

Introduction

The **European Capitals of Culture (ECoCs)** are first and foremost a cultural event, but ‘being a European Capital of Culture can also boost the long-term socioeconomic development of cities. They often take this opportunity to regenerate themselves, improve their creative and innovative potential, develop new and more sustainable forms of tourism and raise their profile. Being a European Capital of Culture can also foster social and territorial cohesion within city boundaries and beyond, strengthen citizens’ roles in the city’s development as well as their participation in the shaping and making of cultural expressions.’¹

Indeed, this is also the ambition of **Esch 2022**, where, together with 10 Pro-Sud municipalities, and 8 municipalities in France, in the Communauté de Communes Pays Haut Val d’Alzette (CCPHVA), Esch-Alzette in Grand Duchy of Luxembourg holds the 2022 ECoC title. ‘Culture, nature, identity, Europe—how can they be integrated and rethought in the context of a region that is reinventing itself at the heart of Europe? This is the question that Esch 2022 asks under the slogan ‘Remix’².

How successfully Esch 2022 will answer this question and meet its overall objectives to safeguard and promote the diversity of cultures in Europe, highlight the common features they share, increase citizens’ sense of belonging to a common cultural space, foster the contribution of culture to the long-term development of cities³, and advance the promotion of nature along with sustainability efforts to protect it, can only be determined by a **comprehensive impact research programme**, in which the social aspect plays a prominent role. This poster presents our ongoing efforts in this respect.

Sources: 1) European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *European capitals of culture : 30 years*, Publications Office, 2020, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/367668>, p. 1; 2) Sam Tanson, Minister for Culture of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg; 3) European Commission (2018) *European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) 2020-2033 Guidelines for the cities’ own evaluations of the results of their ECoC, Annex 10 - Guidelines for the cities’ own evaluations of the results of each ECoC*

Methodology

- Before embarking on our own research journey, we **collected and reviewed 190 data sources** about the region, Luxembourg and Europe. These include studies on culture, socio-economy, tourism, environment, spatial planning and urbanism, mobility, integration, education, research, innovation, European values and identity reports, evaluations carried out by the other ECoCs (Liverpool, Mons, Aarhus, Luxembourg 2007, Marseille, Matera etc.) and other cities, and other relevant studies.
- We also **met with numerous stakeholders** to better understand their own research work in adjacent fields to make sure we are not ‘reinventing the wheel’.
- We have **encountered multiple methodological challenges** concerning the culture-related data in the South of Luxembourg with regards to: complexity, regionality and recency of data, timing, temporality, continuity, sample size, availability, accessibility of existing studies, as well as issues concerning the completeness, representativeness and comparability of data. For a small ECoC, questions of data collection speed and research partners’ capacity were also relevant. The pandemic of Covid-19 has had a very significant impact on any kind of impact measurement, from the establishment of baselines (2020-2021) to influence on data concerning tourism, cultural participation, stakeholders priorities, citizen participation, economic impact, local collaboration, cultural projects’ organisation, integration along with opinions on European identity aspects and many more topics.
- As our methodological framework, we have established a **comprehensive matrix spanning 20+ studies together covering 55+ impact indicators** reflecting the ECoC objectives as set out by the European Commission, partially adjusted, augmented and complemented to fit the specific objectives of Esch2022.
- **Topics researched** range from cultural quality and social well-being, through regional and economic impacts, to links between culture and nature.
- The **studies are very diverse** and include barometer telephone surveys of the resident population, on-site interviews with visitors, self-reporting by cultural actors, statistical analyses of economic data, participant observation in cultural third places, or professional media monitoring, to name just a few. Several indicators are considered in each study, the objective being that together, all of these studies would cover the totality of the indicators taken into account in our evaluation plan.

Main conclusions

Methodological challenges abound, from limited data to Covid-disrupted baselines and habits, but the conclusions gained are priceless. Indeed, impact measurement is not only an effective ex-post reflection tool, but it can also help focus ambitions and support strategic decisions before and during the title year. “You can’t improve what you don’t measure”, as Peter Drucker said, and this couldn’t be more true for the most prestigious European cultural programme aiming to shape minds, hearts and quality of life of thousands.

The research is ongoing but the first results are already suggesting that Esch 2022 is having positive effects on the region, and the event participants consider the organisation of Esch2022 to have a positive impact on their own lives. Impact studies on active participants of the programme and its various stakeholders (cultural players and project owners, policymakers, team and volunteers) are also underway. Same applies to the impact on nature, where social awareness about both the natural richness of the region and the need for sustainability efforts are being built through multiple Esch 2022 projects as well as through the internal ECoC processes and procedures.

Besides shedding light on the impact of Esch 2022, the research team aims to leverage the title and the related impact measurement challenges as an opportunity to shed light on the gaps in the system, encourage new collaborations and research initiatives – even if some might only start delivering results long after 2022. This could be in fact a very significant legacy of Esch2022 in itself.

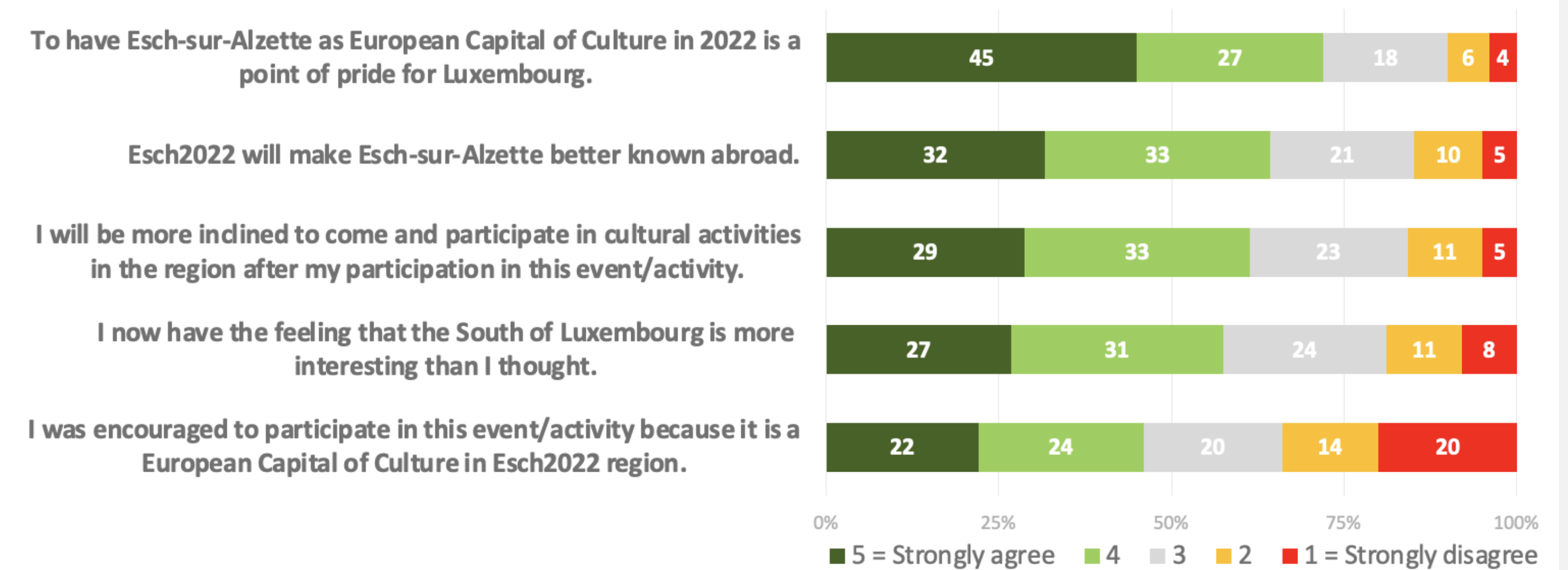
Results

Research is still ongoing but below we present 3 illustrative excerpts.

Impacts of Esch 2022 on the region (illustrative excerpt):

Visitors already consider the organization of Esch2022 to have positive impacts on the region

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 means “Strongly agree” and 1 means “Strongly disagree”, to what extent do you agree with the following statements? (%)



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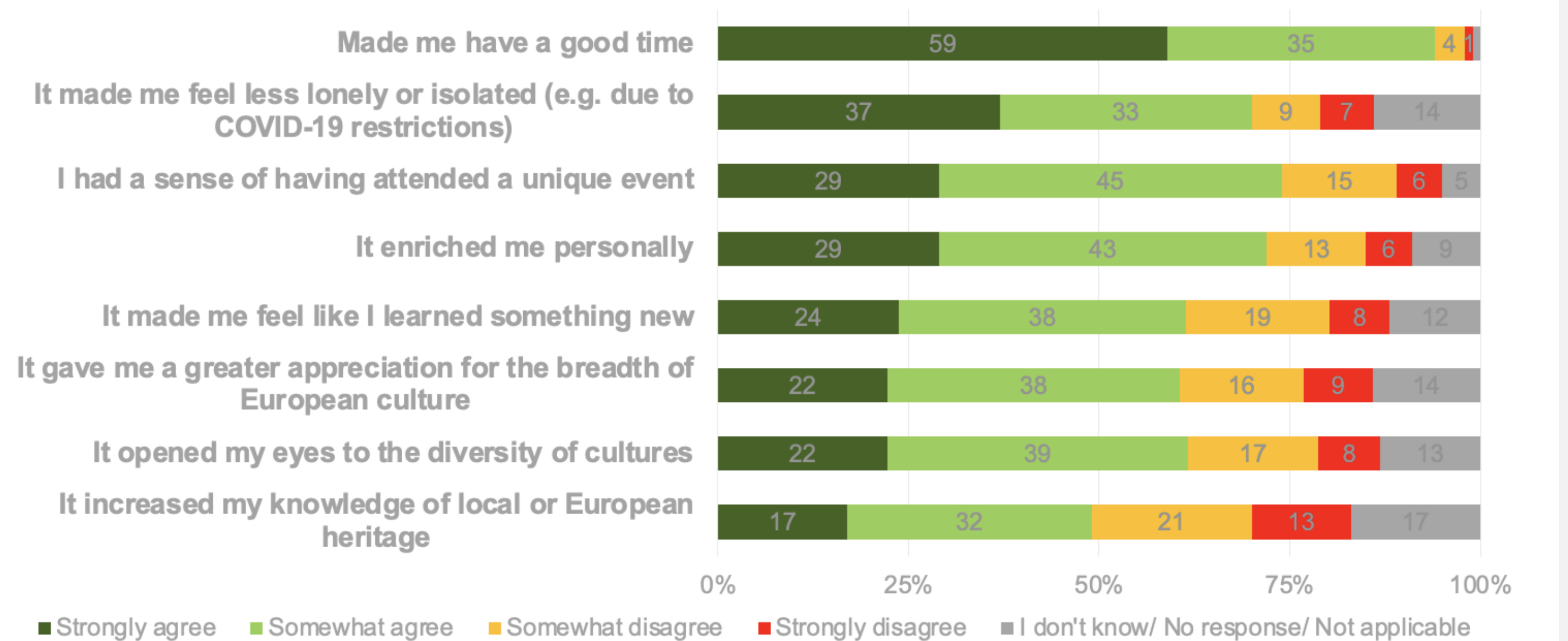
Base: Total: N = 1121; Participants who attended an Esch2022 program event

Source: Survey conducted by TNS Ilres and Esch2022 ASBL (face to face and online). This event satisfaction and evaluation survey started in March 2022 and will end in January 2023. Over 1121 respondents had participated by the end of July (data in the graph).

Impacts of Esch 2022 on the participants (illustrative excerpt):

Participants are positive about various impacts they experienced by participating in an Esch2022 event.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (%) Attending this type of event/activity:



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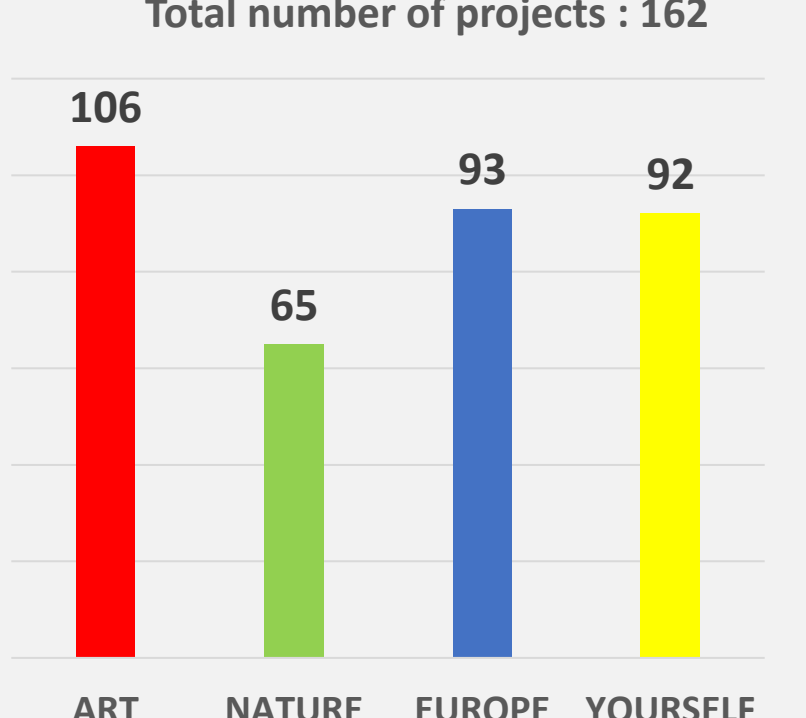
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Impacts of Esch 2022 on nature (illustrative excerpt):

The expected social impacts of Esch 2022 related to nature are an inherent focus of the programming of the ECoC as well as its organisational approach. Both will be included in the impact measurement work. Indeed, multiple projects directly address the **Remix Nature** stream which combines two priorities: ‘the appreciation of the beauty of our region and the idea of a sustainable coexistence’ (esch2022.lu).

Number of projects by REMIX category
Total number of projects : 162



In terms of ECoC management as such, the **ESCH2022 Sustainable Development Charter** ‘is a citizens’ initiative, the outcome of discussions and consultations between the numerous players in the area of sustainable development in Luxembourg. ESCH2022 will be the first European Capital to acquire such a tool.’ (esch 2022.lu)

Moreover, the **ELO project** (with support of the Ministry of Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development) is the information platform for event organisers who want to integrate sustainability into their projects and for visitors who want to identify more easily events that apply sustainability principles. ELO focuses on 6 core actions: Food & beverage; Local economy & production; Mobility & accessibility; Waste management; Tourism & accommodation; Communication & merchandise (ELO brochure)

