

BRUSSELS  
NOU  
WAT  
CULTURAL

CULTURAL  
PLAN  
FOR  
BRUSSELS



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# INTRODUCTION...

After two years of consultation, the cultural sector in Brussels has formulated 34 proposals for a Brussels cultural policy; they are addressed to the cultural sector itself, but mainly to all the relevant government bodies and the Brussels community as a whole. This Cultural Plan for Brussels is part of a broad debate on the city and the challenges the city would like to see formulated for itself. Key words are: collaboration and action, concreteness, and with a clear eye on the future.

The Cultural Plan for Brussels is an exercise in democracy. For the first time, the Brussels cultural sector has come together to negotiate and discuss how it would like to see the cultural future of its city translated into challenges. This task, supported by two networks (RAB and BKO), resulted in various forms of collaboration and exchange with other networks and actors such as the Brussels Museums Council<sup>1</sup>, the Foundation for the Arts<sup>2</sup> and Culture Action Europe<sup>3</sup>. Over the past two years more than one hundred people in the cultural sector have come together on several occasions to brainstorm and discuss the cultural landscape of Brussels. This document is the result of all these sessions. In this Cultural Plan, 120 Brussels cultural actors have put forward the questions, desiderata and, especially, the concrete ambitions which they, with the financial support of the King Baudouin Foundation, have formulated both for themselves and for the city.

Since it became the European Capital of Culture in 2000, Brussels has been the object of numerous projects and ideas which in turn have generated the dynamics of the city's cultural life and led to cross-fertilization and debate — think of BRXLBRAVO<sup>4</sup> and the development of the two organizations that helped create this Cultural Plan for Brussels: the Réseau des Arts à Bruxelles (RAB) and the Brussels Kunstenoverleg (BKO), which signed a cultural cooperation agreement in 2007. Besides this, there are also the conclusions of the Citizens' Forum of Brussels<sup>5</sup> and the socio-economic study of the Brussels metropolis commissioned by four Belgian employers' organizations. Such initiatives embody the debate on the future of Brussels and its ambitions. This Cultural Plan is intended to do the same right across the length and breadth of its own sector.

1. The Brussels Museums Council (BMC) represents and works with more than 80 museums in the Brussels-Capital Region, including federal, communal, community and private museums. [www.brusselsmuseums.be](http://www.brusselsmuseums.be)

2. The Brussels Foundation for the Arts was founded in 1992 in order to counter the fragmentation of the cultural scene in Brussels due to political decisions made in the past. Its main objective is to actively promote the city's cultural offer through different projects such as the annual Cultural Guide to Brussels (an exhaustive overview of the most important upcoming events) and «Arsène 50», the last-minute and half-priced ticket sale for cultural performances and concerts. Its main activity, however, is the daily input of cultural events taking place in Brussels and its dissemination through the website [agenda.be](http://agenda.be) and other media.

3. Culture Action Europe is an advocacy and lobby organization promoting arts and culture as a building block of the European project. Its aim is to influence European policies for more and better access to culture across the continent and beyond. [www.cultureactioneurope.org](http://www.cultureactioneurope.org)

4. BRXLBRAVO is a biennial arts festival established by the cultural sector in Brussels. Art houses — large and small, Dutch- and French-speaking —, museums, theatre companies, dance companies, and individual artists cooperate to create the programme for the festival. [www.brxlbravo.be](http://www.brxlbravo.be)

5. In the context of the elections and institutional negotiations in 2009, the Brussels civil society wanted to make itself heard in order to assert and defend the distinctive character of the City-Region. The Brussels' Citizens Forum constituted an unprecedented mobilization of Brussels' civil society, grouped into a large platform a 6-month process of consultation, reflection and public debate, involving more than a hundred scholars and more than a thousand associations, federations and groups. [www.citizensforumofbrussels.be](http://www.citizensforumofbrussels.be)

If this plan is about culture, then it is first and foremost about «artistic activity» — ranging from historic heritage to contemporary art — and its creation, production and distribution as well as education, information and promotion. Here culture is not viewed in a broad anthropological sense, but more as belonging to an historical heritage which is a part of everyone's identity — we all «belong» to a culture — and as a dynamic process. The construction of culture is an ongoing process that overlaps with other domains of life.

This Cultural Plan presents a vision for Brussels. A vision of culture and of the city. It develops a transparent and clear vision of this city and translates this into concrete proposals wherever possible. This Cultural Plan is an invitation extended to its inhabitants, both new and long-established citizens, politicians, visitors and finally, the cultural players and the artists themselves.

Our vision of Brussels is one of a developing culture. It contradicts the myth of a fixed and distinct identity which one has to belong to or merge with. One cannot simply reduce Brussels to such an identity. Instead, it embodies a constant exchange between the various building blocks of the city, people who have their own background, organizations, institutions, etc. The cultural sector knows from experience that it is this kind of dynamism that makes Brussels so special in the cultural and artistic fields. Through it everyone contributes to the image of the city and what the city generates. Although many other European capitals derive their identity as a city from a 'national' logic, this is not possible in Brussels. Nor can Brussels be reduced to its link with the Communities in Belgium or to its institutional role as the capital of Europe.

Those who support this plan wish to leave the question «Where do we belong?» by the wayside and concentrate fully on the idea of the melting pot which, as if it were a mould, is both a breeding ground and stage for all that we create in Brussels. Moreover, they advocate the idea that culture is an inextricable part of urban reality. This takes place on two levels. First of all, culture contributes to emancipation. Therefore it should lie in the very heart of a city and in the life of every citizen of Brussels no matter where he comes from or what his roots are. On a second level, culture contributes to the national and international allure of the city. The image that people abroad have of Brussels also includes cultural aspects of the city. An ambitious Brussels will allow art and culture to play a central role in the image of itself it wishes to disseminate.

The aim of this plan is to convince people and make them enthusiastic. Through all the cultures that populate and run through Brussels, we can define it as a European workplace where it must be possible to exchange ideas. This means doing away with compartmentalization and entering into new forms of cooperation. Brussels needs more coherence and to achieve this we need clear proposals.

Such proposals are to be found in this publication. They create a dream for Brussels that is more concrete and has four dimensions: the link between its inhabitants, the reception of others, the debate on a city which is also a project, and the urban fabric — the city consists of many networks and at the same time is itself involved in international networks.

The proposals are divided into five themes which together characterize the cultural development and ambitions of Brussels: 1. diversity and cultural accessibility, 2. the spatial distribution of culture, 3. the role of artists, 4. a coherent policy and communication, and 5. the cultural allure of a capital city. If we are to realize some of these items, action will have to be taken on three levels. In this publication the cultural actors make it clear that they are willing to commit themselves to several proposals even though they understand that it will be impossible to achieve all of them at the same time. The RAB and BKO networks also regard themselves as involved in implementing and coordinating the various lines of action. Lastly, there are also the authorities, politicians and other parties in Brussels: in this plan they will find concrete suggestions for a better policy which the cultural sector also hopes to help achieve.



**2000: Brussels, European Capital of Culture**  
**2002: Brussels Kunstenoverleg (BKO) founded**  
**2005: BRXLBRAVO launched**  
**2005: Réseau des Arts à Bruxelles (RAB) founded**  
**2007: cultural cooperation agreement signed**



## RÉSEAU DES ARTS À BRUXELLES & BRUSSELS KUNSTENOVERLEG

The Réseau des Arts à Bruxelles (RAB) and The Brussels Kunstenoverleg (BKO) are two cultural networks that were established after Brussels was the European Capital of Culture in the year 2000. Today they bring together more than 115 cultural institutions in the Brussels-Capital Region of Belgium: theatres, companies, art labs, festivals, etc.; small organizations as well as big institutes. As Brussels-based networks, the RAB and BKO work in close collaboration, creating bridges between the Dutch- and French-speaking communities in Brussels.

The Réseau des Arts à Bruxelles and The Brussels Kunstenoverleg aim to:

- stimulate collaboration within the cultural field and with the public authorities to realize a cultural policy that responds to the specificity of Brussels;
- create a common vision within the cultural field towards the public authorities;
- facilitate experience sharing between Brussels-based cultural organizations;
- encourage dialogue and synergies between the city's cultural organizations;
- set up collaborations to realize research projects about the arts in Brussels;
- create instruments to communicate with, gather and share information for Brussels-based cultural organizations;
- launch collective projects that enhance the visibility of the cultural field in Brussels (e.g., the BRXLBRAVO festival).

[www.reseaudesartsabruelles.be](http://www.reseaudesartsabruelles.be)  
[www.brusselskunstenoverleg.be](http://www.brusselskunstenoverleg.be)

## INTRODUCTION ON BELGIUM

Belgium is a federal state composed of three communities and three regions. The decision-making power is not exclusive to the federal government and the federal parliament. The country is governed by various authorities which exercise their competences autonomously in their respective matters.

### — The Communities

The notion of «community» refers to the people that comprise it and to the ties that bind them together, namely language and culture. Belgium has three official languages: Dutch, French and German. The country thus comprises three Communities: the Flemish Community, the French Community and the German-speaking Community. They correspond to three distinct population groups. The Communities are competent for «person-related matters» such as culture, education, youth, equal opportunity, health, etc.

### — The Regions

Belgium comprises three Regions: the Flemish Region, the Brussels-Capital Region and the Walloon Region. They are competent for «territorial» matters: regional development, the environment, housing, the economy, employment, transport, etc. The Belgian Regions are somewhat similar to the German «Länder».

### — The Federal State

The federal state remains competent for numerous matters such as foreign affairs, national defence, justice, finance, social security, and a substantial part of public health and home affairs, etc. The Communities and Regions are, however, competent to establish international relations in the context of the matters they manage. The country is also subdivided into 10 provinces and 589 communes. The communes are similar to the French municipalities.

### — Brussels

The Brussels-Capital Region was created in 1989 as an autonomous region, comparable to the Flemish and Walloon Regions. The Brussels Region exercises its competences on a territory measuring 162 sq. km and comprising 19 communes. Brussels is officially bilingual (Dutch and French). Brussels is also the capital of Belgium, of the Flemish Region and of the French Community; it is also the unofficial capital of the European Union.



# THE CITY



# A CITY. A VISION

The Cultural Plan for Brussels outlines an ambitious project for a city in four dimensions:

## RECEPTION

➤ Brussels is a city where various backgrounds, generations and profiles come together. Here people must feel that they are citizens of Brussels.

➤ Everyone in Brussels, the foreigner who has just arrived in the city, the tourist who is passing through, the ever-changing public, the artist who lives here, the commuter, a refugee, a traveller or inhabitant, young or old, all must be able to find a piece of art and culture that remains with him, which he looks at or listens to, and which he can help create.

## TIES

➤ On a human level, too, one must be able to continue to recognize and experience a city that is constantly changing. A city like this must facilitate links and promote relationships between its inhabitants.

➤ Culture can give people the feeling that they don't simply live in a place. It creates all sorts of ties between people while at the same time encouraging them to express this in some way. Intercultural dialogue produces cross-fertilization between origins and generations, social classes and neighbourhoods. Artists create them, but they are also the result of good management.

## DEBATE

➤ A city with a future is a city with room for debate. If Brussels wishes to look its future in the eye, then it must be a forum for divergent ambitions and ideas.

➤ An individual's culture and identity are not a source of prestige or a heritage that is outside time. Indeed, this sort of culture or identity requires respect if it does not wish to be at odds with its times or to disappear. Consciously or not, all individuals together create what we call a culture 'in becoming' in Brussels. 'In becoming' because everyone can contribute to it, but also because all these things must not be allowed to clash too much with one another. A culture like this is never complete, but is constantly changing. It consists of ideas and projects and is not just merchandise that one can simply take or leave.

## NETWORKS

➤ In this city, what someone does or thinks may be generated by a huge number of connections between people, ideas and projects.

➤ Cultural activity in Brussels reflects a transverse society. Cross-border ideas and activities are encouraged here. It is a city that incites its cultural actors to look beyond its boundaries: to forge contacts elsewhere and defend common interests.



One can only draft a Cultural Plan for Brussels if one is familiar with the city. With regard to culture, languages, origins and well-being, Brussels is enormously diverse. Brussels is a capital city on various levels, including the international level. At the same time, it provides the people who live and work here with the relative comfort of a fairly small town. It is enveloped in a dense fabric of social networks and clubs. Politically speaking, the city is also well covered, but then in a more negative sense: authority in Brussels is spread over several levels, which means it is fragmented. If one limits Brussels to the boundaries of the Region, it is a poor city with exceptionally high levels of poverty and unemployment — and this, despite the fact that it generates a great deal of wealth and that the real sphere of influence we might call Brussels is in fact larger than what is currently called 'Brussels'. Although Brussels is a metropolis with two million inhabitants, on a political or administrative level no such metropolis exists yet.



## DEMOGRAPHY AND DIVERSITY

In 2008 the population of Brussels was 1,048,491. A total of 295,043 inhabitants (28.14%) were of foreign nationality and a further 200,000 had been naturalized after 1990. There are at least 1,000 people of each of 45 nationalities in Brussels today. 50% of the population is of foreign origin — in the rest of the country the average is 5%. The city has a cultural, linguistic, religious and socio-economic diversity that is unique in Belgium. Moreover, there are 30,000 people waiting to be granted refugee status, an indeterminate number of people who have no papers, and temporary residents, such as students, who are not registered in the communes in which they live. By 2015 the total number of people of foreign origin will have risen to 60% of the population. Brussels is also expecting a demographic boom: in the years to come the population of Brussels will increase by 150,000.

Why is this? Brussels is young. It has the lowest average age in the country. A quarter of its population is under 20 years old and almost one in three is under the age of 30. High numbers of immigrants have increased the birth rate (148 births per 1,000 inhabitants in 2007). One in five people under 15 years old living in Brussels is not Belgian. The largest number of young people lives in the «croissant pauvre», an area situated just west of the «Pentagon»<sup>5</sup>: in 2007 the number of children under 13 years old was highest in Molenbeek and Saint-Josse-Ten-Noode and lowest in Ixelles and Woluwe-Saint-Lambert. Moreover, the internationalization of the city attracts many young people who come here to study or to acquire their first year of professional experience in the European institutions.

The socio-economic picture of Brussels is not good. Since 1995 the average income per inhabitant has been consistently below the national average and is decreasing every year. 30% of the population of the Brussels-Capital Region lives below the poverty line (822 euro per month or 60% of the average Belgian income), compared to 11% in Flanders and 18% in the Walloon Region. There is unemployment in about 30% of families in Brussels. Of the 589 Belgian communes, the city of Brussels is the ninth poorest, and four other communes (Saint-Josse-ten-Noode, Saint-Gilles, Molenbeek and Schaerbeek) are in the top five communes with the lowest taxable income per inhabitant. On the other hand, the sum of all taxable income in Brussels continues to rise. To put it mildly, the socio-economic situation of the Brussels population is extremely volatile. The inequality that characterizes Brussels expresses

1. The Pentagon is the historical city centre of Brussels, delimited by the 'small ring' or inner ring road.



itself in the answer to the question about who lives where — think of the «croissant pauvre» — as well as in the answer to the question of which school a child attends — in which case we mean both general education and technical or vocational schools. Consequently there is every reason for inequality in Brussels to continue to exist.

## METROPOLIS

The socio-geographic reality of Brussels is that of a metropolis which, according to various studies, has a population of between 1.7 and 2.3 million inhabitants, and, depending on the criteria used, encompasses 31 to 62 communes (including the Brussels-Capital Region which comprises 19). In the Business Route 2018 for Metropolitan Brussels plan recently published by the BECI (Brussels Enterprises, Commerce and Industry), UWE (Walloon Union of Enterprises), VOKA (Flanders' Chamber of Commerce and Industry) and VBO/FEB (Federation of Enterprises in Belgium), the metropolis of Brussels is defined as: the Brussels-Capital Region, Walloon Brabant and the district of Halle-Vilvoorde. This metropolis could act as an economic powerhouse for Brussels. Its translation to the administrative level could guarantee a better balance in public funding (income from work, housing policy, etc.) and the development of infrastructure could be better adapted to those who actually use it (equitable distribution of benefits and costs).

Today this metropolis is a socio-economic reality. Few will contradict this, yet on a political or administrative level it does not exist. The way policy in this metropolis is spread over Regions and Communities is a negation of its existence, while at the same time making cross-fertilization between territorial and cultural powers impossible.

## ECONOMY

The Brussels metropolis, as described by the four employers' organizations BECI, UWE, VOKA and VBO/FEB, generates 30% of Belgium's total economic activity. According to a European benchmark study that preceded their publication and covered the 1995-2006 period, productivity is extremely high in this metropolis: the output per hour worked is the highest of all European urban regions examined in the survey and, as far as the net domestic product per capita is concerned, it is only surpassed by Luxembourg. This healthy state of affairs is especially due to the hinterland: in the Brussels-Capital Region, where the economic weight is

always double that in the hinterland, economic growth and job creation are stagnating.

The contribution of individual sectors to the economic health of the metropolis also varies. The financial sector and the «new economy» (ICT, telecom, electronics, audiovisual equipment, etc.) are leading the way while the traditional production sector (textiles, foodstuffs, publishers and printers, wood and paper production, metallurgy, construction, etc.) continues to shrink, and the sector which groups together catering, tourism, leisure time and culture has the worst score of all the urban regions studied — in the 1995-2006 period, the sector had negative growth — and for many years has represented a very low share of the economy. One of the most frequently voiced socio-economic challenges of the Brussels metropolis lies in two obstacles: on the one hand, there is a need for more skilled workers for spearhead companies, and on the other hand any attempt to increase the market for unskilled workers has met with little success.

## BRUSSELS BABEL

Brussels is officially bilingual (French – Dutch), but in fact many more languages are spoken here. Although French is clearly the dominant language in the region, no more than 57% call it their native language. For 5 to 10% of families living here, the native language is Dutch, while for 28% of the inhabitants their mother tongue is neither French nor Dutch. English continues to grow as a language that is used for work and as a lingua franca, and in an increasing number of households parents each have their own mother tongue so that the children naturally grow up to be bilingual. Consequently, mother tongue, everyday speech and lingua franca are increasingly different for many inhabitants of Brussels. There is a growing awareness that Brussels is a multilingual city and that one has to learn new languages if one wants to find a job (including Dutch for those who speak French or other languages). As far as languages are concerned, Brussels is a real patchwork. And whether they are open to this or feel obliged to become naturalized, more and more people are speaking more than one language.

Brussels is thus multilingual and multicultural. Here the idea that from birth one is associated with a single culture that is related to a single language is becoming less and less valid. The link citizens of Brussels have with one of the two large Communities in Belgium is becoming increasingly blurred: although their roots may lie elsewhere they do not recognize



**Mother tongue: the language passed on to children by at least one parent and which is usually spoken at home.**  
**Everyday speech: the language spoken freely in an everyday context, at home, with friends, during leisure time, etc.**  
**Lingua franca: the language one is forced to speak in a particular context and which the largest number of people regard as the language in which they are able to understand one another.**



themselves in the roots of such a Community and, although their roots are Belgian, they no longer regard themselves as being culturally unilingual. The fact that education in Brussels is the exclusive competence of each Community is at odds with this reality.

## GOVERNMENT BODIES

What is characteristic of the Brussels territory is that a considerable number of policy levels each exercise various powers in their own way. Cultural matters are a striking example here. In principle the Flemish and French Communities have exclusive authority over cultural matters, based on the language spoken and depending on where they are situated. In Brussels, however, other policy levels hold these powers:

- the Brussels-Capital Region: the international appeal and image of the city, and urban planning with regard to art in the public space;
- the federal government: several museums and major institutions including La Monnaie / De Munt, the Centre for Fine Arts (Bozar), the National Orchestra of Belgium, the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium and the Royal Museums of Art and History;
- the COCOF (French Community Commission), the VGC (Flemish Community Commission) and the GGC/COCOM (Common Community Commission), each of which attempts to coordinate a number of matters pertaining to the regional territory of the Communities;
- the 19 communes which make up the Region and which, each with their own councillor for culture, can pursue an independent policy — in several instances a councillor for Flemish affairs has powers in cultural matters which are relevant to the Dutch-speaking citizens who reside there.

## CAPITAL

Brussels is a capital city. Of Belgium, of the Communities in this country and of the European Union. Moreover, its mixed, multilingual, cosmopolitan population makes Brussels a truly international city that is in close touch with Europe and the rest of the world. It is also at the heart of a very dense network of roads, motorways and air routes.

The city's international role is becoming stronger and even growing, and this has a significant impact on the city. European and international institutions, including NATO, are responsible for 13 to 14% of employment and of the estimated

GDP of the Brussels Region. They occupy 3.3 million sq. m. of office space (30% of the total available office space in Brussels), provide employment for around 45,000 people (15 to 20,000 lobbyists, 5,000 diplomats, lawyers, international agencies, journalists, etc.) and attract foreign visitors. Brussels' international character has a substantial economic impact on the housing market, tourism and the catering sector as well as on all other public and private sectors.



# THE PLAN





## BRUSSELS, INTERCULTURAL

Today the Brussels-Capital Region has more than one million inhabitants. One in four is not Belgian, and one in five was naturalized after 1990. So about half have foreign roots and this proportion will continue to grow in the coming years.

Generally speaking, those who participate in the public cultural activities belong to the middle classes, are about 40 years old and highly educated.

The origins of those who are citizens of Brussels but not of Belgian nationality are very diverse. According to a recent study, 45 nationalities are represented here by at least 1,000 people each.

Brussels is a multicultural city. More than just a fact, this is a challenge to which we have to formulate a specific answer in each separate context. Such answers can only be generated by intercultural dialogue. Indeed, it is to this Brussels that the cultural sector must gear its operations. Interculturalism is the key factor.



Brussels is a small metropolis. It is not dominated by any one culture. Here communities who speak different languages or whose socio-economic situations differ widely have to live side by side. The best way for them to do this is not in isolation or through a policy of confrontation, but by exchanging one another's histories and future projects. Culture, like work or education, is an essential tool here. It is cultural exchange that makes Brussels liveable as a multicultural city. Anyone who believes that exchanges like these are meaningful and necessary has an intercultural view of the city.

Brussels must be approached interculturally and this supposes a dialogue based on openness, respect and a number of basic requirements such as freedom of expression, equality of the sexes and impartial government. In contrast to an assimilative approach — in which one culture dominates all others — or a community approach — where cultures live in isolation alongside one another — an intercultural approach can be defined as one in which people attempt to get to know one another and each other's ethnic, historical, cultural, philosophical, religious and linguistic backgrounds. This, and the knowledge thus acquired, generate respect for differences between people. On the other hand, there is a growing realization that everyone has to live together and this serves as a basis for defining communal requirements.

The cultural sector can and must help embody this intercultural dialogue, and it still has a long way to go in this respect. At present the cultural sector is developing initiatives that take the diversity of Brussels into account. The various players involved already have the know-how — one only has to think of the success of the Zinneke Parade<sup>1</sup> — but the workers on the shop floor of many cultural institutions are still predominantly white and highly educated. Anyone who looks at what is being created and shown will see that there could be more of a focus on intercultural dialogue. The 'culture in becoming' that characterizes Brussels should also be seen and heard — it has to be created — and everyone should be able to participate in it on the basis of his own background and cultural heritage. Almost all cultural institutions in Brussels are involved in cultural mediation. They organize workshops, encounters and creative projects directed at schools, local clubs and specific population groups, or work individually. So although things are already moving, in the light of future challenges it is not enough. Everyone knows it is not easy to reach people who do not participate in culture. This group is

1. The Zinneke Parade is a biennial event during which the multicultural communities of Brussels come together in the heart of the city. Around 4,000 participants converge on the main streets of the city centre, creating a carnivalesque atmosphere with brass bands, actors, dancers and musicians. The Zinnodes, as the workshops are known, work hard for months following a preparatory stage of about a year and a half. Zinneke is also an artistic and social experiment which aims to combat inequality and to form a project in which everyone can participate. [www.zinneke.org](http://www.zinneke.org)

Diversity in Brussels continues to grow. Due to the presence of young migrants the birth rate is rising. Moreover, these migrants are loath to move on once they have started a family and prefer to remain in Brussels.

Linguistically speaking, Brussels is a patchwork; ever-increasing numbers of citizens speak two or more languages. Speaking a language in Brussels is different compared to the rest of the country. Here, the mother tongue, lingua franca and everyday speech are often not the same and speaking one of the three national languages is not the same as being part of a cultural community.

Poverty in Brussels is on the rise and the impact of unemployment on the city is greater than elsewhere in Belgium.

becoming bigger and bigger, and there are no readymade answers to better reach them in the future. Children and young people are a special target group. The artistic and cultural knowledge and skills they acquire at school are limited, and their cultural and artistic backgrounds are very different.

What we already know is that culture is best spread by people who know and trust one another. Apart from the financial barrier, all obstacles that hamper participation in art and culture can be circumvented by trusting those who inform and advise. Brussels needs networks of trust.

Lastly, we need to address the question of which type of culture we wish to see in museums, arts centres and dance and theatre venues in Brussels in the future. Isn't the range of culture for the Brussels public too biased towards the social world of the forty-year-old, highly-educated member of the middle classes?



**Major challenges in education can be summarized as follows:**

- the school population in Brussels is multicultural and multi-ethnic, and pupils speak different languages;
- the education landscape is segregated and is dual: too many young people from the «croissant pauvre» end up in vocational, technical and art schools; on the other hand, all too often young people from the southeast end up in general education. The same applies to higher education, which is mainly populated by young people from the southeast and the outskirts of the city\*;
- Brussels is undergoing strong demographic growth and is therefore also experiencing a rapid growth in school population.

\* A. Rea, C. Nagels and J. Christiaens, «Citizens' Forum of Brussels. Young people in Brussels — social inequality and cultural diversity», Brussels Studies summary note no. 9, 2 February 2009.



**In Brussels one in three citizens is not aware of the cultural offer and does not participate in culture. Barriers to culture are:**

- no interest in culture and no knowledge of the codes culture assumes;
- no information on the actual cultural offer;
- no money;
- no knowledge of the language;
- awkward working hours and poor public transport.



## INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE? BILINGUAL EDUCATION!

«There is no such thing as Brussels education», claims a study carried out in 2009. Indeed, in Brussels the two Communities each organize their own education with their own school structure. Of the 230,000 pupils officially registered in the region, 80% follow French-language education and 17% Dutch-language education — the remaining 3% attend European and other international schools. As yet there are as good as no consultation structures between the Flemish and French Communities, nor is there any official collaboration between them. Fortunately there has in practice been some collaboration, and similar initiatives should be encouraged.

Besides the legal framework in which the French and Flemish Communities are each responsible for their own education system, there are also institutions which only operate in Brussels. The COCOF (French Community Commission) and the VGC (Flemish Community Commission) also organize education in several institutions, as do the City of Brussels and the other communes of Brussels.

With the exception of the European schools, education in Brussels is monolingual. Collaboration between French- and Dutch-speaking education does not exist. For some years now the French Community has developed immersion education in which some subjects are taught in another language. In Brussels this is still Dutch. Where the system does exist it is very successful, despite the danger of its promoting elitist education.

Anyone who is multilingual has less difficulty understanding others. This is useful for those who work, for instance. Moreover, knowing another language also reinforces an intercultural attitude, which is crucial to the future of young people living in Brussels. Added to this is the fact that two Communities come together in Brussels. Multilingualism must definitely be stimulated in Brussels. The Brussels cultural sector therefore advocates a cultural revolution in Brussels: bilingual education! Launch a pilot project centred on bi-community and bilingual education. Give it a try and think about how education like this can be further developed in the future.

# 01

The cultural players in Brussels must participate in the intercultural dialogue. They must be prepared to take more risks than in the past: to distance themselves from their own cultural references and to create, produce and distribute work which reflects the melting pot of Brussels in both its subjects and the artists themselves. The public must thus also be encouraged to participate. In this respect, the cultural sector would also like to reflect more deeply on the role of art and culture in the public space and participation therein.

# 02

Each cultural player with more than five employees should be able to employ at least one colleague in its team and management who has a cultural background different from that of the rest of the team. Cultural diversity should be positively reflected in the everyday practice of the sector.

# 03

The Brussels cultural sector wishes to establish an informal platform for encounter, discussion and projects which arts organizations set up together with the various cultural communities in Brussels. At the same time, the sector would like to do more to build bridges with cultural players who are not (yet) subsidized or institutionalized or with private players whose projects reach a wide audience. Lastly, the sector wishes to develop a process for the recognition and funding of the intercultural approach to certain arts organizations.

# 04

The Brussels cultural scene is not Flemish or French-speaking but multilingual. It is therefore necessary to have specific codes of behaviour. For example, giving special financial support for translations and subtitles should be taken into consideration. In Brussels this is often an important item in the budget for an artistic project.

# 05

We must find out more about the best way to stimulate cultural participation. By means of an inventory of good practices one can distribute funding more efficiently and existing sustainable initiatives can be strengthened, rather than constantly creating new ones. Moreover, research methods need to be refined and more qualitative research is necessary. Lastly, Brussels also needs knowledge centres, such as a museum of immigration, that will present and promote the cultural heritage of various communities.

# 06

The initiatives being developed today to reach children and young people look fragmented. Collaboration between the cultural sector and schools should be expressed in long-term programmes. These joint ventures can then be stimulated and streamlined at the level of the sector as a whole. Teachers and social workers who cooperate with the cultural sector could be specially trained in interculturalism and cultural mediation.

## 07

Brussels needs cultural ambassadors to cultivate relationships with the population, facilitate the transfer of culture and encourage participation. The cultural sector must stimulate informal networks of trust and strengthen existing ones. Mediation bodies such as Lasso<sup>1</sup>, Dēmos<sup>2</sup>, Culture et Démocratie<sup>3</sup> and Article 27<sup>4</sup> already play a fundamental role in the creation of these.

<sup>1</sup> Lasso is a Brussels-based network centred on art education and public mediation. The members of this network are Flemish and federal organizations and institutions that work in the field of art education and/or public mediation, based in Brussels or its surroundings. Lasso is not bound to any sector and involves all (educational) arts institutes, educational institutions, welfare organizations and socio-cultural actors. [www.lasso.be](http://www.lasso.be)  
<sup>2</sup> Funded by the Flemish authorities, Dēmos is a non-partisan research and advocacy organization working on three overarching aims: to broaden participation in the arts, youth work and sports; to strengthen a vibrant and inclusive democracy; and to empower the public sector to work for the common good. [www.demos.be](http://www.demos.be)  
<sup>3</sup> Since 1993, Culture et Démocratie has mobilized artists, intellectuals and citizens around a critical reflection on culture, democracy and what binds them. The association advocates a central place for culture and creation in public policy, and supports the rights of citizens to have access to and take part in the various forms of cultural and artistic expression. [www.cultureetdemocratie.be](http://www.cultureetdemocratie.be)  
<sup>4</sup> Article 27 is a socio-cultural organization which aims to facilitate access to all forms of culture for people suffering from poverty or social exclusion. To achieve its goals Article 27 collaborates with social and cultural partners. [www.article27.be](http://www.article27.be)

## 09

On the French-speaking side there is also a need for a network for art education and public mediation which could work closely with Lasso on the Dutch-speaking side.

## 10

Today various government bodies are trying to do something about the financial barrier that prevents many citizens of Brussels from participating in culture. It would be best to harmonize the initiatives taken and create a single instrument that encompasses the whole population and all cultural and artistic institutions. The same applies to cultural vouchers: one consideration might be to create a single Brussels voucher that is accessible to all its citizens.

## 08

Cultural mediation is a special field and practising this in Brussels requires specific skills. At present there is no special training that responds to the particular cultural and linguistic situation in Brussels. Existing graduates, Masters, teaching certificates or modules could take this into consideration. Some thought could also be given to introducing a new course in art colleges or universities.



## BRUSSELS. CULTURAL AREA

Brussels truly is marked by culture, but the way this is done seems rather disparate. This is not only due to obvious socio-cultural factors, but also to the great independence of cultural players and the lack of any clear idea on the direction culture should take in the city or region. Consequently, cultural Brussels needs to be charted. Literally — and this will involve the publication of a cultural map of the city — but also in terms of administering the city.



**Brussels has a striking diversity of cultural and artistic projects and infrastructure. Social and economic factors create many contrasts in the city, often resulting in an imbalance in the spatial distribution of culture.**



**For the cultural sector, the government bodies and other parties involved, the global image of this distribution is both vague and hard to decipher. This is partly due to the absence of a common database that encompasses the whole picture.**



With a demographic challenge in sight — by 2030 the population in Brussels will increase by about 150,000 — we need a balanced distribution of culture in the Brussels area. Some parts of the city will become more densely populated and as a result more thought will have to be given to various aspects of public services. In light of the arrival of new inhabitants in these districts, cultural and artistic activities will play a crucial role.

The cultural sector therefore advocates a twofold approach to culture. On the one hand it sees culture as playing a crucial role in the relation between individual and society — culture must be accessible to all Brussels inhabitants and available in all its suburbs. On the other hand, culture also plays a key role in the national, European and international allure of the city. Brussels has serious responsibilities towards international institutions. What happens and is decided here links Brussels closely with other capital cities. The range of artistic activities Brussels allows itself can strengthen its image elsewhere: Brussels can promote itself through culture. The sector emphasizes that these two aspects are complementary: an urban policy that looks beyond its borders benefits from a proper balance between the two.

The French and Flemish Communities exert great influence on the embedding of the cultural scene in Brussels. However, little thought is usually given to the way this occurs: the sites for cultural institutions and projects are more often the result of lobbying by cultural players or of opportunities in the property market. Yet the first criterion should be balanced distribution across the city, taking into consideration existing structures. Culture should be inscribed in the urban fabric, close to every inhabitant and with the demographic challenge of the coming years in mind. Whether it is about geographical zones or special infrastructure, both Communities have much to gain if their ideas are based on a 'cultural and creative pole', i.e., if they manage zones together where similar activities can be organized. A concentration of culture in clusters like this will increase the impact. When it comes to infrastructure, the Communities can make joint investments when similar activities are involved (libraries, local cultural centres, locations for artistic residences, etc). This would often mean having to invest less money, and meetings between members of the two Communities would be stimulated.

Moreover, the cultural and political players who embed the artistic programme in Brussels must also look at the outskirts and the whole of the Brussels metropolis — an area with two million

inhabitants: what connections can be created, what are the common interests? With a coherent vision of embedding culture in the whole of this metropolis, culture on the outskirts might in future be less disparate than it is in the Brussels-Capital Region today.

Some activities play a primordial role in the international allure of Brussels: they attract not only local inhabitants but foreign visitors too. Their location in the city greatly influences the image visitors to Brussels take home with them. If they are concentrated in one spot — like the Mont des Arts / Kunstberg<sup>1</sup> — this benefits the image of the city and the culture that resides here is easily accessible. However, the high concentration of culture in such a location can have a suffocating effect. Because there are no houses and the shops are all very similar, the location loses its human touch. For this reason alone it might be a good idea to spread attraction poles like this throughout the city. Moreover, it would enable visitors from outside Brussels to discover other facets of the city and the economic impact of their visits would be better distributed over the city.

What we are working towards is that the cultural allure of Brussels need not conflict with the embedding of this culture in the everyday lives of local residents. What poles of attraction could we create to this end?

— the Canal Zone<sup>2</sup>: the cultural and socio-cultural development of this zone will (in line with socio-economic efforts) play an important role in reducing the social gap between the neighbourhoods on both sides of the canal;

— the European District: Brussels must become more visible as the capital of Europe. This is an urban development and architectural challenge which will require more thought if we are to achieve a better balance between the various functions of the area (living, working, showcase of Europe, leisure, major roads into the city) — although the latter is already happening today, the cultural sector would like to have more say in the consultations the Brussels Region is involved in on this topic;

— the Cinquantenaire / Jubelpark<sup>3</sup>: this gigantic site in Brussels is faced with a shortage of funds and in this respect also lacks coherence. At the same time, however, it is a location which, if only because of its size, could accommodate a whole range of museum-related or other activities and which, as a major gateway to one of the approach roads to Brussels, could make a great contribution to the cultural allure of the city.

Brussels also lacks cultural landmarks. Such landmarks reveal the role of culture in the city right to its very heart. They are always an architectural and urban challenge. To bring

1. The Mont des Arts / Kunstberg is a historic site in the center of Brussels. This area marks the transition between the 'upper' and 'lower' town. It boasts a profusion of museums, theatres and historical monuments, attracting locals and visitors alike to Brussels.
2. The Canal Zone is a central urban zone that links the rich eastern part of the capital with the poorer areas in the western part. The canal is still a heavily used waterway. But whereas for centuries the Canal Zone was a point of arrival for workers and a busy transit area, today the area is increasingly characterized by social immobility. The zone is slowly but surely becoming more alive and vibrant, also on a cultural level.
3. The Cinquantenaire / Jubelpark is a large public urban park (30 ha) in the eastern part of the European District in Brussels. It houses several large museums such as the Royal Military Museum, the Cinquantenaire Art Museum and the AutoWorld Museum.

Although the capital zone contributes to the intensive cultural activities of Brussels and also benefits from it, it accepts no responsibility for developing cultural activities on the outskirts.

In Brussels there is no reliable tool to map out or correct the cultural offer and as a result, it is difficult to evaluate the factors underlying decisions regarding infrastructure.

The Communities are the most important level at which decisions can be made regarding new locations. Although locations like these also have a territorial impact, the Communities do not have powers over the territory.

On the other hand, the Brussels-Capital Region lacks a crucial lever. Other metropolises can use culture as a driving force in their urban policy — one only has to think of locations for cultural institutions and their urban and architectural impact, or art in the public space — but Brussels is crudely denied such a lever.

Decisions to place new projects or institutions in the urban fabric are not structurally coordinated, either at the level of the players or on a political level — community decisions often run parallel to one another, or in other words compete with one another.



challenges like this to a good end, the Region and communes must work together efficiently on urban and regional planning, both jointly and with the Communities which help fund them. However, ambitious infrastructure projects are not enough. Culture must also be given a place in the life of every inhabitant of Brussels — in the place where they live, work, shop, etc. — and the existing infrastructure must be clearly signposted or illuminated. Allow art and culture to claim their role in city life.

Lastly, as in other metropolises, the rhythm of everyday life in Brussels is expanding. The period of time which is actively lived each day is becoming longer. In this respect Brussels must become more flexible and the distribution of cultural activities can contribute towards this. They can be spread more evenly over the day and throughout the year, and the programme in summer can be extended. In this way the needs of both the inhabitants and visitors to Brussels can be better met.



**Interactions between central locations and those not located in the city centre remain limited. The same applies to the interaction between artistic creations and socio-cultural activities, and between professional culture-makers and amateurs.**



**As yet, culture presented on stage in Brussels can be seen and heard between eight and eleven o'clock at night. If a concert or performance lasts longer, this often causes problems for those who rely on public transport to get home. On the other hand, museums often close relatively early. It is now possible to visit an exhibition at night in Brussels, but only to a limited extent. And finally, in the summer most of the performing arts sector is closed down, providing no structural alternative for those inhabitants who remain in the city or cultural tourists visiting the city.**



## 11

The cultural players in Brussels would like there to be one common database that brings together and charts all cultural activities in Brussels. Various existing initiatives already cover part of the activities on offer. These should certainly be included in developing the project, which should meet three aims:

1. to create a context for decisions that impact the territorial distribution of culture;
2. to create a Who's Who for culture professionals;
3. to inform other professionals by putting maps online or by cooperating with public transport or tourism services. Charting culture is of crucial importance for realizing a Regional Development Plan for culture (see chapter 4).

## 13

Apart from public authorities and other relevant parties, the cultural sector must also be involved when projects concerning the priority zones for cultural development are being considered: the Canal Zone, the European District and the Cinquantenaire/Jubelpark.

## 12

In view of its territorial powers, the Brussels-Capital Region must be able to demand a coordinating role concerning the levels on which the location of new cultural activities are decided. Two conditions must be respected here:

1. that new activities fit in with the existing distribution;
2. that attention must always be paid to whether synergies or integration in existing structures are possible.

# 14

The cultural players in Brussels are committed to strengthening the ties that link them with their colleagues on the outskirts, with the aim of developing a coherent vision of the distribution of cultural activities in the metropolis as a whole. To achieve this they would like to address the two Communities.

# 15

Regardless of the question of which government body is providing funding, the Region must be able to enforce urban planning and architectural specifications for every important cultural infrastructure project. Moreover, it must also be responsible for the coordination of an unambiguous signposting plan for all cultural institutions on its territory.

# 16

With regard to the distribution of culture in time, the cultural sector in Brussels has the following proposals:

- the performing arts sector examines the possibilities of modifying and expanding the annual programming plan, also in the summer ;
- the whole cultural sector wishes to offer its support to the museums in considering changing or extending opening hours.



## BRUSSELS. CREATIVE CITY

Just as young people embody the future of Brussels, so too does culture in Brussels embody a future. Here artists look more to the future than to the past. They experiment. This experimentation should be given more support and embedded in the city. Young artists and creative people enjoy working in Brussels. Let's make sure it stays that way and offer stimulation and reinforcement wherever possible.



**More and more artists are living in Brussels. There are various reasons for this: Brussels lies in a densely populated urban zone with good connections to other major cities. Compared to many of these cities life here is both cheap and pleasant. Brussels is an accessible, multicultural and international city with great artistic dynamism and a comprehensive cultural programme.**



**In art education Brussels has a quantitatively and qualitatively strong programme on both the French- and Flemish-speaking sides. Although there is no question of any form of structural cooperation between the two Communities, in practice there is a great deal of actual collaboration, which includes organizing student and teacher exchanges.**



Brussels needs artists. Their potential is not a means but an end in itself. Here they create art first and foremost, and this creativity takes precedence. However, the creation of art shows that culture is always a construction and can therefore be the basis of social dialogue. In other words, the presence of many artists in a European capital promotes the development of democratic values. The economic potential of culture, on the other hand, is wasted in Brussels. According to the Business Route 2018 for Metropolitan Brussels plan (see page 12), its economic impact is far smaller than in most other comparable cities. Nevertheless, the artistic potential to change this is present.

With this in mind, the cultural sector in Brussels first and foremost wishes to support creations and emerging art practices which originate in the urban fabric of a multilingual and multicultural city. This can be achieved together with artists who live in Belgium, but also with those from elsewhere. It is only by fully stimulating the artists who live here in their occupation as artists that Brussels can truly call itself a cultural city and be worthy of the title of European capital.

Locations that excel in an international context should be reinforced and artists who come to Brussels need a clearer status. Artists are becoming increasingly mobile, which means that they increasingly find themselves in precarious legal and socio-economic situations.

In the careers of many artists, residences are the perfect time to do research; consequently, more and more Brussels arts institutions are offering residential programmes. Unfortunately, residences like this are usually short-term and the number of artists who can participate is limited.



Many art schools in Brussels have an international reputation and each year they attract large numbers of foreign students. After graduating, many artists continue to live and create art in Brussels.



Many young artists find a place for their creations in art laboratories and studios. The Flemish Arts Decree has recognized several art laboratories and provides them with special subsidies. On the French-speaking side there is no special statute for such locations, but there are many structures in place in which the work of young artists can be supported and facilitated.



At an artistic level, there is a great deal of creativeness, research and experimentation in Brussels. This has an impact on other disciplines. Indeed, certain areas are almost havens for artists, as well as accommodating architects, graphic designers, fashion designers, etc.



## 17

In consultation with the professional artistic sector in Brussels, the RAB and BKO would like to set up a multilingual information service and portal site for artists. This information service will provide artists with information on the cultural sector, the city's institutional framework and the various cultural financial sources. The portal site, which could, for example, be called artistinbrussels.be, could be used for networking and for a forum on which artists can find answers to their questions.

## 18

The Brussels cultural players would like to invite and recruit international curators and artistic directors more often. They can contribute to the city's international allure and the way the city reflects on itself.

## 19

The cultural sector wishes to strengthen existing ties with higher art education by way of joint projects and by programming student productions during certain public events.

## 20

A framework should be created for art college students that is geared to the cultural institutions. This can be done in the form of a programme of work placement or apprenticeship in which students can work together with experienced artists in preparation for a creation or production.

# 21

Locations where artists can create and experiment should be reinforced and expanded. A cultural boom generally originates on fallow land: old industrial complexes or other vacant premises, scars in the urban fabric that are still visible. Wasteland like this is available.

# 22

The public authorities should facilitate residence programmes with a duration of 6 to 18 months. One or more international and cross-disciplinary residence places could be set up in cooperation with art schools and cultural institutions.

# 23

The public authorities should promote the development of schools with an international reputation such as P.A.R.T.S.<sup>1</sup>, La Cambre<sup>2</sup>, the Queen Elisabeth College of Music<sup>3</sup> and E.S.A.C.<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, the international appeal of other institutions should be increased and Brussels should stimulate the creation of other international training centres where summer universities, master classes and suchlike can be held. In this way, Brussels can become an international site for education and creation.

1. P.A.R.T.S. (Performing Arts Research and Training Studios) was launched in September 1995. The school is a joint initiative of the dance company Rosas and the Belgian National Opera De Munt/La Monnaie. Its director is choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, who designed the artistic and pedagogical curriculum. P.A.R.T.S. is an internationally renowned training centre in contemporary dance. [www.parts.be](http://www.parts.be)  
2. «La Cambre: Ecole nationale supérieure des arts visuels» is a Brussels-based visual arts and design school that offers a wide array of educational programmes both at Bachelor's and Master's level. [www.lacambre.be](http://www.lacambre.be)  
3. Located near Brussels, the Queen Elisabeth College of Music was founded in the 1930s alongside the Queen Elisabeth International Music Competition (QEIMC). The college offers diplomas at three levels in piano, violin and singing, the latter of which includes an Opera Studio programme in collaboration with Brussels' major opera house De Munt / La Monnaie.  
4. The «Ecole Supérieure des Arts du Cirque» is a professional circus school located in Brussels. [www.esac.be](http://www.esac.be)



## BRUSSELS. COHERENT

Not uniform, but coherent. For too long now Brussels has been a cultural and political battlefield on which challenges are taken up over and over again. The Brussels cultural sector would like to formulate an alternative for the present situation, and the motto here is: efficient cooperation! Such collaborations need not result in uniformity. They could, however, contribute to a coherent policy tailored to Brussels. This chapter outlines the Brussels cultural policy and how it could be improved, as well as a more efficient way to communicate on the subject of culture.



**As decreed in Article 127 § 2 of the Constitution, the Flemish and French Communities have exclusive authority over cultural matters in the territory of the Brussels-Capital Region. This constitutional criterion of exclusivity has given rise to two problems:**  
– the Communities compete with one another, resulting in double the amount of work: the same activities take place in several institutions;  
– cultural players who work in a multilingual, multicultural and international context find it increasingly difficult to identify with one or the other Community in order to meet administrative and formal requirements.



At present culture in Brussels is too much like a jungle in which two Communities and a string of other policy levels have relatively free rein. Nobody can deny that making culture a community matter has helped generate a rich and many-sided cultural scene in Brussels which has been able to develop organically and cannot be reduced to a single idea of culture. Although the sector is pleased with this, it is now more than necessary for a global vision of culture to take over the community-based approach in Brussels with all its attendant institutional whims. For quite some time now, most of the culture created here, or which the public comes to see or listen to, can no longer be described as exclusively Flemish or French. Consequently, we must enable culture-makers to work in a policy context that is tailored to Brussels.



Besides the two Communities, several other policy levels also bear responsibilities regarding culture: the Brussels-Capital Region, the federal government, COCOF, VGC and the communes.



As far as cultural communication is concerned, there are various private initiatives in Brussels (Zone02, Fun in Brussels, Kiosque, Vas-y, etc.); government bodies have, however, also set up communication channels.

Some examples are:

- the city of Brussels has **Brupass**, a quarterly cultural agenda and website;
- the Flemish Community supports and stimulates an interest in culture by, for example, supporting the trilingual weekly magazine **Agenda** (which is distributed as a loose supplement in **Brussel Deze Week**), the **UiTinBrussel.be** website, **tvbrussel**, **FM Brussel**, **Brussel Deze Week** and **Cultuurnet Vlaanderen** as well as the planned **Muntpunt** communication centre;
- via the **RTBF**, the French Community finances **ARTE Belgique** and the programme **Cinquante degrés nord**, and it supports various publications and has developed the site [www.culture.be](http://www.culture.be);

To facilitate a cultural policy that is tailored to the city, there are two possible scenarios:

1. Certain specific cultural powers held by the Communities could be transferred to another government body. Please note that caution is needed here. The minority of Dutch-speaking citizens in Brussels could be jeopardized and this could also result in the policy being blocked. A way must be found to make the cultural policy in certain domains more coherent and thus increase the efficiency of the activities of the cultural players themselves. It is therefore necessary to create a new official body that operates according to uniform rules derived from the decrees of both Communities. Drafting rules like this is no easy task in view of the fact that the decrees of the two Communities are rooted in different philosophies. At the same time, consideration will have to be given to which body some of the powers in the cultural field will have to be transferred to. Should one transfer these powers to the federal level, to the Brussels-Capital Region or to the communes?

2. There could be a cooperative agreement between the Communities that provides for a joint budget, monitoring and an integrated administration. Here too caution is necessary. An agreement like this is often associated with a 'give and take' policy in which the common interest once again recedes into the background. Neither of the two Communities has territorial powers in Brussels and therefore do not bear shared responsibility regarding urban policy.

As far as cultural policy in Brussels is concerned, there is also a challenge at the level of the communes. Based

on the idea that local authorities are close to the people, the 19 communes in Brussels often take useful cultural initiatives: cultural activities in the public space, socio-cultural neighbourhood activities, social integration, etc. However, with the activities they generate they often cross their own boundaries and do not always take the existing infrastructure or activities into account. More consultation with the Region and other communes would ensure that cultural decisions are better integrated in an urban context. More consultation with local cultural players would also ensure that better use is made of existing resources and infrastructure.

As regards the communication of the cultural and artistic offer in Brussels, the challenge is the same as at the institutional level: Brussels needs an integrated and coordinated approach to manage these issues.

- the Flemish Community Commission's responsibilities include culture vouchers and promoting Flemish libraries and community centres;
- the Brussels-Capital Region promotes culture via **BIP** (Brussels Info Place) and **BITC** (Brussels International Tourism and Congress), which also helps with the publication of the bimonthly **BRU XXL** magazine, and via the **Foundation for the Arts** ([www.agenda.be](http://www.agenda.be));
- there are initiatives by **Toerisme Vlaanderen** and the **OPT** (Belgian Tourist Office: Wallonia and Brussels) and by private tourist players such as the hotel sector;
- lastly, there are special initiatives on single themes or for single target groups including **Use-it**, **Arsène 50**, museum promotions by the **Brussels Museums Council**, and promotional events such as **BRXLBRAVO**, **Nuit Blanche**, the **Brussels Museum Night**, etc.



If we look at all these initiatives as a whole, we see a fragmented landscape and as yet there is no strategy aimed at joining all the pieces together.



# 24

The regionalization of substantial cultural powers seems desirable in the medium term. However, we must not underestimate the positive role played by the Flemish and French Communities in the development of art and culture in Brussels. Consequently, and in the first place, the shortcomings of the community approach must be examined and the policy adjusted wherever possible. The best way to do this is in the following three ways:

**24.1** The two Communities, the VGC, the COCOF and the Brussels-Capital Region should set up a joint cultural coordination cell. The lack of consultation between the various government bodies is striking, as is the overall ignorance regarding decrees, procedures and the philosophy underlying each body's policy. The above bodies must therefore work more closely together. A coordination cell can take stock of the situation and supervise the cultural mapping of Brussels (see chapter 2). It can make an inventory of laws, decrees and regulations, seek out the best practices and formulate proposals for more coordination between the documents, as well as their improvement. Together with the cultural sector and other relevant parties it can also help draft a Regional Development Plan for culture. Such a plan would comprise the broad outlines of a cooperation agreement between the Communities (see point 24.4) and the allocation of a limited number of cultural powers to the Region (see point 24.3).

**24.2** The Flemish and French Communities and the Brussels-Capital Region should sign a cooperation agreement that is confined to the territory of the latter.

This agreement would include five essential points:

- a rationalization of the management of bi- or multi-community activities (in so far as they are not covered by federal institutions): a joint financing budget, uniform regulation of subsidies and monitoring, and an integrated evaluation body;
- create an agreement to jointly develop cultural activities that are specially directed at one or more language or cultural communities in Brussels. In this way they are not obliged to make an artificial choice between one of the two language communities in this country;
- define a clear policy regarding the support and development of cultural activities as a driving force for the international allure of Brussels (see chapter 5) in consultation with the Brussels-Capital Region and the federal government;
- develop policy tools to establish a common infrastructure that will enable both communities to organize activities;
- develop a common management tool for information and the promotion of culture in Brussels.

**24.3** The Brussels-Capital Region should be allocated several cultural powers.

It must be possible, for example by way of a special budget, to support intercultural activities and develop a policy regarding the embedding and spatial distribution of culture (see chapter 2). Moreover, it must preserve and reinforce its current role in the development of culture as a driving force for the international allure of the city (see chapter 5). Lastly, it must also be able to promote and support the development of bi- and multi-community activities. For the last point, specific powers can be assigned to the Region which are in proportional balance with regard to the Communities.

## 25

The cultural policy implemented by the 19 Brussels communes will occasionally extend beyond their own boundaries. Consequently, the Brussels Region should devise a system with them to monitor and coordinate this type of policy. The advantages of a system like this include: better integration of the municipal cultural policy on a regional level and an optimization of the financial possibilities of every commune. Moreover, a Charter of good management in cultural policy at a municipal level should be drafted in collaboration with the cultural sector, also including a clear definition of their role — recognizing the special needs of the inhabitants — and of their obligations — in consultation with the cultural players who are active on their territory. This will require commitment on the part of the communes and the cultural sector.

## 26

Regarding cultural communication and marketing, the cultural sector advocates establishing an organization that focuses specifically on cultural marketing in Brussels and which can function across the borders of language, culture and sector. The target groups are:

- anyone who lives in or is visiting Brussels (for an extended period of time);
- anyone who regularly visits Brussels and therefore knows the city well;
- Belgians who do not live in Brussels and do not know the city well;
- tourists;
- other foreign target groups.

Priorities extend to those who live in Brussels or are paying an extended visit to the city and anyone who regularly visits Brussels and therefore knows the city well. At the same time, however, an effective network of tourist and cultural reception points must be created for the other target groups — such as at airports, train stations, etc. Culture should also play a more important role in the tourism marketing of Brussels. This marketing should not be limited to ‘readymade’ cultural heritage and large events. The tourism, cultural and other relevant sectors should sit down together and devise a common communication strategy with one image or brand for Brussels (see chapter 5).

## 27

The cultural sector also advocates that this organization should combine the forces so far deployed by various government bodies for several similar communication channels into:

- a single events magazine, free and multilingual, preferably published every week and distributed throughout the Brussels metropolis, containing a broad selection of cultural events in Brussels;
- a single events site (culture and leisure site), multilingual, with an editorial approach and including profiling facilities and mail services.



## BRUSSELS. CAPITAL CITY

Brussels is a capital city in many ways. At present, however, the governments who declared it their capital are not inclined towards centralization. The challenge underlying this chapter is twofold: what does it mean to reside, live and work in a metropolis, and what does Brussels mean to the rest of the world as a capital city? The central role it plays at various levels should be tangible in the city. This role need not dominate, but it should have a positive image. Brussels needs to come to terms with itself as a metropolis. It needs a forward-looking urban project which will reinforce its international allure. Brussels can become a model city in the eyes of its inhabitants and all Europeans.

At the Belgian level, Brussels is the capital of Belgium, Flanders and the French Community. At an international level, it is, be it only unofficially, the capital of the European Union – the Union only assigns it the status of a decision-making centre. In all these roles it receives countless representations, delegations, lobbyists, journalists, etc.

As a European and global hub, Brussels is connected to the rest of the world and many countries and institutions wish to see themselves in the picture here.

Brussels must not be afraid to take on the central role it plays for the Walloon, Flemish, Belgian and European hinterland. As far as Belgium is concerned, Brussels possesses all the symbols and merits of a federal metropolis as well as the contradictions and imperfections of federalization, resulting in a fragmentation of responsibilities. It has made Brussels flexible, however. A lot is happening here on the cultural front and pragmatism is flourishing. If Brussels still wants to present itself as the capital of Europe, it must ensure that its central role is more visible in the city.

If Brussels is serious about the international role it plays, it must bear this responsibility with verve. It has all it needs to do so. It can play out its diversity and cosmopolitanism in a dynamic urban project: a sustained intercultural dialogue, open to every sort of talent, a European debate that transcends national reasoning, and an integration with the rest of the world.

A positive image of Brussels like this can be generated by:

- individuals who create or strengthen an image of Brussels outside the city;
- the image of the city visitors take home with them;
- the ties foreigners who work and study here have with the city;
- the ties all the inhabitants of Brussels have with Europe and the world in their own city.

Individuals have often put the city on the map – one need only think of René Magritte, Toots Thielemans and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker. Yet Brussels also really needs to think about how it can contribute towards its own international allure. Art and culture must play an important role here. Some events or key locations already attract large numbers of foreign visitors and thus reinforce an international image of culture in Brussels (Bozar, Europalia, Royal Museums of Fine Art of Belgium, Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Queen Elisabeth Competition, Couleur Café, etc.). In addition to this effect, the positive image of cultural Brussels needs to be reinforced even more in the minds of the foreign visitor and the foreigner who lives here or the inhabitant who was born here. The cultural fabric that envelops Brussels today and is becoming increasingly dense and strong must be able to take on this crucial role and help strengthen the city's international image.

There are several reasons why this has not yet happened. The Brussels cultural sector lacks a coordinated approach to the question of its international allure. Compared to other cities, there is little funding available for culture and powers are fragmented. The result is an unclear branding of culture in Brussels: is Brussels the capital city of dance, art nouveau, fashion and design, comic

In its main role as a capital city, Brussels lacks symbolism. This is due to Europe and the Brussels authorities. 'Brussels' is largely synonymous with tough measures. The integration of both its role as the capital of Europe and the people who live and work here for this very reason is fraught with difficulties. Architecture and urban planning are a striking example in this respect. It is not without reason that the Schuman district is known as a European ghetto. What about the other inhabitants of Brussels? They are mainly critical, and complain about traffic congestion whenever a summit meeting is planned, rising rents, etc.

European employees and students often live in a closed circuit from within which Brussels does not look very positive, while the same holds for the reception they get. The information they need cannot be found at one single location, and the political and administrative structure of our – and their – capital city can make life difficult.



strips or music? There is insufficient consultation between cultural and tourism players on the symbolism that is needed to promote a city. Moreover, powers in the area of tourism are divided between the two Communities, the Region and the City of Brussels.

Besides this, there are other reasons why cultural and artistic Brussels should and can play a greater role in the allure of the city:

- cultural and artistic players in Brussels are experienced in dealing with a multilingual and often multicultural public;
- art and culture also attract foreign visitors outside work periods and they stimulate other sectors in periods of low economic activity;
- once Brussels has put itself on the map as a multicultural and creative city it will be easier for people to identify with the city. This will ultimately benefit understanding between inhabitants of Brussels who are of different origins;
- lastly, there are also advantages for the sector itself: more visitors, more income, and hence a more pronounced role as a springboard for artists.



**When it comes to art and culture, Brussels is closely connected to Europe, for instance through the attention brought by a presidency, international projects, the presence of various European cultural networks, etc. Yet, in the Brussels International Development Plan (IDP) culture is not an important factor in the city's international allure.\* Although certain artistic events or cultural sites in Brussels do attract many foreign visitors, few events or sites have an image that is comparable to that of certain events or sites in other major European cities.**

\* The IDP, which was preceded by a study by PricewaterhouseCoopers commissioned by the Brussels government, was published in the autumn of 2007. It emphasizes the main areas and geographical zones in which, according to the government, investment should preferably be made if the aim is to place Brussels at the forefront on the international level and stimulate its international allure. The plan was met with very diverse reactions in the social, economic and urban planning fields.



**Brussels has everything it needs to become an international and cosmopolitan city. It can therefore easily present itself as a European cultural laboratory.**



## 28

The cultural sector would like to help develop a coherent cultural and artistic image of Brussels.

This image must reflect the special cultural reality of the city and must be implemented in every domain — politics, economy, tourism, culture, etc. The first key term for this image is in the plural: the 'arts' in Brussels (dance, performance, comic strips, art nouveau, etc.). Other key words are «contemporary», «avant-garde», «intercultural» and «urban». With these terms the cultural sector also wishes to participate structurally in the consultation on the IDP.

## 29

The cultural, tourism and catering sectors must work together structurally. If they share knowledge of their public and visibility with one another, they can take on the following challenges together:

- annual themes that help promote the city: the tourism sector frequently develops themes like this that have a cultural touch but often without previously consulting the cultural players (except the museums);
- activities which are actually organized at the level of the city as a whole, but which are either a tourism initiative (Winter Wonders<sup>1</sup>, Nuit Blanche<sup>2</sup>, etc.) or one by the cultural sector (BRXLBRAVO, etc.): nowadays the latter initiatives are rarely automatically included in the cultural and tourism promotion of the city;
- the strategic impact of certain events with international resonance (Europalia, Couleur Café, etc.);
- the development of a special promotion of cultural activities for foreign visitors who are visiting Brussels for professional reasons.

1. The Winter Wonders Festival ("Plaisirs d'Hiver / Winterpret") in Brussels is one of the largest winter festivals in Europe. It involves the colourful illumination of several streets and squares in Brussels, a Christmas market, a large outdoor ice skating rink, and several cultural events. [www.winterwonders.be](http://www.winterwonders.be)

2. "Nuit Blanche" ("sleepless night" or "white night" in French) is a cultural event that is both artistic and popular. Nuit Blanche aims to open up the city to the nightlife by encouraging access to numerous places for a wide audience. This approach really is open to the city, to its inhabitants and to creativity. It takes place every year in Brussels in early October. [www.nuitblanchebrussels.be](http://www.nuitblanchebrussels.be)

## 30

The impact of Europe on Brussels should be visible and legible not only at a socio-economic level or at the level of urban planning<sup>1</sup> (master plan for the European District, Brussels-Capital Region, 2008). The cultural sector would like to contribute to certain socio-cultural aspects of this urban renewal. The Esplanade<sup>2</sup> of the European Parliament could play a key role here: Europeans would get to know Brussels in a cultural perspective while the city's inhabitants would get to know Europe. Moreover, at certain times of the year, on Europe Day (9 May) for example, more activities relating to Europe could be organized.

1. In 2008 the Brussels-Capital Region commissioned a master plan for the European District. The first real application of this plan was an urban planning competition in which the task of the participants was to present an urban development project for Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat and its environs. The competition was won in 2009 by Atelier Christian de Portzamparc.  
2. The Esplanade of the European Parliament is a pedestrian square in Brussels that was completed in 2002 and is located in front of the European Parliament buildings. It has been criticized for «leading nowhere» as, aside from the Parliament and railway station, the square is devoid of life. Parliamentary authorities did not wish to share the site with private companies, and hence there are no shops or services along its entire length.

## 31

The discovery of the different aspects of Brussels is the aim of a series of cultural and tourist routes through the city, to be used by both inhabitants and visitors to the city. One major route would run from the Cinquantenaire to the Canal and would thus also pass the European Parliament. The route is 4 to 5 km long and runs through some very different districts. It would take the visitor past a whole series of cultural, artistic, political and economic institutions as well as historical and architectural heritage sites and lots of green areas.

## 32

Brussels must become the location where there is a great deal of thought and discussion about Europe, hence the following three proposals :

- the European Union and the Brussels government could jointly found a summer university on the topic of 'Europe, diversity and intercultural dialogue'. Although the university must be accessible to all, its main task would be to stimulate an interest in education and the social, cultural and political domain. Major European universities could provide academic input;
- certain cultural and artistic sites are already offering presentations and debates on European and other cultures. Such initiatives could be strengthened;
- in Brussels schools there should be more focus on Europe, its history and activities.

## 34

The RAB and BKO can make it easier for cultural actors in Brussels to strengthen their role in European and international networks. We are looking into whether we can collaborate with similar urban networks in Europe. The cultural sector also wishes to encourage the presence and visibility of international cultural networks in Brussels.

## 33

The way foreign students and employees are received and integrated in the city has a huge impact on the image of Brussels they take home with them. They could be made to feel more welcome. For example, why not organize an annual reception day on which one could present the city's cultural activities? The artistic and cultural sectors and European schools could also work together more often. Moreover, we need a central reception point where people can go for all the necessary administrative information on Brussels and be helped in various languages. Finally, there must be more frequent and systematic communication on art and culture in Brussels (signs, reception, surtitles, etc.), and this in several languages.

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