

Vilnius city municipality Integrated Action Plan

URBACT III Project “ACCESS to Culture for all Citizens”

Vilnius, 2022

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Introduction

„Vilnius city municipality Integrated action plan” (IAP) was developed as a part of the transnational URBACT III Project “ACCESS to Culture for all Citizens”. European cities face increasing dynamic challenges (changing needs of the population, globalization, applicability of smart solutions, etc.) that often lead to gaps in the quality / availability of cultural offerings. The main goal of ACCESS Project is to ensure an equal access to cultural services for all societal groups while focusing on three key areas: gaining a deeper understanding of communities (data insight), spreading cultural amenities across the city (decentralization) and fostering cultural inclusion of all members within the society (widening participation). Project kicked-off in 2019 by a consortium of eight partner cities – Amsterdam (Lead Partner), Sofia, Riga, Vilnius, Tallinn, London, Lisbon and Dublin – and will run until 2022.

The most important local strategic document, relevant to the development of the IAP, is “Vilnius municipality’s cultural policy strategic guidelines” (the Guidelines) and their implementation plan, adopted by the decision 1-827 of Vilnius city council on 6th of January, 2021. The Guidelines includes policy measures planned from 2021 to 2023 and are chronologically related to the celebration of 700 years anniversary of Vilnius in 2023.

Despite its jubilatory character, the Guidelines are aiming at long-term goals of municipal cultural policy, initiate a number of crucial reforms in the field of cultural policy. Thus, entire system of financing culture and art projects will be re-designed, also networks of municipal cultural institutions, most importantly, municipal museums, will be reassessed and reformed. The Guidelines also aim at creating preconditions for systematic monitoring of cultural processes in Vilnius. The expected long-term impact of IAP required longer implementation period for its actions, therefore, IAP’s time frame was extended to 2026.

The IAP follows the logic of the Roadmap and integrates five main strategic goals of the Guidelines into the core structure of the IAP. Almost perfect alignment of the goals of the Guidelines with the goals of the Project “ACCESS to Culture for all Citizens” testifies the fact that development of the Guidelines took place under direct influence by Vilnius municipality’s experience received during its participation in the project. The result of such close coordination is a solid political engagement of city council and its commitment to implement the Guidelines and the IAP, which share a lot of essential measures and actions. Another positive result of close proximity of the Guidelines and the IAP is wide publicity and support these documents receive. The provisions of the Guidelines were discussed in more than 40 dedicated meetings organised by Culture Committee of the municipality, in which representatives of cultural institutions and other stakeholders took part. The implementation plan of the Guidelines was extensively discussed in a number of meetings with representatives of municipal cultural and educational institutions; therefore, it is more than likely that the sector itself will be prepared to take an active role in implementation of IAP.

The majority of measures planned to implement the Guidelines and the IVP are directly related to the survey “Participation in culture and satisfaction with cultural services in Vilnius” commissioned by the municipality in 2021. This survey provided essential data on cultural needs of local communities in Vilnius, on inconsistencies and inaccessibility of cultural offerings, on level of involvement of Vilnius national communities into city’s cultural life. It is

also important to emphasise, that this survey is planned as the first iteration in its bi-annual cycle, thus, it is the beginning of a new municipal monitoring system of the processes of culture in Vilnius.

Vilnius Cultural scene

Vilnius is the largest and constantly growing Lithuanian city. In 2021, there were 594377 people living in Vilnius. Famous for its multicultural heritage, medieval layout and Baroque architecture, the old town of Vilnius was included in the UNESCO world heritage list in 1994. Almost all state owned national cultural institutions are based and operate in Vilnius: Martynas Mažvydas National library of Lithuania, Lithuanian National philharmonic society, Lithuanian National opera and ballet theatre, Lithuanian National Drama theatre, Lithuanian National museum of art, National museum of Lithuania, National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania. Three of these national institutions are among the five most popular museums in Lithuania. In 2020, National museum of Lithuania received 140 thousand visitors, Lithuanian national museum of art – 172 thousand visitors, National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania – 230 thousand visitors. In 2018, there were 19 branches of public municipal library open in various districts of Vilnius, which hosted 555 exhibitions in 2019. There were 510 thousand documents in funds of municipal library. Vilnius is home for 7 cultural centres, which shelters 113 art troupes.

There are 24 municipal cultural institutions active in Vilnius. They cover wide range of cultural activities from museums, libraries, theatres, cultural centres, cinema office etc.

There are several art residences operating in Vilnius: Art Printing House, Low Air Vilnius City Dance Theatre, Rupert, Contemporary Art Centre, Sodas 2123 (Lithuanian association of interdisciplinary art).

Vilnius hosts a number of high-profile internationally well-known art and culture events: International Vilnius Book fair is the largest in the Baltics, Contemporary Art fair Art Vilnius is the most significant art fair in the region. Traditional international music and performing art festivals Gaida, New Baltic Dance, Sirenos and others have a wide appeal to local and international audiences. In 2021, Vilnius was designated as UNESCO City of Literature.

Folk art traditions are preserved and fostered by traditional city festivals like Kaziukas fair, international folklore festival “Skamba skamba kankliai”. Each 4 years an open air Vilnius Vingis park arena becomes an epicenter of National song and dance festival, which attracts thousands of participants from all regions of Lithuania. In 2003, the tradition and symbolism of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian song and dance celebrations were proclaimed by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, and in 2008, this tradition was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Vilnius hosts the largest part of Lithuanian Creative industries. According to recent study of Vilnius CCI, in 2019, Vilnius CI employed more than 37 thousand employees, Vilnius CI enterprises generated more than € 2,28 billion income, the exports of goods and services of

Vilnius CI in 2019 accounted for more than € 40,9 million. From 2017 to 2019 the number of Vilnius CI enterprises have risen by 14,4 percent.

General challenges

700 years of dynamic and frequently dramatic history of Vilnius are among the most important reasons for its unique cultural, religious, and social fabric. Subjected to many different cultural influences (most notoriously, Russian and Polish) Vilnius was living under different political regimes: it was the ancient capital of Grand Duchy of Lithuania, one of the capitals of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, then - a part of Tsarist's Russia. It was ruled by Poland before WWII. After Lithuania was occupied by Soviet Union in 1940, Vilnius experienced intense soviet style urban planning and development until 1991. Vilnius became home to many religions, many different national communities, cultural, religious, and social groups. However, historical Vilnius religious and cultural diversity, unbalanced soviet urban planning (which concentrated all public and cultural activities in the centre of the city) created numerous challenges related to cultural, social and geographical **fragmentation** of public infrastructure and services. Physical distance of cultural venues, inadequate **awareness** of actual cultural needs of different social groups, limitations of regional and international **profile** of Vilnius, outdated and insufficiently inclusive **policy** measures and instruments of financial support are the most important impediment trying to facilitate access of culture to all citizens of Vilnius and its visitors. Thus, IAP addresses these challenges by focussing on a number of themes of intervention: **access to culture, synergy of culture and education, international competitiveness of Vilnius' CCS, cultural diversity, modernization of municipal financial support for CCS.**

Monitoring the IAP

Implementation of IAP will be monitored by IAP implementation monitoring group, in which members of URBACT Local Group (ULG) will participate. The monitoring of the IAP implementation will be performed a) on the level of the impact of the entire IAP and b) on the level of more specific results produced by individual actions. General impact of IAP will be assessed on the basis of biannual collection of data about Vilnius society's participation in cultural activities and its satisfaction with the quality of cultural services. The biannual survey will provide important data about city's local communities, national communities, different age groups, inhabitants of different Vilnius districts and their cultural needs, preferences, their willingness and capacity to engage in cultural activities. The survey will show how fast (if at all) Vilnius culture becomes more and more accessible, to which degree the mentioned societal groups are more included in city's cultural life.

Regular collection and assessment of traditional statistical data will show the changes in the number of visitors of cultural institutions, number of artistic and cultural events taking place in them, as well as in number of their participants. The changes of the number of art and culture projects financed by municipality, as well as of the number of their participants, are also important in attempts to assert if the implementation of the IAP is successful.

The monitoring on the level of individual actions will clarify the level of accomplishment of specific actions and, in some cases, the effectiveness of individual steps of each action.

1st action indicators

- Number of revised strategic plans of municipal institutions.
- Better access to finance for local communities' cultural initiatives.
- "Vilnius Culture Map" identifying culturally deprived areas is created.
- Increase in number of art and culture projects implemented in non-traditional spaces; more non-traditional spaces are transformed into art and culture sites.
- Number of culturally active persons belonging to disadvantaged social groups

2nd action indicators

- New municipal program "Education by Culture" is developed and adopted.
- Increasing number of intersectoral initiatives among cultural and educational institutions.
- Number of cultural and artistic projects directly linked with educational practices in municipal institutions.

3rd action indicators

- New municipal program to reverse brain drain of young talents developed and adopted.
- Increased financial support for Vilnius art residences.
- New municipal program for international communication of Vilnius culture is developed and adopted.
- New CCI mapping document is prepared.
- Increased number of high profile international cultural and artistic events.

4th action indicators

- Number of revised programs of Vilnius traditional culture events.
- Increase of number of religious heritage sites, in which educational and culture events are organised.
- Increased financial support for municipal museums.
- Level of participation in culture by members of different national communities, number of educational projects implemented in cultural and religious heritage sites.

5th action indicators

- Increased financial support for art and culture projects.
- Increase in number and quality of financed art and culture projects.
- Increase in number of participants in financed art and culture projects.

Necessary conditions for successful implementation of the IAP

Considering the required environment favourable for successful implementation of the IAP, one could define several types of necessary conditions: political, economic, financial, legal, administrative, related to human resources and competences, technological.

Political conditions

Effective implementation of the IAP requires consistent political will of the city council. Even though the city council has already expressed its will by adopting the Guidelines and their implementation plan, it is also crucial that all new municipal programs, reforms, new financial mechanisms announced in the IAP would be not only developed but also adopted by corresponding political decisions and necessary funding allocated.

Economic conditions

Just as other municipal policy areas, cultural policy is directly related to performance of local economy. Vilnius houses the biggest part of the largest Lithuanian industrial enterprises and service providers; thus, city's economy is directly linked to major trends and challenges of national economy. Efficient implementation of the IAP requires stable growth of Vilnius' economy and its non-falling capacity to contribute to the municipal budget.

Financial conditions

A number of the IVP actions implies increase of financing provided to municipal cultural institutions and to art and culture projects. Therefore, successful implementation of the IAP entails increase in overall municipal spending for culture, which is and will remain the most important source of finance for municipal institutions alongside state financing provided by Lithuanian Culture Council, funds from EU and other international financial instruments, and private support for art and culture. Financial conditions are closely linked to political and economic conditions.

Legal conditions

Municipality's capacity to officially prepare and adopt relevant legal acts is important for implementation of a number of actions of the IAP, which require revision of legal regulation. Examples of such actions are: modernization of municipal financial instruments providing support for CCI projects, exploitation of culture and art in learning by fostering synergy between CC sector and municipal system of formal and informal education.

Administrative conditions

Although Vilnius city municipality is the main body responsible for implementation of the IAP, it is crucial that it assumes a leading role in involving municipal institutions by providing them necessary help and advice, explaining the goals of the IAP, and updating their strategic plans with relevant measures. Municipality is also responsible for constant and systematic monitoring of the implementation of the IAP.

Conditions related to human resources and competences

It is important that specialists responsible for implementation of the IAP receive the required support from administration of municipality. This support includes coordinated planning of the steps of implementation of particular actions, authorisation and initiation of required consultations with representatives of local CCI and experts. It is important to improve qualifications of the responsible specialists, to the extent possible, to provide them access to successful practices of foreign cities in their attempts to widen accessibility of culture and to decentralise cultural services.

Technological conditions

Several actions of the IAP are heavily dependent on implementation of new technological solutions. For example, the program for international communication of Vilnius culture, modernisation of municipal financial instruments providing support for CCI projects are not possible without application of relevant IT technologies that enable data gathering, analysis, and dissemination of information.

Major risk factors and possible mitigation strategies

General risk factors that may impede successful implementation of the IAP are closely related to the creation of the mentioned necessary conditions. Below is the list of the most important risk factors, selected on the basis of their potential gravity and level of probability and possible mitigation strategies

The lack of political will to ensure consistent implementation of the IAP after elections of the city council in 2023	Establishment of IAP implementation monitoring group, in which members of URBACT Local Group (ULG) will participate, will ensure strategic perspective for the implementation of IAP
New waves of prolonged COVID-19 pandemic threaten recovery of local CCI	Robust measures aiming at efficient dealing with COVID-19 pandemic will be implemented while drawing on experience of actions already performed by municipality in 2020 and 2021
Geopolitical situation in the region or other either external or internal factors cause financial and economic crisis in Lithuania and Vilnius	In case of exacerbation of geopolitical situation in the region, municipality will develop dedicated guidelines in which a number of actions will be suggested for local CCS
Culture is not considered a priority policy area by municipality, which reduces its financing	IAP implementation monitoring group will advocate for additional funding, emphasis will be shifted to actions and steps that require no or less funding
Municipality fails to mobilise and motivate its institutions, local art and culture organisations, representatives of Cultural and Creative sectors, and other stake holders to collaborate and take an active role in implementation of the IAP	Additional help from administration and possibly from external experts will be considered

Action tables

1.

Challenge:	In spite of the fact that more and more people are willing to participate in Vilnius cultural life, a number of specific groups of society remain disadvantaged as far as cultural services are concerned. Elder population, children and younger persons are still relatively culturally passive due to limited access to diverse and actual professional cultural content tailored to their needs. Geographically remote districts of the city lack infrastructure, financial and human resources to provide relevant cultural services to their audience. Municipal cultural institutions are focused too much on their traditional audience and not open enough to include local communities and disadvantaged groups of society.	
Action:	Facilitation of accessibility of culture to all members of society regardless of their age, nationality, social status, income, physical fitness, and place of living.	<p>Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draw conclusions from the survey “Participation in culture and satisfaction with cultural services in Vilnius” (2021) - Organize a series of workshops for the leaders of municipal cultural institutions and representatives of other stakeholders, in which emerging needs of local communities would be addressed and additional new measures adopted in the strategic plans of municipal institutions aiming at engaging more children, young, elderly, physically challenged persons into their cultural activities. - Amplify cultural activities of city’s local communities by consolidating existing municipal financial mechanisms implemented in different contexts of a) policy of social security and b) cultural policy of the city. - Draw a “Vilnius Culture Map” together with representatives of municipal cultural institutions and stakeholders, discuss possibilities to cover all “white spots” by updating institutions’ missions and encouraging them to expand their geographical and social reach especially focusing on culturally disadvantaged areas of the city. - Assess the results and positive impact of such municipal programs as “Art in non-traditional spaces” and “I create Vilnius” and develop new program aiming at fostering cultural and art events in non-traditional spaces of Vilnius.
Outcomes:	Implementation of action will increase overall accessibility of culture to different groups of society	
Key notes:	Inspirations from partners: Riga’s project “Bee-hives”.	
Responsible:	Departments of culture and youth, municipal cultural institutions.	
Stakeholders:	Neighborhoods, NGO’s, associations, local communities, educational institutions	
Timetable:	2021-2026	

2.

Challenge:	In spite of numerous examples of successful practices and projects implemented by Lithuanian and foreign NGOs, Vilnius municipal educational system is as yet not capable to efficiently exploit available cultural and artistic assets to invigorate processes of formal and informal education. Cultural and educational systems are relatively isolated from each other and requires policy initiatives of mediation.	
Action:	Exploitation of culture and art in learning by fostering synergy between CC sector and municipal system of formal and informal education.	<p>Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss lessons learned from successful national projects e.g., “Creative partnerships” and “Culture passport”, while drawing on these examples, develop and implement a dedicated municipal program “Education by culture”. - Initiate a round table discussion with leaders and representatives of municipal institutions of formal and informal education about existing legal, administrative, financial, and other impediments to more efficiently utilize culture and art in the process of learning. Develop a list of actions to eliminate these impediments.
Outcomes:	Synergy between cultural and educational systems	
Key notes:	Successfully implemented national projects “Creative partnerships” and “Culture passport” could be efficiently replicated at the city level	
Responsible:	Departments of culture, education, and youth, municipal cultural and educational institutions	
Stakeholders:	NGO’s, associations, artists, CCI	
Timetable:	2021-2026	

3.

Challenge:	<p>In spite of significant international recognition of Vilnius cultural heritage, its festivals and other art projects, city is not known well enough among international networks of culture and art professionals. It is strategically important to attract to Vilnius not only consumers of culture and art from abroad but also world-famous artists and creative professionals, besides, it is essential to attract young talented creators and motivate them to settle down and to spend in Vilnius at least a part of their careers. Development of Vilnius' culture and creative sectors (CCS) lacks strategy, coordination with respect to goals and values shared with municipal policies in areas of city development, community building, transportation, export of cultural products and services etc. The dissemination of information about Vilnius cultural life is also not efficient enough.</p>	
Action:	<p>Strengthening international competitiveness of Vilnius' CCS by making the city better known among internationally acclaimed CCS professionals.</p>	<p>Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initiate a discussion with representatives of art education institutions, national art associations, National association of Cultural and Creative industries, municipal cultural institutions and other stakeholders about necessary conditions to motivate young talents to live and work in Vilnius. On the basis of the results of this discussion, develop a program for young talents aiming to reverse Vilnius brain drain. - Re-assess conclusions of recent studies of ecosystem of art residences in Lithuania, evaluate advantages and disadvantages of existing practices of providing financial support for art residences in Vilnius. Drawing on the results of this evaluation, develop a new municipal system of financial support for Vilnius art residences. - Initiate and take a part in close collaboration with other departments of Vilnius municipality, directly or indirectly responsible for communication, marketing, international relations, and tourism to develop a new program for international communication of Vilnius culture that will be implemented after 2023 (Vilnius' 700th anniversary year). - Drawing on experience of previous anti-COVID measures and the feedback from CCI about their effectiveness, develop a set of short-term and long-term measures to alleviate effects of Covid-19 pandemic. - Initiate a wide public discussion about actual need for new public cultural infrastructure in Vilnius. - Apply more strategic and more systematic approach in fostering development of Vilnius CCI by initiating a new CCI mapping document in 2022, by initiating a discussion with representatives of Vilnius CCI about possible model of cooperation between Vilnius municipality and local CCI.
Outcomes:	<p>Vilnius strengthens its regional and international reputation as "Creative city"</p>	
Responsible:	<p>Departments of culture, communication.</p>	
Stakeholders:	<p>NGO's, associations, artists, CCI</p>	

Timetable:	2021-2026
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4.

Challenge:	In spite of the fact that Vilnius is famous for its diverse cultural heritage, it is unfortunate, that local national and cultural communities live in relative cultural isolation. Up till now, there was no comprehensive study on cultural conditions and needs of different national and cultural communities in Vilnius.	
Action:	Fostering cultural diversity as one of essential aspects of Vilnius' identity	<p>Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draw conclusions from the survey "Participation in culture and satisfaction with cultural services in Vilnius" (2021) about cultural needs and preferences of local national communities. - Develop a strategy of preservation and presentation of Vilnius multicultural heritage not only as testimony of city's past, but also as lively historical sources for multicultural identity of present-day Vilnius' society. - Review and revise usage of authentic elements in Vilnius traditional cultural events by maintaining balance between popular mainstream entertainment and manifestations of authentic ethnic culture. - initiate discussion with representatives of religious authorities, Lithuanian national commission for UNESCO, Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency, and other relevant institutions about possible ways to encourage educational events and practices in cultural and religious heritage sites in Vilnius. - Review, revise, and modernize network of municipal museums, invigorate their activities by increasing their financial support.
Outcomes:	Vilnius multicultural heritage is no longer disconnected from cultural live of local national communities	
Key notes:		
Responsible:	Departments of culture, education, social affairs, and youth, municipal cultural and educational institutions, Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency.	
Stakeholders:	NGO's, associations, national communities	
Timetable:	2021-2026	

5.

Challenge:	Current municipal system of financial support for culture and art projects does not meet contemporary requirements of competence, transparency and efficiency	
Action:	To modernize municipal financial instruments providing support for CCI projects	Steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taking into consideration the best practices of Lithuanian Council for Culture and foreign agencies providing financial support for culture and art projects according to the arms-length principle, develop a new municipal system of financial support for culture and art projects employing expert groups specialising in different areas of culture and art. - Assess the municipal practice of providing support for art festivals taking place in Vilnius, develop a new municipal system of financial support for art festivals.
Outcomes:	An updated municipal instruments of financial support for culture and art projects	
Key notes:	National “Culture council”, comparable foreign institutions (e.g. in UK and Scandinavian countries) working according to the “arm’s length” principle.	
Responsible:	Department of culture	
Stakeholders:	NGO’s, associations, artists, national and municipal insitutions	
Timetable:	2021-2026	