

# CORONA-RELATED SUPPORT FOR THE INDEPENDENT CULTURE SECTOR OF MALMÖ



## AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



## CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

1. CULTURAL RIGHTS
2. HERITAGE, DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY
5. CULTURE AND ECONOMY
6. CULTURE, EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
9. GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE

SUPPORT, ECONOMIC, COVID, COMMUNITY, PARTICIPATION,  
PRECARIOUSNESS, INFRASTRUCTURE, CULTURAL RIGHTS,  
LGBTQ+, INCLUSION

# 1. Malmö and culture

Malmö is Sweden's third largest and fastest growing city, with a relatively young population of 350 000+ residents, roughly half of whom are under the age of 35. People from 183 different countries live here, and around one-third of residents were born in another country. Nearly 25% of Malmö's children live in poverty.

Cultural life plays a crucial role in Malmö's growth and attractiveness. The city's social and economic sustainability depends on creativity created in the cultural sphere. Cultural life offers public spaces for relaxation, entertainment and fellowship. The meeting places of independent cultural life are important to people of all ages and with different backgrounds and interests. The independent sector is driven by a strong commitment from both professionals and community-based culture. It embodies an entrepreneurship that is beyond the monetary, encompassing values such as community and understanding, curiosity and questioning, alternatives and new perspectives. The small scale of independent cultural life creates space for participation, personal preference and involvement, individual development and increased knowledge. In addition, culture can play a compensatory role, particularly for children and young people who lack social and economic opportunities.

In March 2020, the pandemic forced the rapid and immediate closure of all physical culture activities and venues. This closure meant cancelled events, lost commissions and disappearing incomes for independent practitioners.

The pandemic posed an existential threat to the city's free and independent cultural sector, many of whose actors already worked within small economic margins.

In the form of specifically directed resources, the economic support granted by City of Malmö to protect and sustain the independent culture and arts sector of the city during the Covid pandemic of 2020-2021. Between May 2020 and December 2021, a series of financial support packages in the form of grants and financial concessions, aimed towards small to medium sized independent practitioners in Malmö.



**THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC CLOSURE WAS ASSESSED AS BEING BOTH  
NEGATIVE IN THE SHORT-TERM AND POTENTIALLY DISASTROUS IN THE LONG-  
TERM FOR CULTURAL LIFE IN THE CITY.**

## 2. Project goals and implementation

### 2.1. Main goal and specific objectives

The aim was to achieve a specific, timely and targeted intervention to support the independent culture sector of the city. As a complement to the financial support offered by the central and regional government to larger and mainly publicly funded cultural institutions. In view of the extraordinary situation, even practitioners who normally bear their own costs without public subsidy were also given the opportunity to apply for support.

### 2.2. Project development

In March 2020, the pandemic forced the rapid and immediate closure of all physical culture activities and venues. This closure meant cancelled events, lost commissions and disappearing incomes for independent practitioners. Music, film and performing arts were areas with particularly great needs because of their key role in sustaining many individual artists and groups.



**WITH STARTING POINT IN THE NEEDS OF THE INDEPENDENT SECTOR, THE PROGRAMME WAS ALSO DESIGNED TO FINANCIALLY SUPPORT THE “RESTART” OF INDIVIDUAL PRACTITIONERS AND THE INDEPENDENT CULTURE SECTOR AS A WHOLE.**

The purpose of the support was to contribute to a sustainable cultural infrastructure in various arts areas and was aimed at professional cultural practitioners, both individuals and organisation who were significantly economically affected by the pandemic.

The intervention aimed to support cultural practitioners of significance for Malmö's artistic infrastructure during the ongoing pandemic, as well as providing them with the opportunity for artistic work and livelihood during the period.

The project was developed within the framework of the policies of the Cultural Board of the City of Malmö, including its established goals to achieve:

**A GOOD INFRASTRUCTURE FOR MALMÖ'S CULTURAL PRACTITIONERS** - Malmö is an active and attractive cultural city where the city's independent culture sector is given good conditions to establish itself, operate and develop. This includes strengthening the local infrastructure for the independent culture sector.

**CULTURAL RIGHTS FOR THE CITY'S CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE** - All Malmö's children and young people have good and equal opportunities to influence, take part in and create cultural experiences both during school hours and in their free time.





**THE INITIATIVE GENERATED INCREASED AWARENESS OF THE PRECARIITY OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE INDEPENDENT CULTURE SECTOR, AND THE CITY'S ROLE IN PROTECTING AND CREATING CONDITIONS FOR ITS SURVIVAL AND GROWTH.**

## 3. Impacts

### 3.1. Direct impacts

Impact on City of Malmö: an increased awareness of the role of the small to medium-sized independent culture sector, its breadth and diversity, and its importance in the cultural eco-system of the city.

Impact on cultural actors: just under 500 applications for financial assistance to individual cultural practitioners and over 170 applications from small to medium-sized professional organisations were approved during the 18-month period. All previously approved financing remained in place. Many independents also received "rent holidays" from their city-owned rented premises. This represented the difference for many between surviving the effects of the pandemic or leaving the sector.

The broader economic impact resulted from the injection of an additional SEK39m (€3,8m) into the independent cultural sector of Malmö/Skåne region, preserving jobs and cultural facilities/practices. The wider impacts are in the preservation of the independent cultural sector of the city. This sector has a key role in providing meeting places and opportunity for the exercise of cultural rights for a diversity of groups: amongst others, children and young people, racialized people, women and LGBTQ+ people.

### 3.2. Assessment

Through access to adapted and expanded cultural support, many of the free cultural actors were able to survive the pandemic, and then restart and reopen to a more normal extent.

### 3.3. Key factors

Key factors in a successful intervention were a strong political will to act, recognition of culture's role in the city for the well-being of citizens, as well as a rapidly established and open dialogue between the City of Malmö, regional and national bodies and the independent cultural sector.

### 3.4. Continuity

The pandemic made visible that cultural infrastructure consists of a complex chain of artists, producers, intermediaries and organizers. Malmö has an important regional role as a node for both cultural production and events. By contributing to the preservation of breadth and diversity of cultural infrastructure and supporting the individual practitioners, Malmö has also in the longer term strengthened the role of culture as a motor in regional social and economic life.

## 4. Further information

Malmö was a candidate for the fifth "UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21" International Award (February – June 2022). The jury for the award drew up its final report in September 2022, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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