



Meeting minutes	Universul Cultural Center - Working Group Launch Session
Date, location	08.07.26
Note taker	Notion AI, edited by the process team

Agenda overview

Introductory session for the Universul participatory process, focused on explaining how the work groups will function and managing expectations. Facilitated by Natalia Todorova, Andrei Lutenco and Vlada Ciobanu (CPR – Center for Policies and Reforms).

Central information

- The process was launched in partnership with the Ministry of Culture and the Danish Cultural Institute to develop a shared vision for a cultural center in Chişinău, in the building of the current "Universul" publishing house.
- Prior stages included the development and presentation of two preparatory studies (pre-feasibility study and participatory development process study), the process launch event in May, and a second, two-day conceptualization workshop held in early June. Results from the conceptualization workshop were transmitted to the Ministry.
- CPR's role is to facilitate a legitimate, transparent, and inclusive participatory dialogue, not to make decisions; final decisions rest with the Ministry and Government. Key benefits: a consolidated, representative voice; less space for unilateral decisions; community and network building.
- Timeline:
 - July-October, working groups conduct thematic research, consult experts, and formulate draft recommendations;
 - November–December, forum sessions compile contributions from all groups into a final set of recommendations for the Ministry of Culture and other institutions.
- Five working groups will be established:
 - Governance model (legal status, management model, board structure, role of public institutions);
 - Space distribution and regulation (current use of spaces and how to document/improve future use);
 - Audience profiling (who is present/absent, barriers to participation, outreach);
 - Financial Sustainability Model;
 - Cultural Programming.
- Forum sessions (larger, open gatherings) will run in parallel (from July to December) to allow broader public input and testing of proposals. Working groups are expected to be small (up to ~15 people), held online or in person as decided by each group.

Questions and remarks



- Bureaucratic restriction to Universul: Multiple participants described submitting requests to the Universul administration and being redirected to the Ministry and back, with no resolution and no clear leadership currently in place at Universul.
- Urgency of immediate space use: several participants pushed for concrete, near-term action, arguing that cultural spaces need activities now, not only as part of a long-term vision.
- Loss of active cultural groups: approximately ten active cultural groups in Chişinău have disbanded over the past three years due to lack of accessible space.
- Alternative/night culture inclusion: one participant advocated for recognition and destigmatization of night culture and electronic music as legitimate parts of the cultural sector, and asked that this be included in the process.
- Skepticism and fatigue: building on previous discussions with the Ministry, which yielded no results, several participants expressed concern that this process will take a long time and not lead to results.
- International examples: a participant mentioned having previously sent an email with information on five European cultural center models. Accordingly, some participants proposed inviting experts and practitioners from other countries, including Romania, Georgia, and Ukraine, to present relevant experience on managing cultural spaces and organizing community activities. Facilitators confirmed these were received and incorporated into the governance work group's materials.

Next steps and process logistics

- Each registered participant will be contacted by the process facilitators and assigned to and invited to their first work group session.
- First sessions will establish objectives, key questions, who needs to be invited (Ministry contacts, community groups, experts), and a working agenda.
- The space distribution work group is a priority and may meet as early as the following week.
- A larger offline plenary meeting is planned where all groups will present their work to a broader audience for feedback and validation.
- All session materials, minutes, and documents will be made publicly available. Facilitators emphasized the importance of participants spreading awareness to broaden representation.
- Participants not yet registered in a work group are encouraged to sign up using the link to be re-shared by facilitators.



- Participants are asked to respond to facilitators' emails to confirm participation and help set the session agendas.
- A priority meeting for the space distribution and access work group will be organized within the next week, with the intention of including a representative from the Universul administration and a representative from the Ministry of Culture.
- Facilitators will formally request an official meeting with the Universul administration to address unanswered access requests.
- At the working group sessions, it was discussed that, depending on the topic, representatives of relevant institutions and departments would be invited, including those responsible for building administration, heritage, legal matters, and procurement or contracting procedures.
- The international examples submitted by email will be integrated into the governance work group's agenda and discussed to decide which of them merit further exploration.
- All messages, ideas, and proposals from the process will be documented, discussed within the groups and the forum, and transmitted to the relevant institutions. Participants are encouraged to continue submitting concrete ideas, proposals, and suggestions, including by email.