

UCCN MEMBERSHIP
MONITORING REPORT
→ *Košice City of Media Arts*
2018 – 2021



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Never a place of the biggest names, insane cash flows or Top 10 Lonely Planet's places to visit. Some say it's just the last ten years since Košice changed its mindset, became open to different ideas and started to define itself as rather cool and vivid.

Gone are the days of being known as a steel city. Now with a booming ICT industry and a growing creative sector, Košice has been slowly transforming into a cauldron of culture. Now Slovakia's second city stands firm on its foundation for a bright future as the UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts.

Rusnáková, Barbara: City Cracker: Your Local Guide to Košice; Creative Industry Košice, n.o., 2019

In Košice, the creative sector is a vital part of the local economy. As an educational hub the city is well-known for its Technical University (and its Faculty of Arts) which offers students state-of-the-art knowledge and skills in the context of cross-sectoral cooperation. Almost ten years after being awarded the title of European Capital of Culture, Košice now enjoys a well-developed infrastructure and network of cultural institutions, creative hubs, and community centres.

The city's long-term dedication to supporting digital and new media production and initiatives is based on three main pillars: the city's decision to recognize creativity as an essential component of its urban development; a strategic plan for broadening the opportunities for the creative sector; and the commitment to developing further creativity hubs, all of which emphasise the city's recognition of the crucial role of culture and creativity in ensuring sustainable development.

Based on the Memorandum of Cooperation of local actors signed in 2017, the city has developed, supported or co-initiated a number of flagship projects presenting and promoting digital and new media art over the last four years. Among the key events and projects taking place in the city are the **Art & Tech Festival** that brings together topics on the intersection of art, technology and science; the **City to City** online artistic collaboration between cities in the Media Arts cluster; **Media Arts Residencies** in Košice for artists from other UCCN member cities; the annual **Nuit Blanche festival** that presents local and international site-specific light-design and digital artworks, **DAAVS multigenre festival** which connects progressive visual arts with contemporary music, performance, theatre and film; initiatives dedicated to media arts such as the **Media Art Office** established by a local collective of media artists, experts and enthusiasts; and the **Košice Modernism in AR** project organised by the East Slovak Gallery which focuses on bringing art exhibitions closer to the general public.

For the city, membership in the UNESCO Creative Cities cluster of Media Arts is a natural continuation of all the activities it undertakes with the aim of presenting and actively supporting digital art production and the cultural and creative scene in Košice and Slovakia in general, interconnecting the local scene with the international community.

→ A Few Words from Our Mayor

As the Mayor of Košice, I am extremely proud of our city which has enjoyed a highly fruitful period for the development of cultural and creative industries. The municipal organizations of Creative Industry Košice, K13, and Visit Košice have been working closely with the city and local partners to ensure that the creative industry in our city can thrive and that our citizens and visitors can always find a wide range of cultural activities in the city. Although the pandemic situation has not been supportive of culture, I am very pleased to see the exceptional initiatives of our citizens who, even in the difficult past two years, have shown invaluable reserves of resilience and flexibility, and a strong sense of community which has served as one of the most important pillars in the city's growth, both in the past and for the future.

Košice is a unique city with a long history and a promising future. To date, it is the only Slovak city to have been recognized in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. I believe that we will continue in these trends and that Košice will maintain its position in setting an inspiring example for other cities that are undergoing transformations into sustainable, cultural and creative cities of international renown.

Mayor Jaroslav Poláček



2. GENERAL INFORMATION

2.1 Name of the city

Košice

2.2 Country

Slovakia

2.3 Creative field

Media Arts

2.4 Date of designation

October 31, 2017

2.5 Date of submission of the current report

November 30, 2021

2.6 Entity responsible for the report

Creative Industry Košice, n.o. (CIKE) – Focal Point

2.7 Previous reports submitted and dates

N/A

2.8 Focal points of contact

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3. CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PROGRAM'S GLOBAL MANAGEMENT



3.1 Number of UCCN Annual Conferences attended in the last four years

2018 – Kraków/ Katowice, Poland
2019 – Fabriano, Italy
2021 – Santos, Brazil (online)

3.2 Number of previous or future UCCN Annual Conferences hosted N/A

3.3 Hosting of working or coordination meeting(s) addressed to one or more UCCN creative field representatives (including sub-network meetings)

Košice has organized several online meetings for coordinating the cluster website – www.mediaartscities.com; and for coordinating the City to City cluster project, as the city is actively involved in the project's working and coordination group.

3.4 International conference(s) or meeting(s) hosted on specific issues salient to the Creative Cities with the large-scale participation of members of the Network

Art & Tech Days is a festival which focuses on media arts, digital cultures and technologies. Over the course of its six day program, the festival offers one-day conferences, workshops, masterclasses, educational activities for schools, exhibitions of new media and digital art, site-specific installations, concerts, and networking activities. The core event of the Festival is the international conference titled Art & Tech Conference where top world experts, practitioners and researchers in cutting-edge trends on the intersection of technology, art, and academia offer their views and insights on the burning issues of the day. The Festival always invites several artistic collectives or individuals from the Creative Cities, and speakers from the partner cities are also invited to share their inspiring ideas at the Conference. The annual Festival has been held every November since 2016 and offers a nourishing space for networking and idea-sharing.

3.5 Financial and/or in-kind support provided to UNESCO in order to strengthen the sustainability of the UCCN

in different areas including management, communication and visibility (dates, types of contribution, factual or estimated amounts, main objectives, etc.)

Košice has dedicated itself to supporting and strengthening the sustainability of UCCN in a number of ways. Soon after its designation in October 2017, the focal point of Creative Industry Košice employed a project manager, 0.75 FTE, whose sole task was the management of international and local activities associated with UCCN and media arts.

A unique communication campaign, including a promotional video for the Košice City of Media Arts, was created and presented at a general press conference, with the Košice UNESCO City of Media Arts logo being introduced along with the designation's dedicated [website](#).

In 2020, Košice initiated a close collaboration with Slovak National Commission for UNESCO which aimed to highlight the designation's visibility.

At the level of the subnetwork for media arts, Košice finalized a dedicated [website](#) for the cluster which provides general information about the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, discussions on the operation of the Media Arts cluster, or information on the open calls launched.


It is estimated that approximately 400,000 Euro has been contributed to reaching the objectives of Košice's designation as a UNESCO Creative City over the past four years.

3.6 Serving as cluster coordinator or deputy coordinator and period N/A

3.7 Participation in the evaluation of previous applications (number of applications evaluated per Call for Application) of previous Membership Monitoring Reports (number of reports evaluated per reporting exercise)

3 evaluations of Call for Application – 2019 Cali; 2021 Tbilisi and Namur

3 evaluations of Membership Monitoring Reports – 2018 Gwangju; 2020 Austin; 2021 Lyon



4. MAJOR INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTED AT THE LOCAL AND CITY LEVEL TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE UCCN

© Maja Bodnarová, Art & Tech Days 2019

4.1 Memorandum of cooperation of local actors

An initiative to foster collaboration between cultural and digital business spheres had emerged even prior to the city's designation in October 2017. During a press conference in April 2017, a Memorandum of Cooperation of local actors was signed which announced the shared commitment of eight partners to improve the access of the general public to the arts, with a special emphasis on media arts; to strengthen interdisciplinary cooperation between the cultural, creative and IT industries and their impact on the social and economic life of the city; to develop formal and non-formal education in the fields of media arts and digital technology; and also to open the city to new international cooperation with other members of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network.

Košice – UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts has greatly enlarged its base of support and currently relies on ten active local partners, stressing the importance of partnerships for reaching the common goals (SDG 11, SDG 17).

4.2 Art & Tech Days

A unique festival which combines art and technologies was established in 2016 as the key event of the city's media arts program with the aim of offering non-formal education at workshops, inspiring and innovative thoughts, spaces for networking during the Conference, and support and spaces for artists to present their creative activities and works.

The six-day program provides a rich variety of activities. For students and professionals, the festival offers workshops on UX design, machine learning, data visualisation, TouchDesigner, and art & tech related hackathons which provide the opportunity to gain knowledge and develop skills on both a professional and personal level (SDG 4, 5, 8). Workshops on stop-motion animation, classic cartoon animation, production and sound design are organized for children with the aim of stimulating their interest in arts and creativity. Art lovers can also get involved in numerous multimedia performances, concerts, audio-visual and/or interactive installations, films, and exhibitions, with

the majority of these events being accessible also to vulnerable groups (SDG 10). In tandem with the festival, meet-ups for the professional and rapidly growing gaming community are organized with dedicated talks, workshops and game try-outs to support the sustainability of different communities operating in the CCIs (SDG 11, 17).

The Art & Tech Conference, the key element of the festival, has invited acclaimed experts, scientists, researchers and artists working in social and technological innovation, design, visual art, policy making, urban planning, and film, but also in the fields of neurology, language, show business, and gaming to share best practices and to inspire the local community. The Conference offers a valuable space for networking and provoking dialogue as it welcomes a wide range of stakeholders, ranging from the municipality, through private tech companies operating both internationally and locally, freelancers in arts, design, and services to university and high school students.

As of 2021, the festival, along with the conference, has been in existence for five years, and in this period it has invited and welcomed 77 speakers and artists and 8,000 visitors to more than 70 events. Several connections have been established thanks to the support of Media Arts cities, mainly Linz, Sapporo, Braga and Tel-Aviv, and other Creative Cities beyond the media arts cluster—mainly Berlin, Budapest, and the Czech cities of Brno and Prague.

Locally, the festival relies on its local partners (SDG 17), the signatories of the Memorandum, private sponsors, public funding and donations while creating a space for exchanging ideas, sparking inspiration, gaining knowledge and skills, and forging numerous invaluable contacts for future work and potential partnerships.

4.2.1 Media Arts Residency

Creative Industry Košice opened its first call for media arts residency in 2019, a residency program which aims to support artistic creation, internationalization, and networking activities between foreign and Slovak artists. Artists from any of the 246 UCCN Cities are provided with an invaluable two-month residency for the development of their artistic project, a scholarship, travel reimbursement, an atelier, accommodation, and production and technical in-kind and financial support for his/her/their creative activities. The residency is professionally curated and is organised in collaboration with KAIR – Košice Artist in Residence, a well-recognized residency program which has been in operation since 2011. The residency continues to prove successful as it manages to attract significant numbers of applications every year – 46 applications in 2019, 115 proposals in 2020, and 58 submitted projects in 2021.

An autumn spent in Košice gives the selected artists the possibility not only to create and practice their artistic freedom, but also to involve themselves into the local art scene and participate in the cultural life of Košice. The artists are also invited to present their portfolios during the Open Studios Night or workshops and display their work at the Art & Tech Days festival. The artists are also offered the chance to elaborate on their artistic research as speakers at the Art & Tech Conference.





4.3 Cultural policies

From the time of its designation, Košice began to undergo significant change and hence the need for new strategic documents for cultural policies became essential. It was considered crucial that the new cultural strategy of the city and the Economic and Social Development Strategy should be participatory in nature. Both documents were created in accordance with the Policy Recommendations of UNESCO, and preparatory and content-wise refer to the Sustainable Development Goals no. 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Works and Economic Growth), 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 13 (Climate Action), 15 (Life on Land), 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17, Partnerships for the Goals).

This participatory approach was employed in formulating the cultural strategy document titled **Košice Cultural Plan 2021 – 2027**. The support for the creation of the strategy was also provided by an international consortium thanks to the Cultural and Creative Spaces and Cities project, supported by Creative Europe. The bottom-up policy making used as an experimental process provided the opportunity to open up the process of formulating cultural strategy to the wider public. Several online and phone surveys were targeted at the needs perceived by creative individuals and cultural operators, while a map of cultural operators was also drawn up which identified those who participate in the cultural life of the city, bringing together more than 600 subjects. Co-creative meetings then took place that enabled cross-sectoral collaboration and value definitions in contemporary cultural policy. Together, a vision that defined priorities for the next six years was finetuned and founded on the values of inclusivity, participation, accessibility, and an open society. The strategy was designed and illustrated and then accepted by the municipality as their core document of their future cultural development. The development process took almost two years, with COVID complications causing delays to the project.

Additionally, a new **Economic and Social Development Strategy** for the city was prepared. Building on the experiences from the Košice Cultural Plan, a campaign was

designed for the wider public (*Scenario for Košice*) and a “sounding board”, consisting of a plenum of 100 experts called Forum 2030, was organized to collect inputs, thoughts, and ideas to ensure that the new strategy would reflect a wider range of experiences. The collected inputs of 750 participants from the general public and experts in the field were then used in thematic working groups that formulated the vision, goals, and priorities of the city for next five years. Once again, a public campaign was released incorporating the visuals and illustrations from the Scenario for Košice, to collect feedback (receiving around 800 comments), and another Forum 2030 was organized to address the findings of the feedback. The inputs are currently being evaluated and the strategic plan will be submitted to the municipality for agreement in the coming weeks.

4.4 Košice 2.0 and Citizen Experience & Wellbeing Institute

In 2020, the Citizen Experience and Well-Being Institute (CXI) was established to identify, analyse, and redesign the city’s services such as the municipality’s first contact office, the opportunities for community life in Košice, or the potential redesign of urban brownfields and parks. The Institute provides, updates and employs the data, information and ideas acquired from local citizens via public discussions, questionnaires, and Hackathons in applied research and professional cooperation with partners from the private sector, research institutions and universities (i.e., Technical University of Košice), and non-profit organisations (SDG 17) that operate in the city in order to prepare bases for strategic documents of the city and thereby direct improvements to city services that correspond to the needs of Košice’s citizens and ensure a long-term contribution to their well-being, inclusion, and safety (SDG 3, 5, 10, 16). Thanks to the CXI, the city can move forward and react more effectively to the changes and challenges we face (SDG 8, 9, 11, and 13).

CXI uses media art interventions and data visualisations in the public space of Košice to present the data they have collected. Media arts is seen not only as an art form but also as a valuable research tool which allows better participation of citizens in research, as a tool to make the data gained more understandable and to increase aware-

ness of its importance. One such example was the *Saint E. Jenner Cathedral* art intervention presented in the Alfa Gallery (May – June 2021), which adapted its purpose to serve as a COVID-19 testing centre. The project in its artistic form took the form of reflections of six stained glass window depicting the course of the pandemic including the numbers of infected cases as vitrages in sacred places.

The Košice 2.0 project, under which the CXI was established, also delivered a **Creative City** educational program which was preceded by the mapping of the municipal officers' educational needs. The program was aimed at developing the capability of twenty handpicked municipality officers who can influence municipal decision-making based on data and the real needs of citizens and active citizenship towards increasing their quality of lives. A **Networking Catalyst Program** was also developed to address the fact that the city is full of small companies, start-ups, and freelancers who are often unaware of each other and who find it challenging to work together or find specific professionals for their projects, often the same works for the cultural and creative industries. An event series of 11 meetups called Eastside Heroes was organised to reflect the need to support networking within the IT and CCI communities and to present ideas that can change our city; firstly a hackathon from the **City Hack** series where programmers, copywriters, UX designers, idea makers and community representatives met to identify new solutions that could help to improve community life in Košice. The winners of the event were the duo nolimit/Developers who created a tool for community chatting.

4.5 Regional Creative Centre

The Košice Self-governing Region was awarded a grant of almost 18 million EUR to support the transformation of one of their buildings into a Regional Creative Centre providing services to creative individuals and entities to create open cultural facilities and spaces for cultural and creative entrepreneurs in which the entire CCI sector can develop further. Current and future facility users as well as the wider public were *invited to discuss* the proposed premises that would include offices and ateliers for artists and creatives, gallery space, shared spaces, and workshops which re-create and renovate a significant hub to support young artists and creators in their work (SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities, SDG 11 – Sustainable Communities).

4.6 Creativity for Business

In order to support the interconnection of arts and business (SDG 9, 17), CIKE established several projects where local businesses, such as restaurants, factories, hotels, and even Košice Airport, welcomed artists and creatives to leverage their innovative thoughts and improve the services which they provide. One such example was the project named *The Invisible Hotel* which has linked several hotel rooms in the city with a single idea – depictions of the true self of Košice. In addition to the Open Mural Gallery of street art and the famous Golden Treasure of Košice, it is the *Media Art interactive room* which attracts the most attention. Designed by the media artist Boris Vaitovič and the architect Štefan Pacák and developed by the IT company GlobalLogic, the room features a sound-art custom speaker wall and offers the unique experience of an AR live panorama of the city.



4.7 Art as a tool for urban development

Košice has long relied on culture and creativity, and art had served as an important tool of sustainable urban development long before the city was awarded the title of European Capital of Culture in 2013.

→ *Nuit Blanche/ White Night Festival* | [link](#)

Nuit Blanche has been dedicated to connecting art and public spaces in Košice for over 12 years. Over the last four years, it has exhibited more than 100 international artworks and projects in Košice, and produced about 60 new art productions. With an annual budget of 100,000 Eur, the festival has claimed an unassailable place in the media art cultural life of Košice. It is the largest festival of contemporary art in public spaces in Slovakia, annually welcoming around 60,000 visitors, and its accessibility ensures a wide audience base, ranging from children and young people to art critics. In addition to the physical artistic installations in public spaces, the festival cooperates with the local Kino Úsmev (Smile Cinema) to present independent, experimental and research video works from digital and new media artists, and high-end commercial productions and short films from Linz's Ars Electronica festival, a display which was awarded the Prix Ars Electronica prize.

→ *DIG, Media Art Office (MAO) & Atelier of New Media at the Faculty of Arts*

MAO is a collective of media artists, experts and enthusiasts gathered around the DIG Gallery whose main activities are new media exhibitions, international collaborations in media arts, promoting media arts as a form of artistic expression, and providing educational programmes in the field. MAO is interconnected with the Faculty of Arts at the Technical University of Košice and its New Media Atelier, thereby supporting and providing space for presenting the creative works of young talented artists and allowing mutual inspiration to permeate through various artistic exchanges. Since 2017, 27 media art exhibitions have been held in Košice under the umbrella of MAO. Among the collaborations which MAO considers most important are the *ZOO4NAT project* for ZOO Košice (2018); *No Power No Art, Femme Digital* (2019), *EMA project* (Eco Media

Art), and *COVID-EO* for MMUAW/ The Andy Warhol Museum of Modern Art – a series of eight educational artistic trailers (2020).

The activities of MAO directly reflect the Sustainable Development Goals of the Agenda 2030, namely those of Quality Education (SDG4); Gender Equality (SDG5); Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG9); Climate Action (SDG 13); Life Below Water (SDG14); and Partnership for Goals (SDG17). A collaboration between MAO and the New Media Atelier at the Faculty of Arts has also helped eighteen students to graduate from the Faculty since 2017, and 32 students are currently studying at the Atelier within this framework.

→ *DAAVS*

Welcoming audiences for the fifth time in 2021, the multi-genre festival of the VUNU collective mixes fine arts with other arts, disciplines and genres. The festival is a celebration of connecting progressive visual arts with contemporary music, performance, theatre, film, and other fusions. In addition to organizing the DAAVS festival, VUNU also run a gallery dedicated to presenting the works of young contemporary artists, and the collective plays a key role in stimulating cultural participation and interest in culture and arts among young people in particular.

→ *ART'N TECH SERIES @ Tabačka Kulturfabrik*

A series of exhibitions brought ground-breaking media arts projects to Tabačka Gallery to offer new critical approaches towards the use and development of technologies and to open a dialogue on their effect on our everyday lives. The artists presented were Virgil Widrich (AU), Egor Kraft (int.), Spanish artists César Escudero Andalaz and Martin Nadal, and Doron Sadja (US/DE).



4.8 Innovative Initiatives

→ *Greener transportation | link*

In recent years, an important player in the Košice private sector, Antik, has invested 1.4 million Eur into innovative means of transportations, with their 700 shared bikes (including electric bikes), scooters, and motorbikes becoming a widely popular type of transportation in the city due to their accessibility and affordability. The company also operates 80 power stations for electric cars and motorbikes in the city. In 2021, Antik also introduced a powerbank sharing service with 100 stations and continues developing the city in a smart way. Data received from Antik is further used in citizen experience research and media arts interventions by the newly established Citizen Experience and Well Being Institute by CIKE (SDG 17). Antik's initiatives support the general Wellbeing (SDG 3), Affordable Energy (SDG 7), modernizing Infrastructure and Innovation (SDG 9). It develops Sustainable Cities (SDG 11), refers to Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12), and Climate Action (SDG 13).

→ *Košice modernism in AR | link*

An initiative of the East Slovak Gallery and Kabinet, an interdisciplinary studio dedicated to design, architecture, online and artificial intelligence, released a pilot project consisting of a virtual exhibition of art by Košice artists of the 1920s – 30s, a period collectively known as Košice modernism. The project offers an innovative solution to bring art exhibitions closer to people and to the public spaces they use, thereby allowing larger communities to experience and access the arts using everyday digital technologies. The project directly refers to SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities, and SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities.



5. MAJOR INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED THROUGH INTER-CITY AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE UCCN



Košice is continuously searching for opportunities for intercity and international collaborations, and through the activities of Creative Industry Košice, the city is an active partner in many research, artistic and co-creative projects, through which the city responds and emphasizes its main topics, primarily the need for accessibility of services, information and spaces; equality, inclusivity, and diversity in participatory decision-making; sharing know-how to ensure sustainability; and developing partnerships. The topics discussed and addressed are in accordance with the SDGs of Agenda 2030.

CIKE understands the need to strengthen international cooperation, and therefore, in addition to its membership of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, it participates in the European Creative Business Network (ECBN), the Network for Innovations in Culture and Creativity in Europe (N.I.C.E), Trans Europe Halles (TEH), American Chamber of Commerce in Slovakia, and Košice IT Valley Network, thanks to which the local culture and creative sector and international collaborations can thrive.

5.1 Cultural and Creative Spaces and Cities

Helsinki, Finland | UNESCO Creative City of Design

new public policies, participatory democracy, fostering creativity and social cohesion towards sustainable, equal and inclusive cities and communities
(SDG 5, 8, 10, 11, 16, 17)

The international CCSC project was funded by a European Commission scheme in the period 2018 – 2021 and brought together eleven partners from six European cities: Lund (Sweden), Helsinki (Finland), Košice (Slovakia), Madrid and Sant Boi (Spain), and Timișoara (Romania). The participating cities' public authorities engaged with local citizens to co-design new policies to improve their cities, develop innovative solutions for bottom-up initiatives, and become actors in policy-making in the sectors of art, culture, and creativity. Over the course of the project, cities connected cultural and creative spaces and local policy-makers through several participatory processes to tackle the challenges of sustainable creativity, participatory democracy, and social cohesion to develop, test, and validate methods which would allow civil society to engage with local governments in the co-crea-



tive design of policies. It also opened up municipalities and local governments to bottom-up participation and thinking. The CCSC helped to map the various actors working in the CCI in Košice and participating cities while organizing workshops of co-creation, conferences and other events. Three publications were created within the framework of the CCSC project: Commons. Between Dreams and Reality; Policy Analysis and Policy Recommendations; and most importantly, the Strategy for Culture and Creative Industries for the City of Košice for the years 2021 – 2027.

5.2 DEUS project | [link](#)

Linz, Austria: UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts;
Kaunas, Lithuania: UNESCO Creative City of Design

vocational training, critical thinking, quality education and skills for decent employment
(SDG 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 16, 17)

Focusing on quality education, CIKE, together with 10 partners from the field of education and CCI, launched the European Open Design School for Sustainable Regional Development (DeuS) project in 2020. The goal of the project was to co-create a Europe-wide learning and training approach in design, critical thinking, and entrepreneurship to identify participatory, creative, and cost-effective solutions to local challenges by unlocking the potential of the cultural and creative sector. The project invited professionals to identify and develop a Vocational Educational Training (VET) learning and training approach to support and build skills which would help people in their jobs; to develop a process using a co-creation method that would involve local/regional CCI communities, policymakers, and citizens in the identification of local challenges and generate solutions which would be adaptable at the European level. Innovation hubs called Living Labs were established in participating cities to support SMEs, professionals, and VET learners to conduct research and develop innovative products and services to find solutions to the challenges. The project also developed a financial model to promote sustainability that combines public and private funding and income-generating activities.

5.3 Stella project

Budapest, Hungary: UNESCO Creative City of Design;
Brno, Czech Republic: UNESCO Creative City of Music

audience building, performative tools research, know-how and cultural knowledge sharing
(SDG 4, 5, 10, 11, 17)

This two year collaboration with Budapest's Ziggurat Project, Brno's Orbita and the Art and Research Foundation – Organisms and Machines in Culture from Bydgoszcz, Poland emerged in 2019. The project focused on closing the gap between the countries of the Visegrad region and Western Europe, emphasizing the sharing of know-how and the quality of using innovative technologies in the field of the performing arts. The project proposed several educational workshops and conferences in order to build audiences, and carried out a wide mapping of cultural institutions providing support for performative arts and technologies. The project was supported by the International Visegrad fund.

5.4 Culture and Creative Industries COOPERATION COLLIDER | [link](#)

Linz, Austria | UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts;
Ljubljana, Slovenia | UNESCO Creative City of Literature

cross sectoral collaboration, innovations, sustainable consumption and production
(SDG 4, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 17)

This project, which was financed from the Interreg Central Europe grant scheme, proposed cross sectoral collaboration between cultural and creative industries and companies dedicated to advanced manufacturing (AVM). 331 creatives cooperated over the course of four infodays, fifteen workshops and matchmaking events, and several study visits focused on bringing innovative and sustainable solutions to traditional AVM industries in order to increase their competitive potential in the contemporary technological world.

5.5 International Presence and Media Arts

In addition to annual conferences, the active presentation and participation of Košice's representatives is visible through:

2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2021

- yearly study-visits of Ars Electronica festival in Linz

2018

- presentation of Košice – UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts in York
- presentation of Košice as Creative City at Art & Science + Makers Conference in Belgrade, Serbia
- participation in panel discussion at Gwangju Media Art Festival /UCCN Policy Forum by Michal Hladký and professor Boris Vaitovič

2019

- participation at Changsha Media Arts Festival, including a talk of Košice's Vice Mayor Marcel Giboda
- Mirage Festival Lyon – presentation of Košice
- Semibreve & INDEX festival Braga – participation of Michal Hladký at panel discussion

2020

- study-visit of Transmediale/CTM festival in Berlin – UNESCO Creative City of Design
- presentation of Košice's Covid-19 response of Home residencies at Ulyanovsk Cultural Forum
- participation at Gwangju Media Art Festival/ UCCN Policy Forum – experts Michal Hladký & Mária Virčíková, art work presented by Slovak media artist Boris Vitázek

2021

- A virtual path between Košice and Sapporo – participation in webinar organized by Sapporo
- presentation of Košice Creative City of Media Arts UNESCO at the Partners' Forum of Slovak Commission for UNESCO in Bratislava

Among other activities, Košice also participated in the creation of the promotional video “Creative Cities of Media Arts” in 2019 (an initiative led by Tel Aviv); a mapping projection at the Annual Conference in Fabriano in 2019 (an initiative led by Enghien-les-Bains); subnetwork meetings in York (2018), Changsha (2019), and Braga (2019), and online cluster meetings in 2020 and 2021. Košice is also leading a working group on Supporting Media Artists and CCIs and is part of a working group on International Project Cooperation; and forms a core team of the City to City project (see 7.4.1). The city is currently developing the cluster's joint website mediaartscities.com.



5.6 Opportunities to participate in arts and culture in Košice

5.6.1 Art & Tech Days – open calls and invitations

Two rounds of open calls were announced to invite international experts from Media Arts cities to present their research, work and thoughts in Košice. In 2018, the Art & Tech Days festival were pleased to welcome Uri Aviv from our partner city of Tel-Aviv, and in 2019, Agnieszka Kubicka-Dzieduszycka and Michael Spranger, experts invited from Sapporo to provide us with their expertise in arts, technologies and digital cultures.

5.6.2 Media Arts Residency – open calls

Košice is open to artists from all UNESCO Creative Cities. With its partner KAIR- Košice Artist in Residence organization, a yearly open call is promoted which invites artists to create their media art projects in the city and to involve themselves into the local art scene with the aim of fostering mutual inspiration. The open call is announced each year in late spring with the residency starting in September. Since its beginning in 2019, the project has hosted 3 artists.



6. PROPOSED ACTION PLAN FOR THE FORTHCOMING MID-TERM PERIOD OF THE FOUR YEARS



6.1 **Presentation of a maximum of three main initiatives, programmes or projects aimed at achieving the objectives of the Network at the local level, while highlighting expected outcomes and impacts.**

Through its proposed activities the city is focusing on building sustainable partnerships and positive networking (SDG 17) in which inspiration can interflow between CCIs and the private sector, between artists, scientists, and technologists. Košice believes that it is collaboration in particular that can reduce inequalities, support fairer and more just societies and communities, inclusive and accessible cities and their services (SDG 9, 11). Media art is seen as an ideal tool for such efforts.

6.1.1 **Art & Tech Days Festival**

The festival will continue to present and promote cutting edge topics in digital art, technology, and science, connecting the local sector in Kosice with top experts in the fields from all over the world. Art & Tech Days will foster and facilitate cooperation between artists, technology companies, and academia on challenging the common issues and burning topics of the contemporary world, inspiring the local art and creative scene to take an active part in discussions and artistic production in the digital realm on the intersection of art, technology, and science. Through keynote lectures, debates, workshops, masterclasses, hackathons, site specific new media installations and other networking activities, the festival will mobilize local stakeholders (public, professional and businesses) to think differently, interconnect through new international cooperation, establish new frameworks for the sector, and implement good practices locally.

6.1.2 **Digital Pop Up Art Gallery**

A dedicated Pop Up Art Gallery will be established in order to create a new opportunity for local artists working with digital art to exhibit their work, to have a space for forging connections with the professional community and the audience, and to provide the city with a new artistic space for the exclusive purpose of promoting digital art. The Gallery will offer new opportunities for art students to gain

inspiration, get an insight into developing trends and receive the chance to start their professional careers. The Gallery will have its own artistic board, and in-technical and production cooperation with the city's K13 cultural centre, which will establish professional media art exhibitions and showcases and accompanying activities, e.g., debates, masterclasses, and programs for schools.

6.1.2 Media arts desk at Visit Košice tourist point

A media arts desk will be established as a part of Kosice's tourist board brick-and-mortar information point in the city centre in order to promote the city's offerings and programs of digital art to national and foreign tourists visiting the city. The Desk will help to improve communication regarding digital art among visitors to Kosice, and also complement the traditional range of tourist attractions in the city, allowing the digital art sector to generate not only interest but also income.

6.2 Presentation of a maximum of three initiatives, programmes or projects aimed at achieving the objectives of the Network on an international level, particularly those involving other member cities in the Network

6.2.1 Media Art Residency

In collaboration with other cities of UCCN, Košice will continue to organize two-month residency programs for international artists who are offered spaces and support of their artistic research, creation, and presentation. The Residency welcomes artists from any designated UNESCO Creative City through annual Open Calls and the scheme is organised in collaboration with the KAIR – Košice Artist in Residence program which has an extensive history of organizing, hosting, producing and curating artistic residences. The resulting artworks are presented at the Art & Tech Days festival, offering participating artists a significant opportunity to exhibit their art.

6.2.2 Ars Electronica Exhibition

In addition to the annual presentation of videos and short films from the Prix Ars Electronica, an exhibition will be presented in Košice examining the role of Artificial Intelli-

gence in our lives and its impact on our everyday activities and habits. Co-curated by CIKE and Ars Electronica, the final exhibition will be based on Linz's general concept and dramaturgy, but will invite local artists, scholars, experts and businesses to participate. With accompanying programs for schools and students, and the general public, the exhibition will present its cross-sectoral works in the field of art & science popularization in the exhibition space of Kunsthalle Košice.

6.2.3 Media Arts Cluster Cooperation

Košice plans to deepen its work on a bilateral and multi-lateral basis with different cities in the Network and Media Arts Cluster. Currently in its initial exploration stage, a project is being designed in collaboration with the Creative City of Cali which intends to incorporate digital art as a tool for empowering marginalized youth communities in our two cities.

6.3 Estimated annual budget for implementing the proposed action plan

The core activities mentioned in the action plan will be covered from the City's dedicated budget for the designation, which amounts to around 20,000 Eur annually.

The Slovak Arts Council supports individual artistic activities, study visits or mobilities to the amount of approximately 15,000 Eur/per year.

CIKE is a skilled partner in international collaborations and grant schemes funded by the European Commission and EU programmes, and therefore many of its activities (such as Košice 2.0, others) are project based and covered by grant money, amounting to approximately 100,000 Eur per year.

The city dedicates one FTE from CIKE's internal capacities to coordinate and implement the activities related to UNESCO Creative Cities Network. Other CIKE employees (ten people) will deliver their tasks in accordance with the action plan and Sustainable Development Goals.



6.4 Plan for communication and awareness

The city continues to implement its promotional activities primarily through social media. On Facebook, Instagram platform and LinkedIn platform (followers base of 6,200, 1,870 and 267 members), Media arts related activities are typically shared on Facebook and Instagram and information related to the objectives of the Network are shared via the fanpages of CIKE and City of Košice. Different local partners all share information connected to their activities in order to spread the word about media art and inspire activities in support of SDGs.

Košice will continue using their media arts dedicated website (www.cityofmediaarts.sk) to publicize the most important activities such as open calls, concrete projects, news and new initiatives. The city will also support the continuation of the cluster's website (www.mediaartscities.com) for the upcoming years.

Offline media communications are planned in cooperation with local and national TV and radio stations, where audio and video content will be created to promote the designation and related activities. Partners with whom we have already established cooperation include the local TV station TelKE, the Slovak public TV and radio channels RTVS and Rádio_FM, and the online web magazines The Invisible Mag, Startitup and TouchIT.

Active communication with the Slovak Commission for UNESCO will be used to disseminate information about activities and projects, not only in order to inform the Commission but also to use their official and peer-to-peer channels to inspire and trigger new collaborations.

In cooperation with partners on both a local and national level, CIKE will start a showcase campaign aimed at encouraging other Slovak cities to join the Network, as Kosice is still the only Slovak city to be designated in the UCCN. The campaign will include active lobbying with city administrations, presentations, showcases, and networking activities with the partners of the national network of independent cultural centres, ANTENA, in order to reach out to decision.



7. INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Several surveys and co-creative dialogues have been conducted with individuals and the municipality regarding the topic. The worst problem appeared to be the uncertainty and unpredictability of national COVID restrictions and the lack of a rapid response of supportive measures and compensation. Creative individuals found ways to keep in touch with their audiences online, organized events in line with the strict restrictions and managed to survive on minimal income. However, the value of culture was publicly denigrated by national authorities. Local authorities showed some formal sympathy for the cultural scene but were unable to provide sufficiently compensation for the financial losses incurred. Currently, the cultural scene is capable of surviving but the situation is still unpredictable.

7.1 City initiatives to support the recovery of CCIs

7.1.1 Home residencies

As the pandemic affected the lives of many, the municipality reconsidered its resources and released additional grants of 120,000 Eur over and above the annual budget in order to support the continued operation of people working in the CCIs. The experimental form of Home Residencies, a support program for local artists and creatives, was designed to provide a two-month income substitution in the form of scholarships to selected artists and creatives.

From April 2020 to June 2021, a total of 57 projects were supported in three rounds of open calls from the 171 applications received. The total provided amount of 57,000 Eur was used for the development of individuals' artistic activities in media arts, music, theatre, performance, film, architecture, design, literature, visual arts and other artistic fields; the development of business or marketing strategies for cultural organisations or individuals, educational programmes, strategies for audience research and development, new visual identities, new products or services, and other related activities; and research activities in arts, curation, and criticism.

7.1.2 Mentoring online

The international mentoring program Escalator that is organized annually by CIKE was adapted into an online format in order to preserve its continuity in providing support to 18 cultural organisations and individuals from the arts sphere over the last two pandemic years. The program educated the group in managing their strategic plans, finances, and building and maintaining their audience, and guided the flexibility of participants' programmes and spaces.

7.2 Adaptability of Košice's cultural scene

→ **East Slovak Gallery.** The off-program of the second oldest gallery in Slovakia have long been known for its rich selection of exhibitions and educational and creative activities. It is, therefore, no surprise that even during the quarantine period, the Gallery decided to continue not only in its presentation activities but also in scientific and

research activities. On their new page – *At home with VSG* – gallery visitors could find many creative tasks for individuals or families with children which can help them to develop different skills and encourage creative thinking. The Gallery also offered short videos from its exhibitions and online guided tours.

- **Kino Úsmev** (Smile Cinema) is the centre of audio-visual culture in Košice. When the cinema was forced to close for several weeks, they launched a campaign for their loyal patrons with the title **Give a Smile and Support Your Local Cinema**. Using online purchases in various forms of subscription, the campaign supported the staff of the cinema during the pandemic period and the profits generated allowed the reopening of the cinema in the summer of 2021. Another initiative to support the cinema was a cooperation with Prague's Areo cinemas in the *My Cinema LIVE* project which screened a different title every evening and offered participants the chance to discuss them together, sharing their enthusiasm and critiques.
- **Bookstore Artforum Košice**, which, although small, is the city's most popular bookstore in the city, transformed itself into a personal pickup point. Booklovers could order books via email or Messenger which were then either delivered by post, by courier or, within the wider city centre, by the booksellers themselves. Such services also helped them to retain their invaluable contact with their customers.
- **SPOTS Štítová**, formerly a regular cultural centre, also adapted its facilities and activities. In cooperation with the Košice municipal authorities, cultural operators in SPOT Štítová set up a place where materials were prepared for sewing face masks which local citizens could pick up three times a week. At the same time, volunteers and Spots' workers delivered already sewn masks to facilities which needed them, such as retirement homes or hospitals.

The Department of Biomedical Engineering at the Technical University Košice showed solidarity in the use of its capacities by creating and providing *3D printed shields and respirators* for local hospital workers.

7.3 International collaborations

→ City to City

Recently acknowledged as the *Best International Project* by the Fondazione Santagata award, which has been awarded to sustainable development projects realized within UNESCO designations for its second year, the City to City project emerged as a reaction on the part of some Media Arts Cities of UCCN which realized the need for the continuity of international collaboration and for the support of artists and their creative spirit. As an active partner in the cluster, Košice swiftly joined the working group of Braga, York, Guadalajara, Austin and Karlsruhe and co-created the project from the beginning. In 2020, a two-month online co-production process was developed in which artists from different media arts cities working in pairs or groups could co-create a digital media art piece. Emphasizing the importance of networking and cultural sensitivity, the project enlarged its scope in 2021 by offering 4 LAB sessions – online sessions aiming to facilitate networking and training for participating artists.

In 2020, the City to City project adopted the theme of Human Responsibility, which corresponded to the theme of Art & Tech Days festival of 2020, where the created artworks were planned to be presented. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the festival and thus the project's presentation was postponed to 2021.

Locally, the project attracted applications from eight artists, two of whom were selected to participate. In 2020, Beata Kolbašová collaborated with the Sapporo sound artist Junichi Oguro in creating an artwork titled *Reminiscence Path*. In 2021, Ivana Durkáčová and the Guadalajara visual artist Luciano Rodríguez Arredondo collaborated on a digital artwork.

In addition to the direct financial support of artists to the value of 4,000 Eur since 2020, Košice also provided significant in-kind support for the overall coordination of the project.



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→ APPENDIX VIDEO DOCUMENTATION

Košice | UNESCO Creative City Media Arts | [link](#)

What is media arts | communication campaign

What is Creative Industry Košice | [link](#)

What is media arts | [link](#)

What is cross sectoral collaboration | [link](#)

What is the connection between Košice and UNESCO

Creative Cities Network | [link](#)

Art & Tech Days

2019 | [link](#)

2018 | [link](#)

2017 | [link](#)

2016 | [link](#)

KAIR – Košice Artist in Residence Program | [link](#)

Nuit Blanche | [link](#)

DAAVS

2019 | [link](#)

2018 | [link](#)

Saint E. Jenner Cathedral | [link](#)

No Power No Art exhibition | [link](#)