



Mural Fest Kosova

Strategic Plan

January 2024 - December 2027

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Acronyms

MKRS	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport
DKRS	Directorate of Culture, Youth and Sport
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
CH	Cultural Heritage
MF	Mural Fest

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Organization

The organization Mural Fest Kosova was founded in 2016 and our scope is (Organization of cultural activities, specifically visual arts; Art Colony for young people, artistic performances, discussions; trips for the exchange of experiences and trainings; organization of competitions at the national and international level .) In addition to all these objectives, Mural Fest has as its principle the support and promotion of young people in the field of art as well as other fields, the promotion of ideas against discrimination, prejudice and various marginalization of many communities and underserved groups. Educating our community about these issues is central to the ideas Mural Fest conveys.

1.2 Objectives of the strategic planning process

The objectives of the strategic planning process are:

- Development and promotion of Mural Fest
- Increasing the capacities of young people in the field of art and activism
- Raising the awareness of citizens about negative phenomena
- Development of art in the country
- The transformation of the city of Ferizaj into a city of murals
- Promotion of cultural tourism
- Creation of jobs in the field of art, also developing new profiles
- Implementation of agreements for cooperation with a national and international character,
- The development of new professional staff in the field of Art and Culture

1.3 Methodology

This strategic plan has been compiled in continuous consultation with the Assembly of Members, the Management Board and the Mural Fest staff. As long as the scope of our organization is on culture and art, information has been collected about the needs and problems that appear in this field in Kosovo, which MF will continuously engage to address through various projects.

2 The Organizations Profile

2.1 History

The mural festival was born as a result of continuous activities related to this field, that is, murals. The murals in the city of Ferizaj have been made continuously, starting from 1967 with the "waiter" placed in front of Hotel Luboten, then in 2004 as the second mural in the city. Then the next mural comes with the theme "Family reunion", this mural was created by women artists in 2014.

In 2016, the artists of the city, with the initiative of the "Zef Kolombi" Artistic Association, started a series of artistic activities in the form of "street art" where some young people of the city created graffiti and murals in different spaces. And to our city they added a considerable number of works such as: the old substation transformed into a painting; "Interreligious Tolerance" mural, etc. All of this is the result of a larger initiative that would crown the work of Ferizaj artists by deciding on a larger, at the same time international Festival, i.e. the MURALFEST Mural Festival.

Aiming at the promotion of the artistic community in Ferizaj, their empowerment and support, as well as the organization of the Mural Festival and based on our right to freedom of association guaranteed by Article 65.1 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo and the Law on Freedom of Association in NGO 04/L-57, we - the undersigned - of our own free will decide to establish the "MURAL FEST" Mural Festival, which can also be known by the official abbreviation "MURAL FEST". The founders of the organization are:

- Lebibe Topalli - Shabani - Painter,

- Pranvera Sylejmani - Painter,

- Antigona Heta - Painter.

The basic activity of the organization is the promotion of visual art and the promotion of cultural life in the city of Ferizaj and beyond.

Other goals of the organization are:

- Promotion, development of the Festival of Murals,
- Activation of the female artist in the city,
- Empowerment of young artists in the city of Ferizaj,
- Aesthetic education and raising citizens' interest in art.

Today, the organizational council consists of members from various fields such as: painter, designers, directors, journalists, members from civil society, all this with the aim of a more worthy professionalism.

Mural Fest has carried out 9 successful editions of the festival since 2016 of the most diverse themes, which are listed as follows:

Edition I, 2016 – Freedom of Movement

Edition II, 2017 – Environmental Protection

Edition III, 2018 – Anti-Corruption

Edition IV, 2019 – Tolerance

Edition V, 2020 – Change

Edition VI, 2021 – Home

Edition VII, 2022 - On/offline

Edition VIII, 2023 - Fragments of Utopia

Edition IX, 2024 - HER Spotlight

2.2 Vision

Mural Fest aims to be a sustainable, international festival, so that in the near future Ferizaj will be identified as a city of murals. In addition to this aim to be known as a festival and to increase the recognition of Ferizaj as the city of murals, we want to increase our visibility as an organization at the international level, with multiple goals in social aspects and beyond.

2.3 Mission

Mural Fest is dedicated to promoting art and culture in the country, harnessing art as a tool for societal awareness and inclusivity without distinction. Our primary goal is to raise awareness about the issues relevant to our society and contribute to the necessary changes in a democratic society through diverse forms of art.

2.4 Values

The core values of "Mural Fest" are:

- Promotion of Art
- Youth Advancement in Art,
- Education and study of art and art fields,
- Preservation of Cultural Heritage,
- Professionalism,
- Advocacy,
- Tourism.

2.5 Current approach

Mural Fest applies to various national and international open calls. As a potential donor from the beginning there was the municipality of Ferizaj, namely DKRS Ferizaj, then MKRS, Us Embassy, Swiss Embassy, Bloomberg Philanthropies, SMART Balkans, Municipality of Pristina, and many local businesses, which each in their own way have supported the development of Mural Fest. The involvement of citizens and young people has created an emotional connection in terms of culture with the city, always creating an opportunity for artistic development, which we believe will have an impact on the city of Ferizaj.

2.6 Present challenges

We are currently facing several challenges that we believe can be overcome with time. These include the need for a dedicated work materials warehouse, access to essential infrastructure and work tools, and securing sufficient funds. Additionally, we are working towards improving access to institutions, particularly in obtaining permits for utilizing public spaces. We also seek specific and costly tools and materials for organizing the festival, as well as finding donors and adequate support for successful project implementation. Another significant challenge is enhancing the capabilities of our young staff, particularly in developing the non-formal group, "artists," and preparing them for their roles within the organization. Furthermore, we are working on addressing the lack of adequate spaces for activities and accessing necessary permits for project implementation.

3 The context of the organization's action

3.1 Current work environment

Mural Fest currently operates from two offices totaling 80m², one for administrative functions and the other for youth activities. To improve our operations, we recognize the need for a dedicated storage space to house materials such as paints, brushes, easels, and ladders. Additionally, we require adequate space to facilitate project implementation and workshops.

3.2 Resources

Mural Fest relies heavily on its skilled professional staff, many of whom have received education both locally and internationally, boasting extensive professional backgrounds and substantial experience in various fields such as painting, architecture, directing, journalism, financial management, and music.

In its early stages, the organization faced challenges in securing funding, particularly during its first year in 2016, operating with support from the local municipality and a few businesses. However, as a result of successful initiatives, the festival garnered support from additional donors and the US Embassy in the subsequent years. The organization's momentum was further boosted with the reception of a grant from the European Endowment for Democracy in 2022, providing financial stability and enabling focus on other projects. This resulted in a significant budget increase of over 50%, with the organization surpassing an annual turnover of 100,000 euros for the first time in 2021, with further growth anticipated in the coming years.

As the organization continues to expand, a proportional increase in costs, potentially up to threefold, is deemed necessary to effectively execute planned activities. This growth includes an expansion of staff and activity space, necessitating a corresponding budget increase. Leveraging international projects has also strengthened the organization's credibility and will continue to do so in the future.

3.3 Collaborations and networking

Since its establishment, MuralFest Kosovo has actively sought collaboration with both local and international organizations that share our mission of uplifting marginalized communities and revitalizing neglected public areas across Kosovo. As an organization dedicated to advancing the field of art, we have forged strong partnerships with numerous local, national, regional, and international entities, such as the Association of Figurative Arts "Zef Kolombi" in Ferizaj, the High School of Art "Cesk Zadeja," Rin'ON, Bran, Ferizaj Museum, Ferizaj Art Gallery, National Art Gallery in Kosovo, National Museum of Kosovo, Fifth Wall TV, Artistic Collective Voids Project, Center for Balkan Cooperation LOJA, Livrit NGO, and CreAction Geneva.

Our collaborative efforts have facilitated the exchange of professional artists, the organization of educational workshops and exhibitions, and the establishment of close ties with the University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj. Through these connections, we have engaged in various activities with students and utilized their spaces and equipment for our initiatives. Additionally, we have organized mural tours in Ferizaj for students from the University of Prishtina and other foreign universities, allowing them to witness the social and urban transformation achieved through our murals. The evolution of MuralFest Kosovo from an artistic project into the largest and most active non-governmental organization in Ferizaj highlights our multifaceted approach. In addition to advancing art culture, we address social issues through visual art, collaborating closely with the Municipality of Ferizaj and extending our partnerships to other municipalities such as Prishtina, Gjilan, Gjakova, Kamenica, Klina, Lipjan, Kacanik, Shterpce, Shtime, Podujeva, and Prizren.

Our art therapy program has involved collaborations with various institutions, including the Correctional Center of Kosovo, Women's Prison in Lipjan, CAMP BONDSTEEL, KFOR, Domestic violence shelter in Ferizaj, Handikos, Hendifer, and Down Syndrom. Our programs and organizational goals are made possible through the continuous cooperation and support of public institutions, foreign embassies, foundations, and international organizations. We will continue this program by further strengthening our collaborations with organizations and institutions in order to make a bigger impact with this program. During 2024 we will be collaborating with the prisons in Kosovo and the Correction Facility for Minors.

Notably, we have received support and grants from entities such as the American Embassy in Pristina, the United Nations Mission in Kosovo UNMIK, the Swiss Embassy in Pristina, The European Endowment for Democracy (EED), UN WOMEN, Bloomberg Philanthropy, and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, all of which have played vital roles in implementing our initiatives and goals.

3.4 Opportunities and risks

As an organization, MuralFest Kosovo faces several risks that could impact our operations and the successful implementation of our projects. These risks include:

1. *Dependency on Institutional Cooperation.* Our organization has established good opportunities for cooperation with local and central institutions, especially with the Directorate of Urbanism in Ferizaj and other cities. However, there is a risk that these institutions may not be interested in cooperating with us in the future. To mitigate this, we will:
 - Strengthen our relationships with key stakeholders through regular communication and by demonstrating the value of our work.
 - Diversify our partnerships to include more institutions and organizations at both local and central levels.
 - Develop contingency plans to ensure that our projects can proceed even if institutional support wanes.
2. *Obtaining Residents' Permits* in residential areas can become challenging in the following years, especially outside Ferizaj. To mitigate this, we will:
 - Engage with the community early in the project planning process to build trust and understanding.
 - Clearly communicate the benefits of the projects to residents and address any concerns they may have.
 - Work closely with local authorities to streamline the permit acquisition process.
3. *Weather conditions* can affect the timing and execution of our outdoor projects, since we mostly work on field. To mitigate this, we will:
 - Develop flexible project timelines that account for potential weather-related delays.
 - Have contingency plans in place, including alternative indoor venues or rescheduling options.
 - Monitor weather forecasts closely and adjust plans as needed to ensure safety and project integrity.
4. *Funding Shortages* - to mitigate the risk of funding shortages, we will:
 - Diversify our funding sources by seeking grants, sponsorships, and donations from a wide range of organizations and individuals.
 - Develop a robust fundraising strategy that includes both short-term and long-term goals.
 - Maintain a reserve fund to cover unexpected expenses and ensure project continuity during financial shortfalls.
 - Closely collaborate with local business and seek for sponsorship
5. *Community Resistance* - in order to mitigate this, we will
 - Engage in community outreach and education to inform residents about the goals and benefits of our projects.
 - Foster a participatory approach by involving community members in the planning and implementation stages.
 - Address any concerns or objections promptly and respectfully, demonstrating our commitment to the community's well-being.

4 The Plan

4.1 Key Indicators

The achievement of these objectives will be measured after the reports that the Executive Director is tasked to submit following the key indicators:

- Staff engagement
- Time limits
- Budget planning
- Efficiency
- Attendance

4.2 Targeted groups

The target groups that Mural Fest plans to work with are:

- Young people aged 14-27 from Kosovo
- Minorities
- Young professionals in the field of art
- Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports,
- Directorates of Culture, Youth and Sports of various municipalities of Kosovo,
- Networks of international organizations operating in the field of art
- Shelters for victims of domestic violence
- Other organizations in interdisciplinary fields
- Prisons

4.3 Targeted region

Mural Fest is planned to expand across Kosovo, with a focus on the regions of Ferizaj, Prizren, Gjilan, and Pristina from 2024 onward. While Mural Fest has already reached many other areas, future efforts will prioritize smaller towns and the potential for partnerships in additional locations.

4.4 Strategic approach

To ensure the successful execution of our programs, the Mural Fest team is committed to actively seeking funding opportunities. We will pursue open calls for grants and funding from local and central institutions, as well as various organizations. Our approach involves carefully preparing grant applications that are in line with our mission and project objectives. We will develop comprehensive project proposals tailored to the interests and priorities of potential donors and present these to a variety of funding sources, including governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, cultural institutions, and private sponsors. Collaborating with local and international businesses will not only provide financial support but also access to resources, services, and increased visibility. To engage potential business partners, we will create attractive sponsorship packages that offer branding opportunities, corporate social responsibility benefits, and involvement with the community through art and cultural initiatives.

In addition to pursuing funding opportunities, Mural Fest's team will prioritize building professional contacts and networks to ensure sustainable and fruitful future collaborations. This will involve establishing relationships with institutions, organizations, embassies, and influential individuals. Networking efforts will include attendance at relevant conferences, workshops, and events to connect with potential collaborators and supporters. We will also engage in strategic outreach efforts, connecting with cultural attachés, embassy representatives, and international cultural organizations to foster cross-border collaborations and diversify our funding sources. Over the next two years, a key goal is to establish strong partnerships with international organizations and secure funding from the Creative Europe program.

Recognizing that the Mural Fest team is primarily composed of artists, it is important to enhance and develop their skills beyond their artistic expertise. To address this, we will implement a professional development program encompassing training in:

- Project Management
- Financial Management
- Advocacy and Activism

Our aim is to equip our team with the necessary skills to efficiently manage projects, handle finances responsibly, and engage in effective advocacy and activism. The training programs will include project management, financial management, and advocacy and activism. By focusing on these areas, we aim to build a resilient team capable of navigating the complexities of project implementation, securing funding, and advocating for the arts in various forums. This approach

will not only enhance the team's professional competencies but also ensure the sustainability and impact of Mural Fest's initiatives.

4.5 Program / activities

The main goal for the coming years is to expand the activities by extending them to other cities as well as to raise professional capacities in the field of art.

During these 4 years, from January 2024 to December 2027, MF will engage in the development of these programs:

- Mural Festival
- Transformation of public spaces
- The artists
- Art therapy
- Promotion of cultural heritage

1. The mural festival - is the annual festival which is held in Ferizaj during the months of May-June. The preparatory phase begins months before, where the theme that will be covered during the festival is determined, then the list of participating artists (local and international) is created.

The theme for the editions is proposed by the Mural Fest team in December and approved by the board at the end of the year. During this program we will have a set of activity, always related to the theme, which includes:

- Murals
- Installations
- Exhibitions
- Performances
- Workshops
- Lectures
- Public Discussion.

2. Transformation of public spaces - while we have a marked lack of public spaces everywhere in Kosovo, through previous initiatives intervening with art, we have created new public social spaces that would serve the citizens. This program will continue to be implemented in the coming years, where apart from Ferizaj, we intend to extend to other cities.

To carry out the transformation of public spaces, we will select intervention sites based on specific needs, targeting certain areas each year for planned transformations. The program will be curated as follows:

- An open call will invite young people to participate in the transformation, either by submitting their designs and concepts or by joining workshops.
- Artistic residencies will be offered to local or international artists, allowing them to develop their concepts for transforming these spaces. During the residency, artists can choose their preferred forms of activity to maximize impact.
- Successful transformation relies on close cooperation with residents and institutions, ensuring that the recreated spaces meet the community's needs.
- We plan to transform at least two locations each year.

3. Artists - are an informal group within the Mural Fest which is composed of young people from all over Kosovo, with a greater focus on the region of Ferizaj. The members of this group are between the ages of 15-25 and so far we have had 5 generations of this group.

At the beginning of each year, we will continue to open calls for the recruitment of new members, who will be engaged throughout the year, in activities planned for them, including:

- raising organizational capacities
- capacity building in the field of art
- soft skills training
- the possibility of trainings abroad

4. Art therapy - is the newest program of our organization which started implementation in 2022, where the MF team together with the artists held art therapy sessions in the Bondsteel Camp where the Afghan refugees were stationed. Similar initiatives have been undertaken in localities where different ethnic groups live, and finally in the Women's Prison in Lipjan.

During the following years we will work on the structuring and formalization of the Art Therapy Program, which is expected to extend more widely to marginalized and stigmatized groups, including:

- people with special needs
- survivors of domestic violence
- Children and adolescents

- refugees and repatriates
- People with mental disorders
- the elderly
- people suffering from addiction

In order to extend this program as much as possible, it is intended to cooperate with:

- professionals from the field of psychotherapy
- Artists
- social workers
- educational institutions
- Universities

5. Promotion of cultural heritage - will focus on bringing traditional art closer to young people. Thus there will be activities and workshops dealing with:

- pottery
- Artisanals
- javelin knitting

Pottery workshop - Pottery tools will be provided where young people will be trained to become future potters and thus we aim to increase interest in this craft, and create new jobs.

Program Timing:

Programs	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12
1. Mural Festival	x	x	x	x	x	x					x	x
2. Public Space Transformation			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
3. Artivists	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
4. Art Therapy	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
5. Cultural Heritage Promotion					x	x						

4.6. Visibility

The organization Mural Fest Kosova is engaged in increasing its visibility in the artistic scene, aiming to attract greater interest from local and international media. We are committed to establishing close links with local media to promote our activities and projects, increasing awareness and support in the community. Also, we seek to collaborate with international media and renowned art magazines to present our work on a wider platform and draw global attention to our artistic achievements. These efforts aim to further strengthen and promote the community of artists and the innovative projects of Mural Fest Kosova.

4.7 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Project monitoring will include routine checking of progress information to confirm that progress is on track. It will include monthly to quarterly reporting on results, activities and use of resources (i.e. people, time, money and materials). This will be used to ensure that what is planned is progressing as intended and within the allocated resources.

4.8. Sustainability

Ensuring the sustainability of MuralFest Kosovo over the next three years is dependent on a comprehensive strategy encompassing financial stability, capacity building, and strong partnerships.

To achieve financial stability, we will diversify our funding sources by actively seeking grants from local and central institutions, as well as international organizations. Additionally, we will pursue sponsorships from businesses and secure funding through programs such as Creative Europe and other European cultural initiatives. We will meticulously prepare draft proposals and present them to potential donors to ensure a steady stream of financial support.

Capacity building is also critical to our sustainability plan. The MuralFest team, mainly consisting of artists, will participate in various training programs in project management, finance, and activism. This will not only enhance our internal capabilities but also ensure efficient and effective project implementation, maintaining high standards of execution and adapting to evolving challenges.

Establishing and nurturing strong professional networks is essential for our long-term sustainability. We will focus on building collaborations with local and international institutions, organizations, embassies, and individuals to open doors for new opportunities, funding, and resources, ensuring that MuralFest remains a dynamic and influential entity in the art and cultural sectors. In addition, community engagement will play a pivotal role in our sustainability efforts.

Actively involving local residents in our projects will foster a sense of ownership and pride in the transformed public spaces. This approach will not only enhance the social impact of our work but also ensure the longevity and relevance of our initiatives. Our strategic focus on environmental sustainability will further strengthen our organization's position. We will continue to use eco-friendly materials in our projects and promote sustainable practices through our activities, aligning us with broader global sustainability goals and resonating with both the community and potential sponsors.

Conclusion

The organization has developed a strategic plan that includes clear objectives, such as the development and promotion of Mural Fest, increasing the capacities of young people, promoting cultural tourism and raising awareness of societal problems. With a professional team and support from various donors and institutions, Mural Fest has managed to organize nine successful editions of the festival, with themes that deal with important issues such as freedom of movement, environmental protection, women's rights and tolerance.

Current challenges include a lack of material storage, infrastructure and sufficient funding, but the organization remains optimistic that it will overcome these difficulties through collaboration and continued support from the community and donors. Key programs include the Mural Festival, Transforming Public Spaces, Artists, Art Therapy, and Cultural Heritage Promotion, which aim to empower artists and youth, educate and raise awareness of art and culture in society.

In conclusion, Mural Fest aims to become a sustainable international organization and festival, identifying Ferizaj as the city of murals and increasing the recognition of the organization at an international level. With a strong commitment to the promotion of art and culture, Mural Fest will continue to create meaningful change in society through art and activism.