas and is a valuable collaboration body facilitated in close collaboration with Erhverv Aarhus. With the development of the new docklands, Sydhavnen, Aarhus K, and, most recently, the area around the former County Hospital, art and culture have also been given a more distinctive place in urban development. However, none of this would have been possible had it not been, first and foremost, for a focus on strengthening a diverse and ambitious art and cultural scene with good opportunities for development, production, and presentation.

The time has now come to look ahead and set new targets for the next four years.

In February 2020, 130 people gathered at Åbne Scene (Open Stage), Godsbanen, for the event Kulturpolitisk Forsamlingshus (Cultural-Political Community Meeting). During this debate, major agendas were tabled, and it became very clear that Aarhus as a city is inhabited by strong institutions and artists who can and will and do deliver world-class art and cultural experiences.

Shortly afterwards, the global COVID-19 pandemic reached Denmark, and large parts of society went into lockdown. At the time, nobody knew the scale and the consequences of the pandemic, and although at the time of writing, we have lived with it and the varying restrictions for several months, there are still more questions than answers to be found.

Despite the unusual circumstances, this present Cultural Strategy is based on a firm foundation of dialogue with and input from many players – including the professional cultural life, growth layers, youth environments, business community, and citizens in every part of the municipality. In addition to this, the evaluation from the Arts Councils focusing on artistic environments, constitutes a significant contribution.



Restart 2022

For the cultural sector and the entire experience economy, the lockdown has had extensive consequences. Governmental and local emergency funding has helped many, but even so, we are hobbled as we embark on this next chapter of Aarhus' history as a city of culture. Many cultural institutions are struggling to make finances add up, aiming to develop formats that will enable them to continue to produce and present art and culture to audiences in a meaningful way and within safe settings.

When we prepared for the year as Capital of Culture, we did so in the wake of, among other things, a global financial crisis and a dawning climate crisis, which is even more tangible today. Back then, our strategy was to rethink. To build on our strengths and enter partnerships that would put art and culture at the forefront to explore new solutions and create room for reflection.

Now, we need to rethink again. And to restart. We will use the first year – 2021 – to investigate, reflect, and develop, among other things. What have we learnt? What does the new reality look like? How can we gear up for future challenges? What new opportunities do we see? – For instance, in terms of digital formats. We will do this in partnership with the many strong cultural players, the business community, association activities, and the citizens. We will do this together.

And come 2022, we will restart cultural life in Aarhus. This will be a celebration of art and culture as well as all that this city is capable of when we stand together. In this sense, the year will become a key indicator for this Cultural Strategy and a catalyst for joining the city anew across all areas.

In order for the restart to have sufficient effect, the entire city needs to be involved. Cultural and business communities will work hand in hand to give the year the volume and quality that is required to create momentum and have an impact.

Partnerships and networks

A number of major ventures are already in the pipeline. With a wide and inclusive programme, Music City Aarhus 2022 will amplify the city's identity as one of Denmark's most important music cities, pointing forward with due respect for the heritage on which the city's musical players have built their work. Musikhus Aarhus (Concert Hall Aarhus) will celebrate its 40 th anniversary, the Music School will celebrate 90 years, Bora Bora will celebrate 10 years as a dance stage, Den Gamle By (The Old Town) will open its new main entrance, and at Gellerup, the new Sports and Culture Campus will open. More will come. The restart will be for all cultural players and will unfold through wide collaboration, so that in 2022, Aarhus will once again stand out as an ambitious and collaborating city with a strong and beating cultural heart

The COVID-19 pandemic is a challenge that nobody has faced before, and there are no off the rack solutions. We must figure them out together. During the lockdown, the cultural sector of Aarhus has demonstrated a unique capacity to think in terms of solutions, rather than in terms of limitations, focusing on communities, rather than on individuals, and exploring new expressions and partnerships during tough times. Whilst living with the restrictions of the lockdown, we managed, in collaboration with Kultursamvirket (the Cultural Association), to create a forum of artists, cultural institutions, politicians, associations and others, where we shared knowledge and discussed the challenges and opportunities that the pandemic brought along. We will maintain this cultural forum to give the voice of art and culture a continual place in the discussions about the city's development.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals are all about the challenges that we share with the rest of the world. We should be inspired by other people's great ideas, whilst sharing our own knowledge. This is one of the reasons why a global outlook and partnerships with other cities will also play a key role in this Cultural Strategy.



Photo: Barbara Katzin

Especially regarding climate, we have set ourselves an ambitious goal in Aarhus: As early as 2030, we want to be 100 % CO 2 neutral. Achieving such high ambitions requires that we incorporate the goals into our everyday lives, and that we work together. This means that the Cultural Strategy must interact with the city's other policies, and that it must be realised through partnerships.

Thank you to all who have contributed to the development of this cultural strategy. We look forward to implementing it with you and to create new cultural legacy across Aarhus.

Restart 2022 selected highlights

- Music City Aarhus 2022 in collaboration with Business and Culture Forum, among others
- The Next Level and the establishment of Musikhusparken, incl. the transformation of Brobjergskolen into a powerhouse for childrens culture
- Sports and Culture Campus Gellerup
- Nature and Science Museum at Aarhus Ø
- Musikhus Aarhus' 40'th anniversary



Photo: Per Ryolf

Vision and goals for the cultural strategy

When Kultursamvirket discussed the priorities of a new Cultural Strategy with the Cultural Committee, the message was clear: Find out which role art and culture are to play in Aarhus – then we will take it from there. The answer is equally as straightforward: Art and culture are the heart. That which gives the city life and pulse, supplying us with fresh blood and oxygen for the brain. Art and culture are of enormous value, and during the last six years, our biannual survey among the citizens of Aarhus has confirmed that culture is what makes Aarhus a great city – for everybody.

The vision for the Cultural Strategy in Aarhus is therefore:

“Aarhus – Culture in our heart, our eyes on the world”

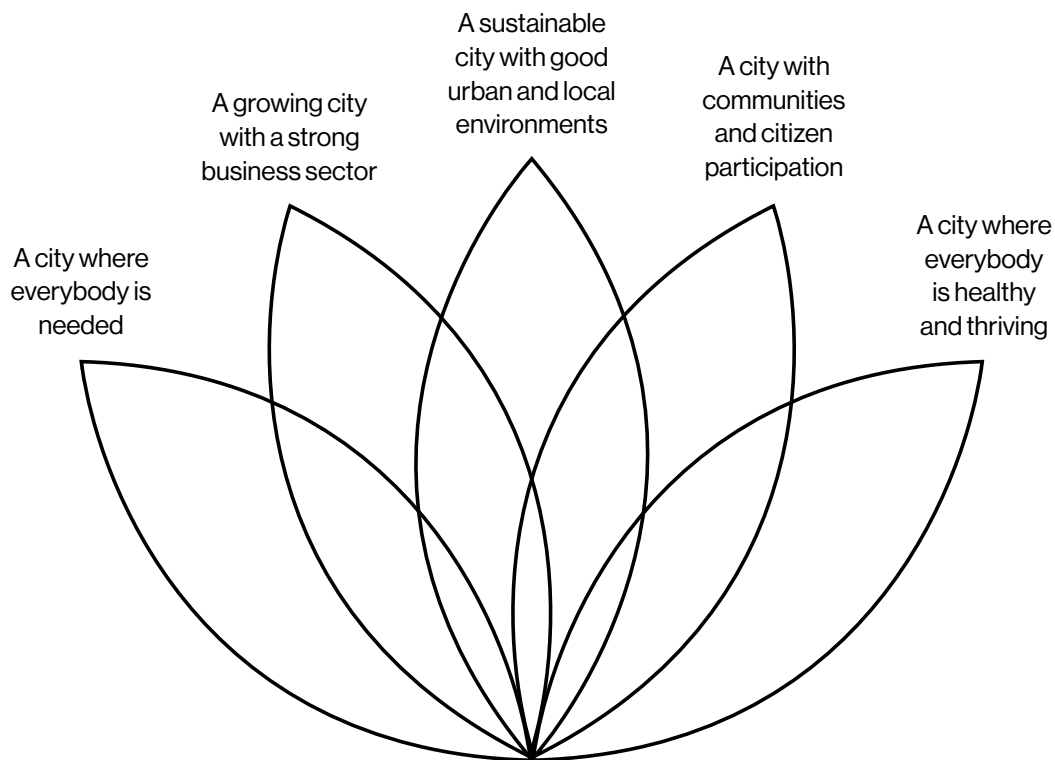
Cultural Strategy 2021-24 outlines a framework and a direction for the work with art and culture in the City of Aarhus for the next four years. It is to serve as a useful tool for the city’s art and cultural players, supporting their important work. The Cultural Strategy will therefore also, among other things, form the basis for the multiannual agreements between the municipality and the cultural institutions receiving operating grants.

With this strategy, we also want to make it very clear that art and culture equal welfare. This should not be taken to mean that art and culture are to be instruments in the creation of the good life. We actually believe that art and culture are a prerequisite. A foundation.

Perhaps, cultural strategy has never been more important.

Cultural Strategy framework

The Cultural Strategy must contribute to achieving the five targets we have set to make Aarhus a great city for everybody:



In order to secure strong collaboration across political fields, the Department of Culture and Citizens Services has three focus areas:

- From the UN Sustainable Development Goals to everyday goals
- Democratic, participatory citizenship
- Increased focus on children's and young people's development and opportunities

The UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals were adopted at the UN summit meeting in New York on 25 September 2015. It is a global contract which the city of Aarhus has committed to. The 17 goals are interrelated, but even so, we have indicated eight goals that we wish to focus on in particular through this cultural strategy:



Themes

We will realise the vision and ensure a focus on the goals through the Cultural Strategy's six themes. Thus, the themes will serve as indicators when it comes to making political prioritisations in the coming period. The specific initiatives within each theme are joined together in an action plan, which can be adjusted throughout the period when new initiatives emerge.



- A strong foundation
- Culture is welfare
- Formation and education
- Open arms – open mind
- Global perspective and action
- Climate

THEME:

A strong foundation



Photo: Jonas Normann

Due to a targeted cultural-political effort spanning several decades, Aarhus is now in a strong position in terms of art and culture. The city has a strong cultural infrastructure with strong institutions, professional artists, and independent cultural players. Through the prioritisation of frameworks and funds, we are to secure the right conditions for this foundation to continue to develop. Aarhus should be an interesting and relevant city in which to develop and practice one's artistic work. This is a prerequisite for the other themes in the cultural strategy.

We will

Strengthen collaboration across different groups of cultural players

Strengthen the established cultural institutions' role in the city and the surrounding area

Involve professional artistic competences and cultural growth layers in the city's development

Sharpen the art centres' role in relation to independent artists and environments

Focus on the independent environments and their work, ensuring that their voices are heard in relation to the city's development

Prioritise space for art and culture production, experiments and presentation

Strengthen the connection and collaboration between culture and the business sector for the benefit of the development of the entire city

Strong institutions

The cultural institutions in Aarhus constitute a foundation for the strong cultural life that attracts and delights citizens and visitors alike. The large institutions attract an impressive number of visitors each year, opening up as an integrated part of the city's social space. Along with the city's other cultural institutions and independent players, they offer world class artistic experiences and communication of cultural heritage. In the coming period, we will join forces with the institutions to strengthen their work and their role in the development of the city as a whole. Being an established and recognised institution comes with obligations. It requires a stronger connection between the institutions and the city's independent players and growth layers for the benefit of the entire ecosystem. We will also focus on strengthening collaboration across institutions, investigating how to develop operations to ensure the greatest possible returns for the development and presentation of art and culture.

Professional artists and independent players

Aarhus wants to attract and nourish professional artists. Through our funding streams, we will support artists in their work. However, it is also essential to have interesting artistic environments with sufficient critical mass as to sustain a high standard. The artcentres play an important role as advisers, network facilitators, and a voice for the different art forms. The centres can also contribute to strengthening the connection between institutions and independent artists, and we will investigate how we can enhance their role for the greatest benefit of the professional players. The arts councils will continue to secure a high artistic standard and focus on independent art in the distribution of the municipality's cultural funds and the work with, among other things, arts purchases and art in public space. However, we will also take a closer look at the Arts Councils' role in the city's development in other ways.

Space for production, experiments, and presentation

For several years now, particular focus has been directed at strengthening Aarhus as a city of cultural production. We have come a long way with good production facilities and professional centres within all art forms. It is necessary to safeguard the strong environments and to allocate even more square metres for culture production.

We need to make use of spaces that are vacant for shorter or longer periods of time, and we need to consider whether existing facilities are used in the best way. We will continue to focus on quality and diversity. There should be room for experimenting and for presenting art – also the art whose audiences are not counted in their thousands. Space for cultural production is a significant focus area in the new urban development areas at Sydhavnen, the County Hospital, and Aarhus K.



Photo: Jonas Normann

Growth layers and independent environments

One of the prerequisites for a strong art and culture life is focusing on good conditions for growth layers and talents to develop and grow. There must be space for dreaming big and for striving for the next level, whether you attend an artistic educational programme, or you are at the beginning of an artistic career, starting a business or want to develop projects with others. Over a number of years, Aarhus has developed several strong environments for talents to develop and express themselves. The independent environments across the city are based on a high degree of social commitment, participation, and exchange – locally, nationally, and internationally. We want to safeguard these environments and maintain a continual dialogue with them and with the independent players, to ensure that their voices are heard in the city’s development, and we will support activities across different fields.

Partnership with the business community

The business community and the foundations are invaluable partners for the city’s cultural life. Both in developing knowledge and competences and in developing the cultural infrastructure. However, a strong cultural life is also an important prerequisite for a strong business sector. Business and Culture Forum Aarhus is a new collaborative body that will promote partnerships and strengthen collaboration between culture, business, and the city. The forum embodies the very unique collaborative spirit of Aarhus, and it will play a key role in the implementation of the cultural-political ambitions, not least in connection with the restart in 2022. Through concrete initiatives, we will explore new models for collaboration, facilitate networks and render visible the development-related and financial opportunities that can be found in the intersection between business and culture.



THEME:

*Culture
is welfare*



Photo: Frontløberne

In the last Cultural Strategy, we presented a new view of culture's role in the city's development. To a great extent, European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017 was the catalyst for this. By now, cultural policy has really entered centre stage, and we no longer talk about how art and culture can play a part within other welfare agendas. Culture IS welfare, and in the coming period, we will work with the city's other departments to make sure that this is reflected in the way we deal with urban development, health, and economic development in Aarhus.

We will

Develop the city through new, distinctive culture buildings, such as The Next Level and the Nature and Science Museum

Focus on culture, green areas, and communities when we develop, both in the city centre and in the surrounding area

Work to safeguard the voice and place of art and culture in physical urban development

Launch initiatives within culture and health

Focus on the positive communities we can create through culture

Reinforce sustainable growth in the creative industries

Explore the creative industries' potential in relation to other welfare agendas

Strengthen collaboration with knowledge institutions and the connection between research and practice



Photo: Tonny Foghmar

A good life for all

Culture is all about people – about what we share and what we create together. A diverse art and cultural landscape support the realisation of the good life by creating quality of life, joy of life, and reflections on the good life – throughout life. It is conducive to a spirit of community and the good human relations that are necessary for individual well-being.

Art and culture create experiences and encounters that further ‘the good life’, both when you are part of an audience, practising, or a volunteer, and when culture plays a more direct role as a change agent that links ‘people with challenges’ to ‘people with solutions’. This could, for instance, be in the employment area, where cultural institutions often offer different and more accommodating access to the labour market. Or it could be the establishment of informal spaces in safe settings with culture as the unifying factor that can help overcoming dissatisfaction with life and loneliness among young people, a successful example of which is Ungdomskulturhuset.

Culture is the core of the city’s development

Urban life – before urban spaces – before buildings. For several years, this mantra has guided urban development in Aarhus. Here, culture plays a key part, among other things by creating life and experiences in urban spaces and buildings. The ongoing development of Sydhavnen is a good example of how this is being implemented in practice. By phrasing, from the outset, calls to tender that integrate cultural players, socially vulnerable people, the area’s particular cultural heritage, and space for movement, we ensure that the city develops on a human scale. At the old County Hospital in Tage-Hansens Gade, Ungdomskulturhuset has been the first new occupant and a strategic partner in a number of the subsequent processes.

In the coming period, we will also see new, distinctive cultural developments that will transform the urban spaces that they are part of, attracting visitors from near and far.

In the area around Musikhusparken, The Next Level will become a catalyst for an interesting development where an exciting and future-proof urban park around James Turrell's 'The Dome' will be welcoming and inclusive, encouraging the creation of new communities. At the same time, the park will become a cultural powerhouse for the cultural players in the area, including Brobjergskolen, which will be converted into a hub for children's culture. A new, ambitious Nature and Science Museum will contribute to a vibrant urban space at Aarhus Ø with an international community house for biodiversity, green transition, and sustainable development – centred around people and nature. We will continue to work for culture to be at the heart of a green and inclusive urban development, both when specific projects are unfolded, such as the vision for Kongelunden Aarhus, and when towns in the surrounding area are to be developed into even better settings for the good life. We will also work to secure more green urban areas over the coming years.

Culture is health

Both national and international research show that much can be gained from a partnership between culture and health, and therefore it is sensible to include art and culture as an integral part of welfare tasks. Many cultural operators already have experience partnering culture and health efforts, providing a strong foundation for further initiatives. In Aarhus, we have a joint strategy for culture and health, focusing partly on prevention/health promotion, and partly on treatment/rehabilitation. Taking our starting point in this strategy and working in close dialogue with partners locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally, we will explore and develop the field and continuously gather and communicate knowledge and experience from the field.

Creative industry

By now, the creative industry's role in and contribution to social development and economy is firmly established. In Aarhus, we have strong businesses, industry clusters, talent and incubation environments, and interplay between education and research. The business plan for the City of Aarhus, Erhvervsplan 2020-23, therefore includes specific initiatives related to these. With the Cultural Policy, we will focus particularly on the development of the creative professions in the field between culture and business. This applies to the digital visual industries, including film and games production, and it applies to music and sound. In relation to literature, too, a large number of industries both facilitate and are nurtured by art. We will focus on strengthening the conditions for sustainable growth in the creative industries in Aarhus, and we will explore the industries' potential in relation to other welfare agendas. This applies not least to climate activities as well as to the digital agenda and the further development of Aarhus as a smart city. We will support international exchange – among other things via the Districts of Creativity network – and we will tell the good stories.

Knowledge

A lot of research is conducted into the practice and societal significance of art and culture – both nationally and internationally. In the coming years and under the theme Culture is welfare, we will gain varied experience, and it is therefore necessary to continually analyse and document our experience. At the same time, we need to ensure that the research and knowledge that have already been produced are brought into play to a greater extent. In a collaboration between Denmark's six largest cities, the universities, and the Ministry for Culture, we will endeavour to ensure that research and practice are linked closer together for the benefit of cultural life and future initiatives.

THEME:

Formation & education



Photo: Per Ryolf

All children and young people in Aarhus should experience a city where there is room for dreaming, for creating, for practicing, and for acquiring new skills. Culture is something we create together and something we share, and all children and young people will benefit from culture's positive communities. Art moves us and creates space and language for that which can be difficult to understand. Children's and young people's encounters with art and their own creative development are therefore the cornerstone of formation and of the good life of children and young people.

We will

Give more children the opportunity to encounter professional art and culture

Support children's and young people's opportunities for expressing themselves creatively and practicing their creative talents

Create spaces in the city that support creative play and activity

Strengthen talent environments and artistic ecosystem

Focus on drawing attention to and opening the creative networks and environments in the city

Strengthen the creative youth environments and create opportunities for young cultural entrepreneurs to test their ideas

All children should encounter professional art and culture

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that all children have the right to participate fully in cultural and artistic life. We know that children's encounters with professional art and culture have a positive impact on well-being, learning, and social mobility. Encounters with art and culture should be included as part of the learning, for instance in the local day-care centres, schools, or educational after-school options. However, it is also an important element in general education and thus, an important aspect in terms of creating happy, healthy, and vigorous children. We will collaborate with the city's cultural players as well as libraries, schools, and day-care centres to give more children the opportunity to encounter art and culture – both as a part of their everyday life in day-care facilities and schools and in their leisure time.

Space for creative activities

It should not always be necessary to actively seek out art. Sometimes, it should also be the unplanned and casual that meets children and young people. It is also important that children and young people can be active participants in art locally, and that they can be creative instead of just experiencing art as an audience. Space must be created for the unorganised and the spontaneous, without too many regulations and with room for surprises in urban spaces. We will work to provide creative urban spaces on children's terms, intended as creative arenas – both in nature, in the city, and in local areas.

Education and career

In Aarhus, we are happy to attract good, creative forces from outside, and we are happy when talents and professional players from the city assert themselves both nationally and internationally. However, it is also necessary to consider where we need to strengthen the local ecosystem, so that a lack of educational options and opportunities for self-expression do not impede a career within art or creative professions. One of the things we will focus on is gathering players in developing environments.

Young cultural entrepreneurs

However, it is also important to open up the environments and networks, so that more young people and new arrivals can find their way in and have the opportunity to participate. Aarhus has been designated City of Talent by the Agency for Culture and Palaces from 2020 to 2022. We will further develop 'Talent Aarhus' into a strong platform for collaboration on talent development in Aarhus. The objective is to strengthen professional competences in the different environments and to contribute to a cohesive and more diverse food chain through collaboration with the informal talent environments, the business sector, association activities, artistic educational institutions, and professional players.

Aarhus is one of Denmark's youngest cities, and 8000 Aarhus C is the first postal code to have an average age below 30. The city hosts a number of creative environments, where young artmakers and creative entrepreneurs can participate in networks and collaborative projects. The diversity and dedication in these environments are a huge strength for the city.

An important milestone during the last period was the establishment of Ungdomskulturhuset – in daily terms UKH. After a period of moving around, UKH has now settled permanently at the old County Hospital, as an important haven for young people providing the time and space to meet in positive communities with space to grow, develop, and practice their creative ambitions. At Sydhavnen, Frontløberne (the Frontrunners) play an important role – among other things as a launch pad for cultural creators. And at Aarhus K, Institute for (X) forms the centre for the development of a creative city district along with the players of Godsbanen including the new studio community Corporum, and in the coming period this will also include the new school of architecture. We will strengthen the creative youth environments of the city and create opportunities for new, fledgling ideas to be captured and tested rapidly.

THEME:

*Open arms,
open mind*



Photo: Johan Adrian Buus

Aarhus is a city that celebrates diversity. We will work to ensure that all have equal access to and feel welcome in the cultural life, and for diversity in artistic and cultural expressions. Art both challenges and strengthens democracy, but only if it is free and accessible, and everybody has the opportunity to both experience and create.

We will

Strengthen accessibility and openness in the city's cultural options

Work for all citizens to experience Aarhus as their city of culture

Give more people the opportunity to participate in positive, cultural communities

Strengthen art and culture options across the city

Work to break down silos and promote dialogue and participatory citizenship

Focus on promoting cultural diversity and equality

Move art and culture out into the urban space



Photo: Preben Stentoft

Open doors and positive communities

A reoccurring theme in the process leading up to this cultural strategy was 'open doors'. The city's cultural options are open to all – but do people also experience them as being open? Are we, for instance, capable of guiding those who are not familiar with the city's cultural institutions? And are we capable of capturing the new expressions and formats that emerge with the new citizens? In the coming period, we will join forces with the city's cultural institutions to keep a particular focus on accessibility and on ensuring that everybody experiences Aarhus as their city of culture. This applies in particular to the new citizens who come to Aarhus from outside, but also to the citizens who for other reasons experience a physical, mental, or social barrier in the publicly supported cultural options. The positive communities that cultural activities can create must be welcoming all citizens. The establishment of housing for homeless young people in connection with Ungdomskulturhuset is one example of this approach, where vulnerable young people are invited into a community with other young people.

Culture for everybody throughout the city

The ambition for all citizens to encounter professional art and culture is also about moving art and events from institutions and into contexts where we do not actively seek it out. An active and interesting cultural life can be many things and take place in a great variety of places. It takes courage to travel new paths and enter partnerships that may challenge long-lasting traditions. Using our experience from Kunstekspérimentariet (the Art Exploratorium) and good input from studies carried out by the Oplandsudvalg (Committee for local areas), we will work to ensure that citizens across the municipality have the opportunity to encounter art and to get involved in cultural communities in their local areas.

Event Strategy 2020-25 provides a direction and framework on how we can work with major events in a sustainable way that creates value to the city's players and to the citizens – be that as a participant or as one of the many volunteers. We will support the development of art in the public space and endeavour to ensure that the events that take place in Aarhus involve as wide a circle of cultural players as possible.

Diversity is a strength

Aarhus should be a great city – for everybody. We want to be a city with room for variety, and we consider diversity and equal opportunities a strength – in terms of age, gender, and ethnicity. It is therefore also important that in Aarhus, you experience a cultural life that reflects our diverse city and its inhabitants. Naturally, this is not a goal that can be achieved solely via the cultural strategy, and fortunately, many excellent forces in the city are playing along. In dialogue with the city’s cultural players, we will consider which challenges relating to diversity and gender equality different parts of the cultural life may be facing, and together with Kultursamvirket, among others, we will discuss how we can work with the challenges in different ways over the coming four years to secure a diverse and inclusive cultural life that touches all citizens in Aarhus.

As the first city in Denmark, Aarhus has been accepted into the Rainbow Cities Network – an international network of cities that work to improve conditions for LGBT+ citizens, and during the last period, the LGBT+ House was set up. Together with players such as Aarhus Pride, the house makes important efforts to promote better conditions for LGBT+ people in Aarhus. As from 2022, Sports and Culture Campus in Gellerup will be a physical manifestation and a natural centre in a vibrant and internationally orientated city district. Gellerup Art Factory (GAF) is an open art and culture collaboration for and by local players who launch both local and international projects and support cultural initiatives in the area. GAF will be one of the key players in the new campus, and during the period leading up to the opening, we will work with the partners to strengthen the cultural networks in the city district, and not least with the rest of Aarhus.



Photo: Jonas Normann

THEME:

*Global
perspective
& action*



Photo: Galway2020

As the European Capital of Culture 2017, Aarhus left its mark internationally as a strong city of culture, placing the value of international collaboration on the agenda. Many of the city's professional artists, cultural institutions, and independent players work with partners across the world, and the city is visited by many delegations and tourists every year. A global focus comes with involvement in global agendas. We are not alone in facing the challenges that are addressed in the UN Sustainable Development Goals. For this reason, we need to find solutions in partnerships across sectors and geography.

We will

Support the city's professional artists, cultural institutions, and independent players in their international collaboration

Work with the CDEU and the partners in the European Region of Culture to help our cultural life as best as possible on their way out into Europe

Develop urban partnerships in keeping with the themes of the Cultural Policy

Focus on excellent hospitality

Strengthen the international focus in communicating the city's cultural options

Share our experience and learn from those who have gone ahead of us

Get involved in global agendas

International partnerships and networks

The European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017 strengthened the connections between Aarhus and the rest of the world. Art and culture continue to show the way forward when it comes to international collaboration, and during the last period, cultural collaboration agreements have been set up with Manchester, Hamburg, and Nanjing. The agreements reflect shared interests between the cities and form the basis for concrete collaboration projects between art and culture players.

Although international collaboration projects are also challenged by the COVID-19 crisis and the restrictions it has incurred, we are not lowering our ambitions. On the contrary. We will give priority to dialogue and collaboration, as we believe that we learn through exchange with others. This is why we will also focus on a close connection to the European agenda and to the networks that can provide good knowledge and experience for the benefit of Aarhus. This goes for e.g., the exchange between European Capitals of Culture, which continue to create opportunities for artists from Aarhus across Europe. It also goes for the Eurocities network, in which we share knowledge and experience about the implementation of cultural strategies in specific actions and participate in EU-funded initiatives. We share the experience we ourselves have gained and involve relevant partners as we set out on new paths. We focus on seizing opportunities in order to make them tangible for Aarhus, for instance when over the coming period we explore the possibility of Aarhus becoming a UNESCO City of Literature.

Excellent hospitality

Aarhus has most definitely made it onto the world map, something we notice in terms of the great interest from business tourists and delegations who visit, but also from the increasing number of tourists from near and far. The international marketing of Aarhus in connection with the year as European Capital of Culture increased awareness of Aarhus as an exciting destination.

Capacity building

Fortunately, many people also choose to make Aarhus their new home and the basis for their working life. Regardless of how long people stay here, or why they come; we want to give them a warm welcome. We will prioritise excellent hospitality. Through the volunteer programme ReThinkers at Visit Aarhus, we will continue to focus on providing a hospitable and visible reception of tourists in the city. We will also focus on communicating the city's cultural options in both Danish and English, as a minimum.

In collaboration with Libraries and Citizen Service, and via the Kultur-kammerater (Cultural Mates) initiative, among other things, we will continue to work for international newcomers to be included in the cultural life's positive communities accompanied by people who already know the city well.

International collaboration and applying for international funds for projects is meaningful but can present challenges. We will support the cultural players of Aarhus in developing the necessary competences and finding the right paths forward. Here, the partnership with the Central Denmark EU Office (CDEU) is pivotal, and the programme Genvej til Europa (Shortcut to Europe) will provide excellent help for cultural players in the coming period, for instance in connection with finding the right collaboration partners or navigating among EU's funding streams. Another track in competence development is the regional cultural collaboration that was created in connection with Capital of Culture 2017. This partnership continues as the European Region of Culture and focuses on European collaboration and improvements of artists' and cultural institutions' development conditions through knowledge sharing and learning. 2017 spurred many new connections between cultural players across the region, and we will continue to be involved in the regional collaboration with a particular focus on developing the best possible basis for the development of our cultural life.

THEME:

Climate



Photo: Gert Medom

It is both obvious and relevant to ask why climate should be a theme in a cultural strategy. Climate constitutes the 13th Sustainable Development Goal and is as such part of the overall framework for this cultural strategy. When we choose to make climate a theme it is because in Aarhus, we have set a very ambitious target of becoming CO₂ neutral by 2030. This requires a huge effort of us as a city, citizens, business sector, and institution – and that we come together as a community.

We will

Establish a climate partnership for culture that will work for sustainable development of cultural life and the development of specific initiatives

Incorporate climate requirements into agreements with cultural institutions and organisers

Learn from good national and international experience

Involve the creative industries in the development and communication of the effort

Aarhus transitions

One of the Sustainability Committee's recommendations is that art, culture, and association activities should play a more prominent role in this green transition and in securing involvement, motivation, and participation among all citizens. Cultural life in itself is not a culprit in climate change. However, cultural life and the creative professions have a significant voice that reaches many people, and they are therefore frontrunners and ambassadors in the effort with creative measures that can increase our awareness and inspire all of us in the work for a sustainable future.

Reaching the 2030 target means that there are some things we cannot continue to do, or that we have to do in a different way. For instance, we will insist that visiting events must present a plan for sustainable production and completion. And from 2022, an operating grant from the City of Aarhus will be accompanied by specific requirements on sustainable operation – for instance by means of the submission of climate accounts.

In 2021, we will establish a climate partnership for culture with wide representation from the cultural life, ensuring that the measures launched not only benefit the climate goal, but do so in a meaningful way which also benefits development of both cultural players and creative enterprises.

Knowledge and competences

The climate challenge is a global challenge that requires local action. All good forces must be joined to reach the goal, and we must learn from those in front of us. The role of the cultural sector in the green transition has been on the agenda in our sister city Manchester for a long time, and they have excellent experience with involving all parts of the organisation in the conversion. One thing is certain, it will not work if only the leadership has a sense of ownership for the agenda. We need to gather all competences and join all good ideas. In collaboration with the cultural sector of Aarhus and our partners in Manchester, we will continue to build on the experience so that in the course of 2021, we develop a model that suits Aarhus' ambitions and goals. And we will launch initiatives that ensure that the cultural life has the tools and competences that are needed to complete the task.



Photo: Dennis Borup Jakobsen

City of Aarhus Cultural Strategy 2021 — 2024



Cultural Strategy 2021-2024
Culture and citizens' services
City of Aarhus 2021

Layout: hejblokken.dk
Print: Grafisk Service
Paper: Recy star

