

**GENT**  
**UNESCO CREATIVE CITY OF MUSIC**  
**SINCE 2009**

**Monitoring Report**  
**DECEMBER 2020**



## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Ghent was designated 'UNESCO Creative City of Music' in 2009.

The official launch of the title in Ghent took place in 2010 with a program that reached out to as well the political level, the cultural field and a broad audience.

The management of the title is taken care of by the Departement for Culture, Sports and Free Time.

Ghent actively participated in the annual meetings of the network in Enghien-les-Bains in 2017; Krakau-Katowice in 2018; Fabriano 2019. In the latter Ghent also contributed to the musical program with sending the Ghent based band 'Okkupeerder'. During the 2016 annual meeting in Östersund, Ghent was elected coordinator of the cluster of music cities. Ghent remained coordinator until 2017.

Overarching initiatives that contributed to achieve the objectives of the UCCN in the past four years are: the work done in Ghent on the UN SDG's; the further development of UiTPAS Gent; the 2020 project 'OMG Van Eyck was here', commemorating the Flemish Master and painter of the Ghent Altar Piece Jan Van Eyck; the start of 'Kunstenoverleg' and the projects City Composer and Sound Logo. Important and overarching as well, is the URBACT project REFILL on the reuse of vacant buildings and sites.

In Ghent's strategic plans for culture 2014-2019 en 2020-2025 music is explicitly put forward as one of the main focuses. Several locally important initiatives will be continued. Considerable efforts were and still are made to renovate important municipal music venues such as the Ghent opera house and the concert hall De Bijloke. Structural and project-based subventions continue to support a.o. Ghent's music life.

On the intercity level and more in general on the international level, Ghent remains in favor of feasible exchanges of artists and cultural managers.

In the years to come Ghent will continue to put music and creativity in the core of its culture policy notably in its strategic plan for culture 2020-2025 and in its bid for European Capital of Culture 'Ghent 2030'.

On the network and international level continuing and strengthening the exchange of artist and cultural managers, but also of knowledge will be in the forefront of Ghent's policy.

The COVID-19 pandemic lead in Ghent to several interesting initiatives of private cultural players in cooperation with other actors and municipal departments. The city council injected an extra budget of 6.5 mio euros in culture to counter the impact of the pandemic.

## 2. GENERAL INFORMATION:

- 2.1. Name of the city: GHENT
- 2.2. Country: Belgium
- 2.3. Creative field of designation: Music
- 2.4. Date of designation: 08/06/2009
- 2.5. Date of submission of the current report: 31/12/2020
- 2.6. Entity responsible for the report:  
Department for Culture, Sports and Free Time – City of Ghent
- 2.7. Previous reports submitted and dates: Monitoring report 2009-2016,  
30/11/2016
- 2.8. Focal points of contact:  
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## 3. CONTRIBUTION TO THE NETWORK'S GLOBAL MANAGEMENT:

- 3.1. Number of UCCN annual meetings attended in the last four years (please note that a regular participation in these meetings is compulsory): 3  
2017 Enghien-les-Bains; 2018 Krakau-Katowice; 2019 Fabriano.
- 3.2. Hosting of a previous or future UCCN Annual Conference: None
- 3.3. Hosting of working or coordination meeting(s) addressed to one or more specific UCCN creative field representatives (including sub-network meetings): None
- 3.4. Hosting of international conference(s) or meeting(s) on specific issues salient to the Creative Cities with a large participation of members of the Network: None
- 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, type of contribution, factual or estimated amounts, main objectives, etc.): None
- 3.6. Membership of the Steering Group and period: 2016-2017
- 3.7. Participation in the evaluation of applications (number of applications evaluated per Caal for Application), or previous Membership Monitoring Reports (number of reports evaluated per reporting exercise): None

#### 4. MAJOR INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED AT THE LOCAL LEVEL TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE UCCN:

##### OVERARCHING INITIATIVES RELATING TO THE KEYWORDS: SUSTAINABILITY, CREATIVITY, PARTICIPATION, AWARENESS

*UN Sustainable Development Goals  
Ghent Sustainability Report 2020, voluntary local review*

*From the introduction to the review:*

The City of Ghent has embraced the SDGs since their formulation in 2015. We were one of the SDG pioneers in the Flemish Association of Towns and Cities (VVSG) and were an SDG voice.<sup>2</sup>

The City of Ghent continues to act as an SDG ambassador during this term. The SDGs were an important source of inspiration for the preparation of the 2020-2025 municipal multiannual plan and helped shape the objectives. They have also provided guidance for the evaluation of our policy. The respective policy documents explicitly refer to the SDGs for the policy areas of international solidarity and international cooperation.

Over the past few years, the City of Ghent has also collaborated on international publications regarding local efforts for the SDGs (e.g. OECD, Eurocities, Austrian Städtenbund, Barillo Food Centre) and participated as a speaker in Belgian and international fora (e.g. VVSG study days, UN conference in New York (2018), Kanazawa (2019)). This enables us to expand our knowhow and make local practices more effective.

The City of Ghent has signed various statements about the SDGs drawn up by international networks and organisations. Examples include the VVSG charter (2017), the Belgian charter (2016) and the Basque Declaration – ICLEI (2018).

The City of Ghent monitors policy developments with regard to the role and importance of the SDGs in European policy making (e.g. the European Commission's reflection paper on a sustainable Europe (June 2019) and the new European Commission's Green Deal (2020-2027)) and implements them in its own policy development.

*SDG 11.4 Protection of cultural and natural heritage:*

The contribution of culture to the implementation of SDG 11 is summarized in this section. Attention was given to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cultural life in the city.

For the report:

[https://www.sustainabilityreports.be/sites/default/files/reports/en\\_sdg\\_rapport\\_book\\_20082020\\_final.pdf](https://www.sustainabilityreports.be/sites/default/files/reports/en_sdg_rapport_book_20082020_final.pdf)

## UiTPAS

*Loyalty program - advantage and savings card*

UiTPAS is a loyalty program launched in July 2012 by the Flanders Ministry of Culture as a pilot project, using an advantage- and savings card in order to stimulate participation in free time activities. Following a positive evaluation by the regional government, the program started in Ghent in September 2014.

The program aims at stimulating participation in free time activities like culture (library, theatre, museums, concerts, etc), sports, activities for children and youth, etc. In Ghent and two neighboring municipalities, more than 140 locations offer card owners the possibility to earn points that can be swapped for discounts on forthcoming activities and/or for incentives. By June 2020 50.000 UiTPAS cards were active in Ghent and two adjacent municipalities.

The program offers advantages for every cardholder but at the same time it is a tool for stimulating participation amongst vulnerable groups and individuals, especially people living in poverty. By using their card they are automatically and in a discrete way offered considerable discounts without stigmatization. This is made possible by a close cooperation between the municipalities and the cultural providers.

In its regular subvention contracts with cultural actors, the city of Ghent demands participation in UiTPAS.

For more information:

<https://uitin.gent.be/uitpas>

<http://persruimte.stad.gent/173395-gent-reikt-50-000e-uitpas-uit>



*OMG Van Eyck was here*  
*Commemorating the Flemish Master Jan Van Eyck*

Ghent is the city where Van Eyck painted his world-famous masterpiece 'The adoration of the mystic lamb' or 'Ghent Altarpiece' and where for the past six centuries, millions of visitors have gathered from all over the world to admire this painting. In 2020 Ghent is celebrating Jan Van Eyck and the Ghent Altarpiece with a special festive year full of events and activities.

Van Eyck's heritage courses through the city, and generation after generation he continues to inspire new masters.

For this commemorative year more than seventy Ghentish designers agreed to create a product or design inspired by the Ghent Altarpiece. Each and every one of them is a passionate artisan who, just like Jan Van Eyck in the fifteenth century, is keeping artisanal mastery and creativity alive with the utmost care, knowledge, and patience.

The Van Eyck designers practice a broad range of crafts, leading to a great diversity of unique products: jewellery, hats, floral arrangements, beer, rugs, shawls, handbags, ceramics, glassware, etc.

For this commemorative year the city, the Flanders Festival and Collegium Vocale Ghent joined forces and commissioned a composition by the world famous Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, inspired by the Ghent Altarpiece. 'Agnus Dei, the adoration of the mystic lamb' was created during the Flanders Festival in the Saint-Bavo Cathedral, home to the painting.

For more information:

<https://visit.gent.be/en/omg-van-eyck-was-here>

<https://vaneyck2020.be/themajaar-omg-van-eyck-was-here>

<https://www.gentfestival.be/en/news/omg-van-eyck-was-here-flanders-festival-ghent/348/>



*Kunstenoverleg Gent*  
*Muziekoverleg - GreenTrack*

'Kunstenoverleg' is an initiative of the cultural sector, supported by the city. It gathers all sorts of cultural actors, in all sorts of disciplines.

The main objective of Kunstenoverleg is to stimulate and facilitate cooperation:

- within the Ghent cultural field;
- amongst culture, the arts and other sectors like tourism, education, economy, urban development, media, etc;
- between the cultural field and public authorities.

Kunstenoverleg is:

- a network for reflection;
- an advisory board;
- a platform for artistic projects.

The 'Muziekoverleg', a structure that was set up amongst all actors in the field of music (see previous monitoring report), is since 2019 incorporated in Kunstenoverleg, as to stimulate crossovers.

The same goes for 'GreenTrack' an initiative of the cultural sector and the Ghent municipality that mainly is dealing with sustainability in culture and in urban life in general.

For more information:

<https://gentskunstenoverleg.be/>

*City composer*  
*Sound logo*

Some 20 years ago Ghent appointed a city poet. Later on it was decided that this function would alternate with a city composer and since recently with a city 'raconteur'. Raising awareness for the discipline they represent through public performances on designated occasions, is the core of their function.

From 2017 until 2019 Fulco Ottervanger was Ghent's city composer. Ottervanger was the 4<sup>th</sup> city composer of Ghent, after Peter Vandermeersch, Dick Vanderharst en Annelies Van Parys.

In 2016 as the first city in Belgium, Ghent created a sound logo 'Sounds like Ghent'. The city soundlogo sits next to the visual logo of the city and will contribute to the promotion of 'Ghent, UNESCO Creative City of Music'. The logo was developed by the Ghent based sound agency 'Roundhouse' by simply listening to the sound(s) of the city, through workshops and through studying Ghent's policy on citymarketing. The logo is amongst others available as a ring tone for mobile phone, as a door bell, will played on the carillon of the Ghent Belfry (UNESCO World Heritage) and serves as the music on hold of Gentinfo, the municipal information service. All material re the soundlogo is available in open data on [www.soundslike.gent](http://www.soundslike.gent) and everyone is invited to play and work with it. If the result is posted with #soundslikegent, the city will further promote it via its own communication tools. Recently a remix-contest was launched, with a free recording and release on Record Store Day as an award.

For more information:

<https://persruimte.stad.gent>

**PUNCTUAL INITIATIVES  
IN SUPPORT OF THE GHENT MUSIC FIELD AND  
RELATING TO THE KEYWORDS:  
SUSTAINABILITY, CREATIVITY, PARTICIPATION, AWARENESS**

*Investing in infrastructure  
A solid base for further development*

Infrastructure for the arts is a *conditio sine qua non* for a rich and diverse cultural life in any city. In general Ghent is well equipped when it comes to cultural infrastructure, but investing in it is an ongoing concern. Especially since much of the venues are historical buildings. The fact that so many historical buildings are being used for music performances was one of the reasons why Ghent was designated 'UNESCO Creative City of Music'.

Three major building campaigns of the past and coming years were and are directly linked to music:

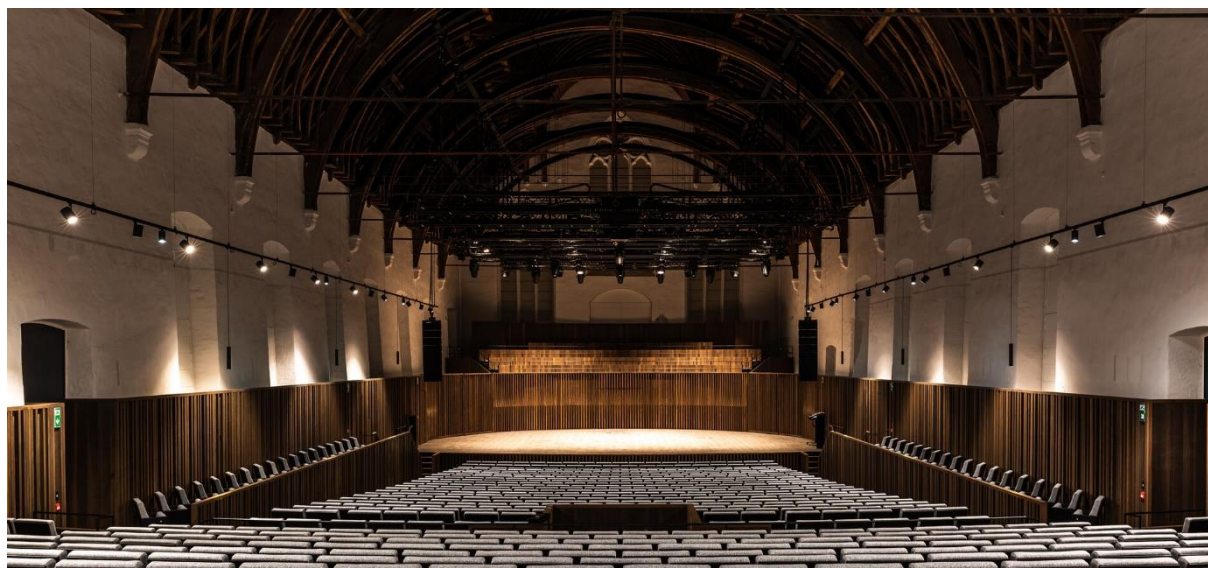
- Concert hall Muziekcentrum De Bijloke
- The Wintercircus
- The Ghent Opera house (see under 6)

*Concert hall De Bijloke*

Between 2019 en 2020 the main concert hall of Muziekcentrum De Bijloke, located in a 13<sup>th</sup> century former hospital ward, was renovated and transformed into a concert hall of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It now seats an audience of about 800 and has a widely admired acoustic. With about 160 concerts every season, Muziekcentrum De Bijloke reaches out to 90.000 visitors.

For more information:

<https://www.bijloke.be/pQZlrfI/nieuwe-concertzaal/verbouwing>



*Concert Hall De Bijloke after renovation*

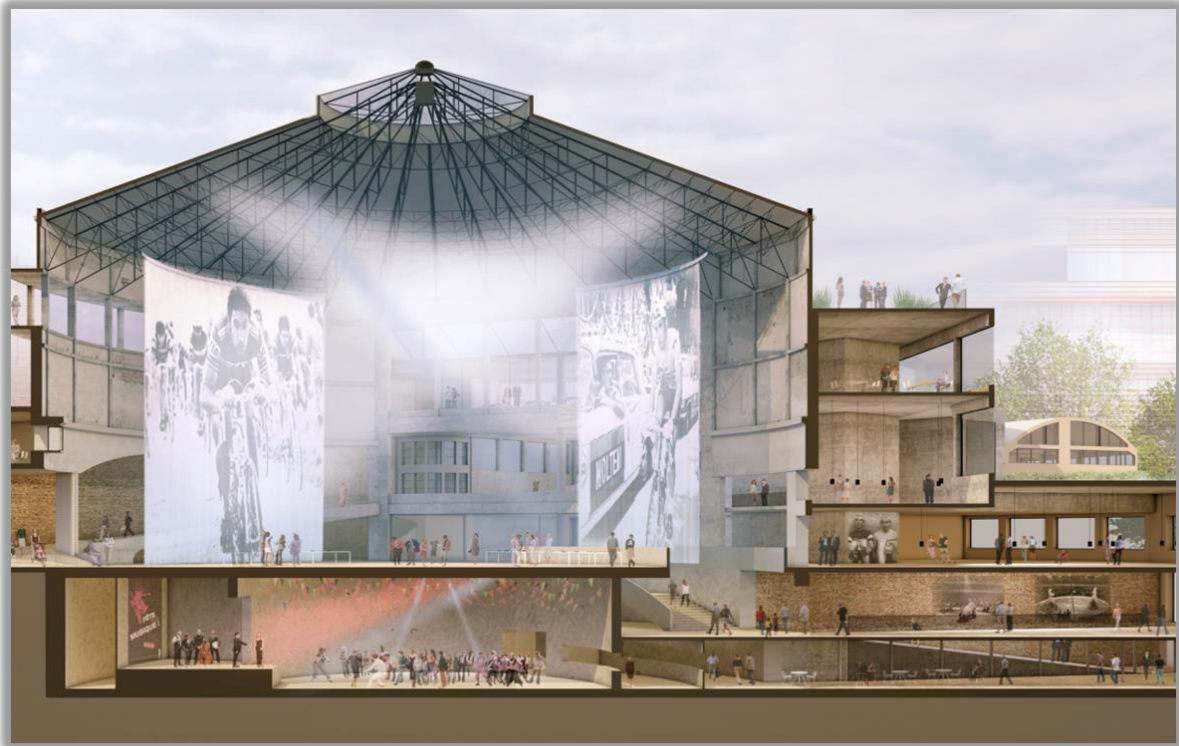


### The Wintercircus

In 2022 a new venue for pop&rock will open in the former Ghent Wintercircus, for an audience of about 500. This new venue will fill the existing gap for this genre.

For more information:

<https://sogent.be/projecten/wintercircus>



*Pop&Rock venue in the Wintercircus*

Complementary to these three major projects, ad hoc and structural subventions for regular investments in music venues are budgeted, and through a specific regulation Ghent is subsidizing private initiators that are building rehearsal rooms for electronic music (cfr infra).

### *Subventions Structural & Project-based*

A sound and balanced policy of structural and project based subventions, that was finetuned over the years, helped develop a rich and diverse cultural field in Ghent. Specific regulations are open to professional, semi-professional and amateur companies and artists.

The focus of the project-based subsidies varies throughout the terms of office, but music is a constant, next to participation. Other focuses are talent development and children and youth.

A prominent role in Ghent's cultural life is played by actors in the field of music. Ghent is home to 29% of all music organizations operating in Flanders. It is a wide range from Flemish institutes like Kunsthuis Opera Ballet Vlaanderen, over Ghent based internationally renowned companies like LOD, to local initiatives like '123 Piano' and 'Artist is looking for (...)', the latter being musical projects that bring people together through live music and that provoke spontaneous interactions.

Especially to be mentioned are the Ghent festivals. One of the 4 reasons why Ghent was awarded the title of UNESCO Creative City of Music, is the amount of music festivals or festivals with a focus on music (e.g. FilmFest, the Ghent international film festival), that were born and are deeply rooted in Ghent.

The Ghent based festivals together with several art centers and companies are seen as the backbone of Ghent's cultural field and life. Therefore Ghent continues to support its festivals with subsidy contracts of 6 years. This gives them a stable ground and allows to plan over several years. In these subsidy contracts cultural partners are asked to a.o.:

- Support and help develop Ghent as a UNESCO Creative City of Music
- Implement the UiTPAS (see above)
- Support and help develop the municipal policy on culture, but also on e.g. environment, mobility and waste (an important issue for outdoor festivals)
- Comply to the ethical values that the city stands for such as integrity and non-discrimination

The total budget for structural and project-based subventions is about 10mio euro/year.

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

*URBACT - project REFILL*  
*reuse of vacant spaces as driving force for innovation on local level*

*Keywords: developing hubs of creativity and innovation*  
*Broadening opportunities for creators and professionals in the cultural sector*

From 2015 until 2018 Ghent took the lead of the URBACT project REFILL, reuse of vacant spaces as driving force for innovation on local level.

### *Project description:*

The last years many cities experimented with the concept of 'temporary use' of abandoned and derelict spaces. It has been an important and inspiring source of innovation and change in cities, being a motor and incubator for new forms of urbanity. Initiatives – often from a bottom-up perspective – vary in themes and in target groups: SME's artists, craftsmen, organizations seeking meeting space, cultural initiatives, residents who maintain a piece of green, initiatives for urban agriculture, managing a community center, experimenting with new forms of mobility,...

A temporary no-man's-land offers the opportunity to create something new, experiment, discover but also experience the city differently. The element of temporality offers the advantage to be exempt to the mainstream rules that apply for managing and exploiting 'regular' spaces. And this is how innovation is triggered. In some cities it just occurred and cities let it happen, in others local authorities actively looked for ways to facilitate this. The project united cities who have experimented for some years with temporary use and developed an instrument (legislation, a fund, financial instruments, an agency, a network, a (digital) platform,...) to address the topic. Both public and private space and buildings were in scope.

In the past ten years Ghent developed its own policy in temporary use of vacant spaces through a city-wide regulation combined with subventions. Cultural projects are an important part of this policy, thus 'developing hubs of creativity and innovation and broadening opportunities for creators and professionals in the cultural sector'.

For more information:

<https://stad.gent/nl/over-gent-en-het-stadsbestuur/stadsbestuur/wat-doet-het-bestuur/gent-internationaal/samen-internationaal-werken/europese-subsidies-en-projecten/refill-ee-urbact-project-rond-tijdelijke-invulling>

<https://stad.gent/nl/over-gent-en-het-stadsbestuur/inspraak-en-participatie/tijdelijke-invulling-van-terreinen-en-gebouwen>

<https://www.efro-projecten.be/nl/zoek-ee-europees-project/refill-582/>

*Connecting internationally  
through music*

Ghent and Tallin are twinned cities. Tallin wants to candidate for the title of UNESCO Creative City of Music. In the past few years exchanges between both cities not only but also in the field of music took place on a regular basis.

The same goes for Kanazawa, another twinned city to Ghent and a UNESCO Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art.

The calls by other UNESCO Creative Cities of Music for exchange or contribution to music projects, where on a regular basis spread amongst the Ghent music actors. The city supported this projects.

Ghent together with Antwerp would welcome in 2020 the 'World Choir Games'. 550 choirs from allover the world would bring some 20.000 participants to both cities. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this event is postponed to 2021.

For more information:

<https://www.koorenstem.be/en/news/world-choir-games-will-be-postponed-july-2021>



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

### *Culture policy Present strategic plan for culture*

#### Continuing the policy focus on music:

- Financial support for building rehearsal studio's for electronic music (cfr supra)
- Facilitating 'Kunstenoverleg', a meeting platform for the Ghent cultural (and music) scene (cfr supra)
- Infrastructure:

- Ghent opera house:

Some 25 years ago the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ghent opera house was renovated. A new and thorough renovation and restoration is more than necessary. Preparations are ongoing and the building campaign will start in 2024 and is due to be finished in 2028.

<https://www.operaballet.be/nl/het-huis/blog/dit-zijn-de-nieuwe-plannen-voor-opera-gent>

- The Wintercircus

In 2022 a new venue for pop&rock will open in the former Ghent Wintercircus, for an audience of about 500. This new venue will fill the existing gap for this genre (cfr supra).

<https://sogent.be/projecten/wintercircus>



*Ghent Opera house, new entrance after renovation .*

International work:

- Ghent ECOC 2030:  
Ghent will candidate for the title of European Capital of Culture in 2030. Preparations for the bid are ongoing and will include cooperation with the partners of the international networks that Ghent is a member of, such as a.o. the UCCN, EUROCITIES, AVIAMA
- Kanazawa:  
Kanazawa is a twinned city to Ghent and UCCN Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art. In 2021 Ghent and Kanazawa will celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their twinning. As far as circumstances will allow, cultural exchanges between both cities will support this event
- UCCN:  
Ghent will continue to take part in the activities of the UCCN and the subnetwork of music cities

Estimated annual budget for implementing the proposed action plan
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Investing in infrastructure:

The total budget for investing in infrastructure for 2020-2025 is about 56 mio euros.  
Most relevant in this context are:

<b>Structural</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Total</b>
Capitole	326.000	326.000	326.000	326.000	326.000	326.000	1.956.000
Musiccentre De Bijloke	793.259	793.259	793.259	793.259	793.259	793.259	4.759.554
Arts Centre Vooruit	208.000	208.000	208.000	208.000	208.000	208.000	1.248.000
Diverse	19.999	19.999	19.999	19.999	19.999	19.999	119.994

<b>One-off</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Total</b>
Musiccentre De Bijloke	300.000	590.000	480.000	120.000	200.000	0	1.690.000
Wintercrucis	0	0	1.200.000				1.200.000
Opera house	0	0	0	0	0	15mio	15mio
Opera (purchase adjacent building)	0	0	0	0	0	1.500.000	1.500.000

Subventions:

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Total</b>
Subventions	8.384348	8467084	8.529.511	8.599.369	8.676356	8.754.702.	51.411.371
Id Extra	1.465.000	1.465.000	1.465.000	1.465.000	1.465.000	1.465.000	8.790.000
UiTPAS	375.000	375.000	375.000	375.000	375.000	375.000	2.250.000
Amateurarts	100.000	100.000	100.000	100.000	100.000	100.000	100.000
Musiccentre De Bijloke	1.083070	1.091.186	1.099.370	1.107.440	1.115.578	1.123.786	6.620.430
De Centrale Intercultural Centre	1.623.747	1.637.548	1.651.468.1	1.665.506	1.679.662	1.693.936	9.951.870

Communication Awareness
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The municipal communication tools will be used to communicate and raise awareness:

- [www.stadgent.be](http://www.stadgent.be) and <https://stad.gent/ghent-international>
- The Ghent twitter account <https://twitter.com/stadgent>
- The international newsletter of the city <https://stad.gent/en/international-policy/news-events/international-newsletter>
- The municipal newsmagazine for residents <https://stad.gent/nl/over-gent-en-het-stadsbestuur/over-gent/nieuws-over-bestuur-en-diensten/stadsmagazine-0>

## 7. INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

To counter the insulation of elderly residents in retirement homes the municipal department for culture developed the initiative 'UitinGenTV'. The indoor television circuit was used to broadcast on a regular basis a cultural programming. The cultural sector supplied the footage, the department for culture, the department for elderly care and the municipal ICT supplier took care of the selection, the distribution, logistics and communication.

The main event of 'OMG Van Eyck was here' (cfr supra) was planned to be the exhibition 'Van Eyck, an optical revolution' in the Museum for Fine Arts. The exposition was internationally acclaimed as a 'once in a lifetime experience'. Due to the pandemic the exhibition had to close a few weeks after opening. The museum consequently developed a digital tour through the exposition, thus offering a broad public the chance to visit.

On the policy side the city financially supported the cultural actors that could not claim regional support to bridge the spring lockdown.

Actors renting infrastructure on the private market were financially helped by the city to pay the rent.

Actors renting infrastructure from the city were exempt from paying rent during 3 months.

Amongst others 154 studio's for artists were thus secured.

For culture an extra budget of in total 6.5 mio euros was raised by the municipality to counter the impact of the the COVID-19 pandemic.

