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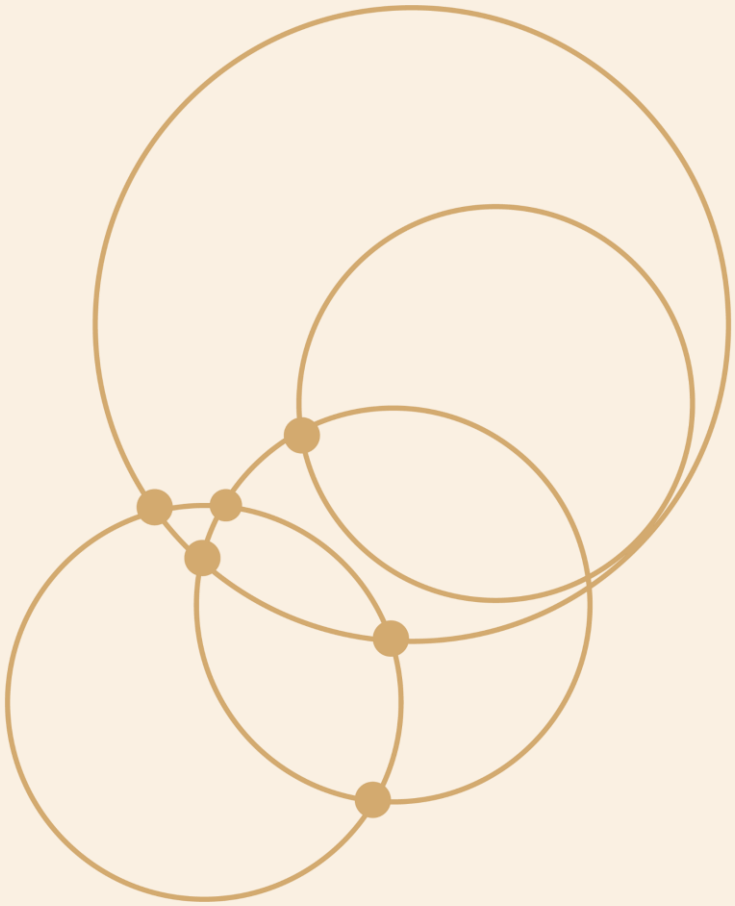
Redefining Café Houses
as unique European Cultural Heritage



CAFE

CAFE Training Manual & Toolkit

Methodological handbook for cultural café houses in Europe

Final version

Document information

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1. Introduction: Why café houses matter today

Café houses have long been more than places of consumption. In many European cities they have functioned as meeting points for writers, artists, students, neighbors, political thinkers, travelers and everyday citizens. Their cultural importance lies not only in coffee or gastronomy, but in the possibility of staying, talking, reading, listening, debating, learning and belonging.

The CAFE project stems from this heritage and asks a contemporary question: how can café houses remain relevant cultural and community spaces in the 21st century? The answer is not nostalgia. A contemporary cultural café needs to combine hospitality, local rootedness, artistic experimentation, responsible operation and a clear relationship with its audiences.

This toolkit turns the knowledge gathered through the CAFE project into a practical handbook for café houses across Europe. It is written for venues that wish to strengthen their cultural role, whether they are historic coffee houses, literary cafés, bookshop-cafés, community cafés, bars with cultural programming, small hospitality venues, or cultural organizations working with café spaces.

Core message

A café house can be a cultural, community, democratic and sustainable meeting place. The aim of this toolkit is to help café houses turn that idea into daily practice: through mission-setting, programming, partnerships, audience development, staff roles, communication, evaluation and shared values.

What this toolkit is and what it is not

This document is a practical manual built from the training event, the CAFE research, the best practice collection, and the identity-building process of the emerging Network of European Café Houses. It translates project knowledge into tools that can be used by cafés outside the original partnership.

The toolkit does not prescribe one ideal café model. Café houses differ greatly: some have a strong literary tradition, others work with music, visual arts, social inclusion, education, sustainability or neighborhood development. This handbook therefore offers adaptable methods rather than fixed rules.

The five foundations of a cultural café house

Foundation	What it means in practice
Cultural purpose	The café has a reason to organize culture: it responds to a local need, an artistic mission, a heritage story, or a community gap.
Hospitality as relationship	Guests are not treated only as customers. They are potential participants, neighbors, learners, readers, co-creators and returning community members.
Local ecosystem	The café understands its neighborhood and works with artists, civil groups, schools, cultural institutions, municipalities and other local businesses.

Foundation	What it means in practice
Experimentation with care	The café tests formats and supports artists, while managing risks, staff capacity, neighbors, accessibility and financial limits.
Values in practice	Inclusivity, community, sustainability, openness, care, creativity and trust are visible in concrete decisions, not only in communication.

2. How to use this handbook

This handbook can be read from beginning to end, but it is designed as a modular toolkit. Each module contains a short explanation, a method, practical steps and one or more worksheets. A café can use the whole toolkit for strategic development or select only the tools needed for a specific situation.

Who is it for?

- Café house owners and managers who want to strengthen their cultural identity and long-term relevance.
- Cultural programme coordinators who organize events in hospitality spaces.
- Independent cafés that already host cultural activities but need a clearer structure, calendar, partnership model or evaluation method.
- Historic cafés that wish to connect heritage with contemporary cultural life.
- New or hybrid venues that want to become community anchors without losing operational viability.
- Municipal cultural professionals, civil organizations, artists and neighborhood initiatives interested in working with café houses.

Suggested user pathways

Situation	Recommended route through the toolkit
Starting from zero	Begin with self-assessment, cultural mission canvas, ecosystem map, programme format library and first 90-day plan.
Already organizing events	Use the programme portfolio, audience journey, staff briefing, communication toolkit and evaluation dashboard.
Building community	Use the third-place audit, stakeholder map, community advisory methods, inclusion checklist and recurring programme formats.
Improving sustainability	Use the environmental checklist, revenue models, budget calculator, impact framework and Code of Conduct self-check.
Preparing to join the network	Use the values section, case card template, good practice summary and Manifesto/Code of Conduct self-check.

How each module works

- Read the short explanation to understand the issue.
- Use the proposed method to make the topic concrete in your own café.
- Complete the worksheet with your team or with partners.
- Choose one small action that can be tested within 30 to 90 days.
- Measure what happened with simple indicators and adapt the next step.

3. Self-assessment: What kind of cultural café house are you?

European café houses enter cultural work from very different starting points. A small café with one owner, a bookshop café, a historic literary café, a music bar, a cooperative café or a café embedded in a cultural institution will need different first steps. The purpose of this self-assessment is to help the team identify its current profile and choose realistic development priorities.

Type	Typical feature	Main challenge	Recommended first step
Beginner cultural café	Rarely organizes cultural programmes.	No routine, no clear audience, limited confidence.	Start with one low-risk format per month.
Community café	Strong local presence and regular guests.	Cultural work depends on informal relationships.	Map local partners and create a recurring community format.
Literary / artistic café	Clear cultural identity and content profile.	Audience renewal and sustainable curation.	Develop a yearly programme portfolio and partner strategy.
Tourism-facing café	Many occasional visitors and strong location value.	Local community may weaken or feel displaced.	Create programmes for locals and bridge visitors with local stories.
Historic café house	Strong heritage, story and symbolic value.	Risk of nostalgia without contemporary relevance.	Connect heritage narratives with living artists and current issues.
Hybrid cultural-hospitality venue	Several functions: food, drink, events, meetings, work, exhibitions.	Focus can become fragmented.	Clarify mission, zones, staff roles and financial model.
Socially driven café	Inclusion, solidarity, education or sustainability is central.	Mission may be strong, but resources limited.	Document social values and seek partnerships or support.

Five-dimension readiness check

Score each statement from 1 to 5, where 1 means “not yet true” and 5 means “strongly true”. The result is not a judgement. It simply indicates where to begin.

Dimension	Statement to score 1-5
Cultural mission	We can explain why cultural programming matters for our café and our neighborhood.
Programme capacity	We have enough time, people and basic tools to organize at least one recurring cultural activity.
Community connection	We know who our regular guests, local partners and under-reached audiences are.
Operational sustainability	We understand the cost, staff workload and possible income of cultural events.
Values and responsibility	Our inclusion, sustainability and community values are visible in daily decisions.

Interpreting the score

5-10: Start with a mission, one small programme and basic audience mapping.

11-17: Strengthen routines, partners, communication and feedback.

18-25: Focus on network-building, deeper evaluation, shared resources and long-term sustainability.

Module 1. The café house as cultural ecosystem

Module snapshot

Why this matters: A café house does not operate in isolation. It is part of a street, neighborhood, city, cultural economy and social network.

What you will produce: A map of your local cultural ecosystem, three potential partners, and a realistic first cooperation plan.

The CAFE training used Budapest's Bartók Quarter and Margit Quarter as examples of how cultural cafés, galleries, civil organizations, municipalities, designers and local businesses can reinforce each other. The key lesson is that a café becomes stronger when it understands and actively shapes its surrounding ecosystem.

A cultural ecosystem is not only a list of institutions. It is a set of relationships, shared audiences, habits, spaces, resources, permissions, informal networks and values. A café can become an anchor institution when it provides something that the neighborhood needs: a place to meet, a cultural programme, a safe informal forum, a visible platform for artists, or a bridge between public life and private hospitality.

Method: Local cultural ecosystem map

1. Define your radius. Start with a 15-minute walking distance from the café, then add key partners further away.
2. List cultural actors: galleries, bookshops, studios, theatres, libraries, schools, universities, museums, festivals and independent artists.
3. List civic and social actors: neighborhood associations, NGOs, social initiatives, youth groups, elderly groups, environmental groups and local activists.
4. List hospitality and business actors: other cafés, restaurants, shops, local producers, markets, tourism actors and creative businesses.
5. Mark existing relationships, weak ties and potential new partners.
6. Identify the overlaps: shared audiences, shared topics, shared values, shared practical needs.
7. Choose three partners for the next 90 days and define one concrete action with each.

Tool 1.1 Local cultural ecosystem map

Purpose: Identify the actors around the café house and select realistic cooperation opportunities.

Question / field	Your notes
Who is within 15 minutes of the café?	
Which actors already bring people together?	
Which actors work with audiences we do not yet reach?	
Who could provide content, artists, speakers or community knowledge?	
Who could help with permits, communication, equipment or space?	
Which three relationships should we develop first?	

Anchor institution approach

The anchor institution approach means that the café house becomes important because it solves or supports a local need. It does not have to be large. A small venue can be an anchor if it consistently offers space, attention, information, cultural access or community care.

Local need	Possible café response
No informal meeting place for residents	Weekly community table, open breakfast, neighborhood discussion.
Few platforms for emerging artists	Monthly micro-exhibition, open mic, small performance slot.
Weak connection between students and locals	Student-led talks, reading groups, low-cost workshops.
Limited accessible culture	Free or pay-what-you-can programmes, daytime events, simple language communication.
Fragmented local businesses	Joint event calendar, street festival, shared discount or cross-promotion.
Limited sustainability awareness	Seasonal menu events, repair café, food waste workshop, reusable cup campaign.

Working with municipalities

Municipalities can be regulators, landlords, communication partners, cultural funders and neighborhood planners. A café house that can document its cultural and social value is in a stronger position when discussing permits, terraces, public space use, events, leases or local support.

- Prepare a one-page evidence sheet: number of events, participants, partners, artists, community groups and media mentions.
- Show how the café supports the neighborhood beyond commercial activity.
- Ask for specific support: permission, space, co-communication, small grant, equipment, street activation, network introductions.
- Frame the café as part of a local cultural strategy, not as an isolated business request.

Practical step for the next 30 days

Hold one internal meeting with the team and create a 15-minute neighborhood map. Choose one cultural actor, one civic actor and one public or municipal actor to contact.

Module 2. The café as third place and heritage space

Module snapshot

Why this matters: Cafés historically worked as democratic spaces: places beyond home and work where people could linger, exchange ideas and build relationships.

What you will produce: A cultural mission statement, a third-place audit, a heritage storytelling plan and a staff host briefing.

The idea of the café as a “third place” is central to the CAFE training. A third place is neither home nor work: it is a comfortable, accessible and recognizable place where people return, meet and develop informal belonging. In the CAFE materials, this is closely connected to the historical “soul” of coffee houses and the human factor: owners and staff who act as hosts, not only service providers.

Heritage is not only a historic building or famous former guests. It can be the story of the street, the community, the former function of the building, the people who gather there now, or the cultural practice the café keeps alive. A useful heritage strategy connects the past to contemporary relevance.

Method: Cultural mission canvas

Tool 2.1 Cultural mission canvas

Purpose: Write a concise cultural mission that can guide programming, partnerships, communication and staff decisions.

Question / field	Your notes
Why do we organize or want to organize cultural programmes?	
Who do we serve beyond ordinary customers?	
Which local need, gap or opportunity do we respond to?	
Which artistic, social, educational or heritage themes fit our identity?	
Which values should people feel when they enter the café?	
Which activities are not right for us?	
What change would we like to see in one year?	
How does our cultural mission support the business rather than compete with it?	

Example mission statement

Our café house is an open cultural meeting place where local residents, artists and civic actors can gather around accessible programmes, shared stories and everyday hospitality. We use food, drink, conversation and artistic formats to strengthen belonging, critical thinking and sustainable neighborhood life.

Third Place Audit

Dimension	Question	Score 1-5
Welcome	Do new guests feel that they are allowed to stay, look around and return?	
Comfort	Are seating, lighting, temperature, sound and movement suitable for longer stays?	
Mix of people	Can different ages, backgrounds and purposes coexist without tension?	
Conversation	Does the space encourage informal conversation without forcing it?	
Regularity	Are there repeated rituals or programmes that help people return?	
Staff role	Does the team act as cultural hosts and not only servers?	
Belonging	Can guests recognise themselves in the space, menu, events and communication?	

Heritage + contemporary relevance

A café house can use heritage in several ways: through menu stories, wall texts, city walks, staff narratives, programmes with historians, literary events, collaborations with artists, archival photographs, or contemporary reinterpretations. The aim is not to freeze the café in the past, but to make its story useful for today's audiences.

Heritage resource	Contemporary use
Historic building	Guided walk, short story on the menu, artist response to the building.
Literary or artistic tradition	Reading series, commissioned texts, book exchange, writers in conversation.
Neighborhood history	Local memory evenings, intergenerational storytelling, urban walks.
Former social role	Recreate the café as forum: debates, public talks, civic meetings.
Personal stories of staff and guests	Portrait series, audio stories, regular guest interviews.

Staff as cultural hosts

A cultural café depends on staff who understand the purpose of events, the rhythm of the space and the expectations of different guests. Staff do not need to become cultural managers, but they need simple information, confidence and clear roles.

- Before each event, share the title, purpose, expected audience, timing, ticket or consumption logic, and responsible person.
- Clarify where non-event guests can sit and how to explain the programme politely.
- Invite staff to suggest observations after the event: who came, what worked, what created tension, what guests asked.
- Recognize emotional labor. Hosting a cultural event is not only technical service; it involves care, attention and conflict sensitivity.

Module 3. Cultural programming in cafés

Module snapshot

Why this matters: A cultural café house needs more than occasional events. It needs a programme portfolio that fits the space, audience, resources and mission.

What you will produce: A programme portfolio, format selection, yearly calendar and event canvas.

The CAFE best practices show that cultural cafés work with many formats: book launches, science cafés, concerts, exhibitions, political debates, bilingual events, film screenings, theatre, family programmes, workshops, design markets and informal learning sessions. The challenge is to choose formats that fit the café's identity and capacity.

A programme portfolio should balance regularity and experimentation. Regular formats build habit and trust; one-off formats allow novelty, artistic risk and new audiences. A café with limited resources should start with a small number of repeatable formats instead of trying to be everything at once.

Method: Build a programme portfolio

1. Clarify your mission and audience before choosing events.
2. Select 2-3 recurring programme lines that can be maintained for at least six months.
3. Choose one experimental slot for small tests and artistic collaborations.
4. Create a simple balance between low-cost, income-generating, visibility-building and community-serving events.
5. Avoid over-programming. A full calendar is not useful if the team cannot deliver it well.
6. Review the portfolio every quarter using participation, feedback, staff capacity and financial sustainability.

Programme format library

Format	What it is	Basic needs	Good for	How to measure
Literary evening / book launch	Author talk, reading or book presentation.	Small stage, microphone, chairs.	Readers, locals, students.	Attendance, book sales, return visits.
Neighborhood talk	Moderated discussion on a local issue.	Quiet area, moderator.	Residents, civic actors.	Quality of discussion, follow-up actions.
Science café	Accessible talk with researcher or expert.	Projector optional.	Students, professionals, curious locals.	Questions asked, partner interest.
Micro-exhibition	Small visual arts display in café space.	Wall space, labels, lighting.	Artists, everyday guests.	Artwork views, artist contacts, sales.

Format	What it is	Basic needs	Good for	How to measure
Pop-up performance	Short theatre, dance or spoken word intervention.	Flexible seating, briefing.	New audiences, artists.	Audience reaction, disruption level.
Acoustic concert	Small music event suitable for café scale.	Sound check, neighbors considered.	Music lovers, regular guests.	Attendance, bar sales, noise feedback.
Open mic / storytelling	Low-barrier stage for community voices.	Host, simple rules.	Local creators, young people.	Number of performers, diversity.
Community breakfast / dinner	Shared table built around a theme.	Reservation logic, food planning.	Neighbors, partners.	Connections made, repeat attendance.
Urban walk starting/ending at café	Guided walk linked to neighborhood heritage.	Guide, meeting point, route.	Tourists, locals, heritage audiences.	Participants, café conversion.
Workshop	Practical learning session.	Tables, tools, facilitator.	Families, adults, students.	Skill gained, satisfaction.
Intergenerational conversation	Different age groups exchange stories.	Moderator, accessible timing.	Older residents, youth.	Sense of belonging, story collection.
Creative lab	Hands-on co-creation with artists or students.	Materials, clear goal.	Artists, schools, communities.	Prototype, learning outcomes.
Sustainable gastronomy workshop	Food waste, local sourcing or seasonal cooking.	Kitchen access or demonstration table.	Conscious consumers.	Behaviour change, partner interest.
Local makers market	Small market for local designers, zines, crafts.	Tables, payment clarity.	Local producers, shoppers.	Sales, new contacts.
Neighborhood forum	Open forum on local issues.	Moderation, ground rules.	Residents, municipality.	Issues raised, next steps.
Café-to-café exchange	Programme exchange with another café.	Partner agreement.	Network members.	Collaboration continuity.
Micro-residency	Artist works in or with the café for a short period.	Brief, fee, output.	Artists, regular guests.	Process visibility, final output.
Outdoor reading / street theatre	Small cultural event outside the venue.	Permit, portable tech.	Passers-by, locals.	Foot traffic, media.
Living lab on local issue	Experimental programme responding to a community question.	Facilitator, documentation.	Stakeholders, residents.	Learning, prototype, decision.
Film screening / listening session	Film, audio or music followed by discussion.	Rights, screen/audio.	Culture audiences.	Discussion quality, attendance.

Event programme canvas

Tool 3.1 Event programme canvas

Purpose: Plan one event clearly before committing time and resources.

Question / field	Your notes
Event title and short description	
Why are we organizing it?	
Which audience is it for?	
Which partner or artist is involved?	
What is the desired atmosphere?	
What does the audience do, not only watch?	
What does the café need to prepare?	
What is the cost and expected income?	
How will we communicate it?	
How will we know whether it worked?	

Quarterly programme balance check

Type	Recommended share	Purpose
Signature recurring format	30-40%	Build identity and returning audiences.
Community / neighborhood format	20-25%	Strengthen local belonging and relevance.
Artistic / experimental format	15-20%	Keep the café culturally alive and distinctive.
Educational / social responsibility format	10-15%	Lower barriers to learning and social engagement.
Commercially supportive format	10-20%	Support income, partners or visibility.

Module 4. Experimentation and artistic collaboration

Module snapshot

Why this matters: Cafés can be living laboratories where artists and audiences meet in informal, low-threshold ways.

What you will produce: A low-risk experimental event plan, an artist collaboration brief and a risk checklist.

Experimentation does not require a large stage. It can begin with a 20-minute performance, reading in a corner, a small exhibition wall, a live podcast, a designer pop-up, a community art project or a creative prompt for guests. The CAFE training emphasized that cultural cafés remain relevant when they become active cultural producers rather than passive rental spaces.

At the same time, experimentation must be managed carefully. Cafés are working hospitality spaces. Guests may arrive without knowing that a performance will happen. Staff may need to serve during the event. Neighbors may be affected by noise. Artists may need clarity on fees, conditions and expectations.

Method: Smallest testable cultural experiment

1. Define the question: What do we want to learn? Example: Will our regulars engage with short theatre in the café space?
2. Design the smallest possible format: short, low-tech, limited audience, clear timing.
3. Agree roles and conditions with the artist or group in writing.
4. Brief staff and communicate clearly with guests.
5. Document the event with notes, photos or short reflections.
6. Collect feedback from audience, artists and staff.
7. Decide whether to repeat, adapt, scale up or stop.

Tool 4.1 Living lab programme planner

Purpose: Use a café event as a small experiment that produces learning, not only entertainment.

Question / field	Your notes
What question are we testing?	
Who needs to be involved?	
What is the smallest safe version of the format?	

Question / field	Your notes
What are the boundaries: time, sound, movement, audience size, content?	
What can go wrong?	
What will we document?	
What evidence will help us decide the next step?	

Artist collaboration brief

Field	What to clarify
Purpose	Why are the café and artists collaborating.
Format	Reading, exhibition, pop-up, performance, workshop, residency, installation, etc.
Fee or income model	Fixed fee, ticket split, pay-what-you-can, sales commission, in-kind support or mixed model.
Space and technical conditions	Exact area, sound limits, lighting, walls, projector, cables, seating, storage.
Audience relationship	Who attends, how participatory the format is, content sensitivity.
Communication	Who writes copy, who provides images, tags, deadlines, languages.
Documentation and rights	Photo/video permission, artist credit, use on website/social media.
Staff and operations	Arrival time, soundcheck, service flow, green room needs, contact person.
Evaluation	How feedback will be collected and what success means.

Risk checklist for experimental events

- Will the programme disturb guests who did not come to the event?
- Is the sound level appropriate for the building, neighbors and license?
- Does the artist understand the limits of space?
- Is the content communicated clearly enough for audiences?
- Is there a plan for low attendance or unexpectedly high attendance?
- Does the staff know who is responsible for decisions during the event?
- Is the event accessible and safe for different participants?
- Have costs and income assumptions been checked?

Module 5. Beyond the walls: outdoor and neighborhood programming

Module snapshot

Why this matters: A café can extend its cultural role into streets, courtyards, squares, markets, festivals and walks.

What you will produce: An outdoor programme checklist, public space partner map and neighborhood activation plan.

Outdoor programming can make the café visible to new audiences and connect it more strongly to the neighborhood. Open-air readings, street music, public walks, small markets and micro-festivals can turn the area around the café into a shared cultural space. However, outdoor activities require more attention to permissions, weather, sound, safety, neighbors and accessibility.

The CAFE training used examples such as literary festivals, urban walks and district-level cultural ecosystems to show that the boundary of a café is not always the front door. The public realm can become part of the café's cultural mission when it is used responsibly.

Outdoor programme decision tree

Question	If yes	If no
Do we have a suitable outdoor area nearby?	Check permissions and capacity.	Consider a walk, partner courtyard or indoor window-facing format.
Can we manage sound without conflict?	Set limits and end time.	Choose non-amplified or visual formats.
Do we have staff capacity?	Assign outdoor and indoor roles.	Reduce event scale or partner with another organization.
Is the audience flow clear?	Plan entry, seating, ordering and toilets.	Create signage and simple instructions.
Is there a weather plan?	Confirm indoor fallback or cancellation rule.	Do not announce until backup exists.

Tool 5.1 Outdoor cultural event checklist

Purpose: Prepare a public-space or outdoor programme with fewer operational surprises.

Question / field	Your notes
Public space or terrace permit needed	

Question / field	Your notes
Noise limit and end time checked	
Neighbours informed	
Weather plan confirmed	
Power source and sound equipment tested	
Access route and accessibility checked	
Waste management and cleaning plan ready	
Toilets and handwashing available	
Staff and volunteer roles assigned	
Audience flow and ordering system planned	
Emergency and conflict contact person named	
Photos/video and communication consent clarified	

Neighbourhood activation formats

- From café to café walk: a guided route connecting several venues and stories.
- Street reading hours: short readings outside the café at a predictable time.
- Neighborhood long table: shared meal or conversation in a courtyard or street segment.
- Micro-festival: one afternoon with small performances, local products and artistic interventions.
- Outdoor exhibition trail: window or wall-based works displayed across nearby businesses.
- Local makers weekend: small market with designers, zines, books, prints and food producers.
- Public question wall: a participatory installation where passers-by respond to a local question.

Module 6. Community engagement and audience development

Module snapshot

Why this matters: Cultural programmes succeed when the café understands who it serves, who is missing and what relationship it wants to build.

What you will produce: Audience personas, a community engagement plan and a simple audience journey map.

Audience development is not only promotion. It is a strategic and relational process: widening audiences, deepening relationships and diversifying participation. A café house may have many guests but still lack cultural audiences. It may have cultural audiences but not local residents. It may be loved by tourists but disconnected from neighbors. This module helps distinguish between customers, audiences and community participants.

Audience groups to consider

- Regular guests and long-term loyal customers.
- Occasional guests who visit because of location, tourism, work or convenience.
- Local residents and neighborhood communities.
- Artists, writers, musicians, performers and cultural professionals.
- Students and young people.
- Older residents and intergenerational groups.
- Families and children.
- Digital workers and freelancers.
- Civil, activist, environmental or social groups.
- Under-reached communities, minority groups and people who may not feel invited into cultural spaces.

Method: Audience journey

Stage	Question for the café	Possible tool
First contact	How does someone hear about us?	Window, social media, partner, friend, local press.
Interest	What makes the event feel relevant and accessible?	Clear title, simple language, price clarity, photos, partner endorsement.
Arrival	Do people know where to go and what to expect?	Signage, host, staff briefing, accessible seating.
Participation	How are people involved during the event?	Q&A, table discussion, activity, informal conversation.

Stage	Question for the café	Possible tool
Return	Why would they come back?	Recurring format, newsletter, personal invitation, loyalty card.
Advocacy	How do they bring others?	Shareable photos, partner tags, community ownership.

Tool 6.1 Audience persona

Purpose: Create a simple profile of one real or desired audience group.

Question / field	Your notes
Name of persona	
Age / life situation / connection to neighborhood	
Why would this person enter the café?	
What cultural topics or formats would interest them?	
When are they available?	
What prevents them from attending?	
How do they find information?	
What would make them return?	

Community engagement methods

Method	Use when	How to keep it simple
Guest question card	You need quick feedback.	One card with three questions at the end of an event.
Idea box	You want programme ideas from regulars.	Physical box plus QR form. Review monthly.
Open programme table	You want to co-design a series.	Invite 8-12 local people for 90 minutes.
Community advisory circle	You need deeper local legitimacy.	Meet quarterly with residents, artists and partners.
Partner focus group	You want to reach a new group.	Ask one partner to invite participants and co-host.

Method	Use when	How to keep it simple
Informal staff listening	You need everyday audience insight.	Ask staff to note repeated questions or comments.

Low-threshold rule

An event is low threshold when people understand what it is, who it is for, what it costs, what language it uses, whether they need prior knowledge, and how they can leave or participate without embarrassment.

Module 7. Social and Environmental Responsibility

Module snapshot

Why this matters: Coffee houses are everyday public-facing spaces. Their choices around inclusion, waste, sourcing, pricing and learning shape community trust.

What you will produce: A social/environmental mission statement, living classroom plan and responsibility checklists.

The CAFE training framed café houses as living classrooms and ethical hospitality spaces. A café house can host workshops, debates, book launches, screenings, study groups and practical learning formats. It can also lead by example through local sourcing, waste reduction, fair working principles, inclusive programming and accessible communication.

Living classroom model

A living classroom is an informal learning environment rooted in everyday life. People come for coffee, but they may also learn a skill, meet a researcher, discuss a neighbourhood issue, hear a writer, take part in a workshop or discover a sustainability practice. The café lowers the barrier to learning because the setting is familiar and hospitable.

Learning format	Example
Knowledge talk	Local historian, urban gardener, researcher or activist explains a topic in accessible language.
Hands-on workshop	Composting, coffee tasting, zine-making, podcasting, creative writing, repair or food waste.
Intergenerational exchange	Older residents and young people share stories about the neighbourhood.
School / youth collaboration	Students use the café for project presentations, podcasts or research evenings.
Public debate	Moderated conversation with clear rules and respectful dialogue.
Creative lab	Small group co-creates a poster, text, performance, map or prototype.

Tool 7.1 Learning goal planner

Purpose: Design a café event as a learning experience, not only a presentation.

Question / field	Your notes
What should participants understand, practice or feel by the end?	

Question / field	Your notes
How will the event use the informal café setting?	
What activity will participants do?	
How will people without prior knowledge be included?	
What local partner can make the learning more relevant?	
What follow-up can participants take home?	

Environmental practice checklist

- Map food waste for two weeks and identify the most common causes.
- Prioritize seasonal and local products where feasible.
- Reduce single-use plastics and make reusable options visible.
- Offer vegetarian or plant-based choices without presenting them as exceptional.
- Use cultural events to explain sustainability practices to guests.
- Choose reusable event materials and avoid unnecessary printed communication.
- Document progress: cups saved, local producers used, waste reduced, workshops hosted.

Inclusion practice checklist

- Use clear language in event descriptions.
- State price, language, registration and accessibility information visibly.
- Provide free, low-cost or pay-what-you-can formats when possible.
- Offer seating and timing suitable for different age groups and needs.
- Brief moderators to protect respectful dialogue.
- Invite under-represented voices as creators, not only as audiences.
- Make the house rules non-discriminatory and understandable.

Module 8. Business and operational sustainability

Module snapshot

Why this matters: Cultural programmes create value but often do not pay for themselves directly. A sustainable model must combine mission with operational realism.

What you will produce: Revenue model choices, cost calculator, decision tool and staff capacity plan.

The CAFE identity work surfaced a central tension between cultural mission and commercial viability. Many cafés operate as businesses first, while their social and cultural value depends on activities that may be financially fragile. The solution is not to ignore money, but to design transparent, mixed models that recognize both direct income and non-financial value.

Revenue and support models

Model	Best used for	Watch out for
Free event supported by consumption	Open talks, exhibitions, community events.	Attendance may not translate into sales; staff costs still exist.
Ticketed event	Concerts, workshops, special evenings.	May reduce accessibility; ticketing needs administration.
Pay what you can	Community, experimental or solidarity events.	Needs clear communication and income expectations.
Minimum consumption	Events in small spaces where seats matter.	Can feel exclusionary if not carefully framed.
Supporter ticket	Events with mixed audiences and solidarity logic.	Requires trust and clear purpose.
Membership / friends scheme	Regular programme and loyal community.	Needs ongoing benefit and communication.
Sponsored event	Series with local businesses or CSR partners.	Protect artistic independence and values.
Municipal / public support	Events with local cultural or social value.	Requires documentation and administrative capacity.
Partner-funded programme	Schools, museums, NGOs, festivals.	Clarify tasks, credit and ownership.
Revenue share with artists	Music, performance, market formats.	Agree with splits and risks beforehand.
Cross-financing from hospitality	Mission-critical programmes.	Must be transparent internally and financially controlled.

Tool 8.1 Event cost calculator

Purpose: Estimate the real cost of a cultural event before confirming it.

Question / field	Your notes
Artist / speaker / facilitator fee	
Technical cost	
Communication / design cost	
Extra staff hours	
Food and drink cost	
Licenses, permits or rights	
Photography / video	
Cleaning / security	
Expected ticket or participant income	
Expected consumption income	
Non-financial value: audience, press, partner, mission, network	

When is a non-profitable event still worth doing?

- It reaches a new audience the café wants to build a relationship with.
- It strengthens the café's cultural identity or heritage story.
- It creates a strategic partnership.
- It responds to a local social or educational need.
- It gives visibility to artists or communities aligned with the café's mission.
- It can become financially stronger after two or three iterations.
- It contributes to the Network of European Café Houses and future cooperation.

Staff capacity check

A cultural calendar fails when invisible labour is underestimated. Before adding a new event series, check who will handle programming, communication, booking, room setup, artist care, technical needs, ticketing, moderation, documentation, cleaning and feedback.

Task	Responsible person	Backup	Time needed	Notes
Concept and artist contact				
Budget and agreement				
Communication				
Room setup				
Front-of-house briefing				
Technical setup				
Moderation/hosting				
Documentation				
Feedback collection				
Follow-up communication				

Module 9. Communication toolkit

Module snapshot

Why this matters: A cultural programme works only when people understand why it is relevant, welcoming and worth attending.

What you will produce: Event copy template, channel plan and post-event communication routine.

Many café houses communicate well as hospitality venues but less clearly as cultural spaces. Cultural communication should not be too institutional, abstract or insider-oriented. It needs to explain the event in simple language, show who it is for, reduce uncertainty and connect the programme to the café's story.

Event copy template

Tool 9.1 Event communication brief

Purpose: Prepare clear communication for one event across channels.

Question / field	Your notes
Event title	
One-sentence promise: what will happen and why it matters	
Who is it for?	
What will participants experience?	
Is prior knowledge needed?	
Date, time, language, duration	
Price / registration / capacity	
Accessibility information	
Food and drink information	
Artist / partner short bio	
One image or visual idea	
Main call to action	

Communication channels

Channel	Best use
In-café poster	Reaches regulars and people already connected to the space.
Table cards / menu insert	Turns ordinary visits into cultural discovery.
Instagram / Facebook event	Quick visibility, reminders, partner tagging.
Newsletter	Builds regular audience and longer relationship.
Partner channels	Reaches new but relevant audiences.
Local press / cultural calendar	Builds legitimacy and reaches non-social-media audiences.
Artists' own channels	Connects the creator's community to the café.
Neighborhood groups	Useful for local, family, civic and community formats.
Window / street sign	Reaches passers-by and tourists at low cost.

Post-event communication

- Thank the artist, partner, staff and audience within 24-48 hours.
- Share 3-5 good photos or one short recap rather than a long report.
- Mention one lesson, quote, question or moment from the event.
- Invite people to the next related programme immediately.
- Tag partners and artists correctly.
- Archive the event internally with attendance, costs, photos and feedback.

Module 10. Evaluation and impact measurement

Module snapshot

Why this matters: Simple evaluation helps a café learn what works, document social value and make stronger decisions.

What you will produce: An event report template, feedback form and mini-impact dashboard.

Evaluation does not need to be complex. A café house needs enough information to decide whether a programme should continue, change or stop. The CAFE evaluation framework distinguishes between what happened, what changed in the short term, and what longer-term value might be created.

Three levels of impact

Level	Question	Examples
Output	What happened?	Number of events, participants, artists, partners, posts, press mentions.
Outcome	What changed shortly afterwards?	New audience, stronger partner relationship, returning guests, new programme idea, participant learning.
Impact	What may change over time?	Café recognised as cultural space, stronger community, ongoing series, new funding, network cooperation.

Tool 10.1 Three-question feedback form

Purpose: Collect useful audience feedback without overburdening participants.

Question / field	Your notes
Why did you come today?	
What are you taking away from this event?	
What would bring you back next time?	

Tool 10.2 Event report template

Purpose: Create a short internal record after each cultural event.

Question / field	Your notes
Event title and date	
Format and topic	
Artist / speaker / partner	
Number of participants	
Audience type observed	
Income and direct costs	
What worked well?	
What was difficult?	
Audience feedback highlights	
Staff feedback highlights	
Photos / links / media coverage	
Decision: repeat, adapt, scale, stop	

Mini dashboard for quarterly review

Indicator	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Number of cultural events				
Total participants				
Number of artists/speakers				
Number of partners				
New audience groups reached				

Indicator	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Average feedback score or sentiment				
Events that covered direct costs				
Press/social media mentions				
Follow-up partnerships				
Main lesson learned				

14. Values, Manifesto and Code of Conduct in practice

The CAFE identity training did not seek to make all cafés the same. It identified a shared ethical backbone that can hold different types of café houses together as a network. The value mapping process showed strong convergence around inclusivity, community, sustainability, openness, care, creativity and trust. These values should guide the future Manifesto and Code of Conduct, but they also need to become visible in everyday choices.

Value	In practice this can mean
Inclusivity	Clear information, varied price points, accessible formats, non-discriminatory house rules, diverse creators and audiences.
Community	Regular local programmes, space for neighborhood initiatives, relationship with regulars, co-created formats.
Sustainability	Environmental practice, economic realism, long-term partnerships, careful use of resources.
Openness	Welcoming atmosphere, curiosity toward different voices, low barriers to participation.
Care	Attention to staff, artists, neighbors, guests, conflicts and emotional safety.
Creativity	Artistic collaboration, experimentation, storytelling and everyday cultural imagination.
Trust	Transparent agreements, reliable communication, respectful partnerships and consistent behavior.

Code of Conduct self-check

- Can we explain our cultural mission publicly in simple language?
- Do we treat artists, staff, partners and audiences fairly?
- Do our events include people beyond our usual circle?
- Do we consider environmental impact in programming and operations?
- Do we communicate costs, access, language and expectations clearly?
- Do we have a process for dealing with conflict, harassment or exclusion?
- Do we document and share good practices with the wider network?
- Do we allow local adaptation while respecting the network's core values?

Balancing tensions

The identity-building workshop showed that some tensions are not problems to eliminate but balances to manage. The network should remain flexible enough for different café models while protecting its ethical core.

Tension	Practical balance
Culture and commerce	Plan financially, but recognise community and cultural value.
Experimentation and stability	Use small tests while maintaining reliable recurring formats.
Local identity and tourism	Welcome visitors while protecting local relevance.
Professionalism and informality	Use clear agreements without losing warmth and accessibility.
Independence and public support	Seek support while protecting cultural integrity.

15. European adaptation guide

The CAFE toolkit is designed for European cafés in different urban, cultural and financial environments. The same method will look different in a small town, a capital city, a tourist centre, a historic café or a new community café. The task is not to copy the Budapest examples, but to translate their logic into local conditions.

Context	Main opportunity	Main risk	Recommended adaptation
Small city or town	Strong personal relationships and visible impact.	Limited audience base and fewer artists.	Use recurring formats, shared calendars and local schools/civil partners.
Large city	Many partners, artists and audiences.	Competition and communication noise.	Develop a clear niche and strong partner-based communication.
Tourism-heavy area	High foot traffic and heritage visibility.	Local audience may feel displaced.	Create local-only or local-first programmes and multilingual bridges.
Historic café	Strong story and symbolic value.	Nostalgia can become static.	Invite contemporary artists to reinterpret heritage.
New café	Flexibility and freedom to define identity.	Weak legitimacy as cultural space.	Start with community mapping and one consistent cultural ritual.
Regulated historic centre	Visibility and heritage value.	Permits, sound, neighbours and technical limits.	Use low-tech, acoustic, daytime and small indoor formats first.
Cooperative or community-run café	Shared ownership and volunteer energy.	Decision-making complexity and burnout.	Clarify roles, meeting rhythm and manageable programming pace.
Bookshop or gallery café	Built-in cultural identity.	May rely on a narrow audience.	Develop hybrid events: reading + workshop, exhibition + conversation, book + neighborhood topic.

Local adaptation questions

- Which local regulation affects sound, public space, opening hours and food service?
- Which audience groups are present but not yet engaged?
- Which cultural practices are locally meaningful?
- Which language or accessibility choices matter in your context?
- Which funding or support models are realistic for your legal status?
- Which European network opportunities could help you learn, exchange or gain visibility?

16. Case cards from the CAFE project

The following case cards summarize selected examples appearing in the CAFE project materials. They are not final research profiles; they are practical learning cards showing how different cafés and cultural spaces approach programming, audiences, funding, experimentation, sustainability or network-building.

Name	**Hadik Coffee House**
Location / type	Budapest, Hungary / Historic café house and cultural venue
Practice	Uses literary programmes, exhibitions, book fairs, city walks, dinner evenings and cultural partnerships to keep café heritage alive.
Key lesson	Heritage becomes powerful when it is activated through living cultural formats, not only displayed as decoration.
How to adapt	Connect one historic story of the café to a contemporary artist, writer, walk or public conversation.
Name	**Kelet** Café and Gallery
Location / type	Budapest, Hungary / Book-focused café and gallery
Challenge	Creating a place for reading and exchange while balancing everyday café use.
Practice	Combines specialty coffee with a “bring a book, take a book” library, science café evenings, exhibitions and district festivals.
Key lesson	Books and knowledge-sharing can become everyday tools for community building.
How to adapt	Start with a book exchange shelf and one monthly knowledge event linked to local partners.
Name	**Planetarium**
Location / type	Cluj, Romania / Community and cultural café/bar
Challenge	Maintaining grassroots cultural activity in a changing urban and economic environment.
Practice	Hosts round tables, book launches, exhibitions, concerts and political debates, with attention to bilingual Hungarian-Romanian dialogue and minority voices.
Key lesson	A café can become a platform for dialogue when it intentionally creates visibility for under-represented voices.
How to adapt	Identify one local language, community or group that is present in the city but under-represented in cultural programming.

Name	Knjigarna in kavarna Maks
Location / type	Nova Gorica, Slovenia / Bookshop café and cultural venue
Challenge	Building a new academic and cultural meeting space in a cross-border city.
Practice	Offers multilingual books, book presentations, lectures, jazz evenings, artist-of-the-month displays and partnerships with GO! 2025 actors.
Key lesson	A café can act as a cultural connector between languages, books, music and urban identity.
How to adapt	Use multilingual communication or cross-border partnerships where local identity is shaped by more than one language or community.
Name	**Café 7stern**
Location / type	Vienna, Austria / Low-threshold cultural café
Challenge	Supporting culture without excluding small artists or audiences.
Practice	Provides space for small bands, readings, solidarity formats and political/community meetings, often using pay-as-you-wish logic.
Key lesson	Low-threshold access can be a cultural strategy, not only a pricing model.
How to adapt	Test pay-what-you-can formats for one recurring programme and track attendance and donations transparently.
Name	**Welthaus Café**
Location / type	Bielefeld, Germany / NGO-linked café and media library
Challenge	Connecting hospitality with global justice, education and sustainability.
Practice	Combines café, media library, fair trade products, educational resources, cultural events, city tours and sustainability-related partnerships.
Key lesson	A café can make social responsibility tangible by connecting everyday consumption with learning and civic action.
How to adapt	Partner with a local NGO or school to host a learning format that connects food, fairness and community.

Name	Haltestulle
Location / type	Bielefeld, Germany / Cooperative café/restaurant
Challenge	Running cultural programming collectively while managing limited resources.
Practice	Organizes rotating exhibitions, concerts and literary events through cooperative decision-making and local/regional products.
Key lesson	Shared ownership can create strong community energy, but it needs clear roles and communication routines.
How to adapt	Use a monthly programming meeting with clear decision criteria and a simple capacity check.
Name	**TÁP Theatre collaboration**
Location / type	Budapest, Hungary / Experimental theatre practice in hybrid venues
Challenge	Bringing artistic experimentation into informal hospitality spaces.
Practice	Micro-performances and fringe theatre formats dismantle the fourth wall and create direct interaction with café audiences.
Key lesson	Experimental art can refresh a café's cultural role when the format is scaled to the space and staff are briefed.
How to adapt	Invite one local performance group to test a short, low-tech intervention during a quiet time slot.
Name	**Margit Quarter / Bartók Quarter**
Location / type	Budapest, Hungary / Neighborhood cultural ecosystems
Challenge	Transforming districts through cooperation between municipalities, cultural actors, hospitality and creative businesses.
Practice	Use cultural urban strategies, galleries, cafés, studios, civil initiatives and design actors to build identity and walkability.
Key lesson	Cafés are stronger when they act as part of a district ecosystem rather than isolated venues.
How to adapt	Create a joint neighborhood calendar with three nearby cultural or hospitality actors.

17. Templates and worksheets

This section collects the core templates in an editable format. They can be copied into separate forms, printed for workshops, converted into online forms, or used as internal planning sheets.

Template 1. Café cultural self-assessment

Statement	Score 1-5	Evidence / notes
We have a clear cultural mission.		
Our staff understands our cultural role.		
We know our main audience groups.		
We have at least one reliable cultural partner.		
We can calculate event costs and income.		
We collect basic feedback after events.		
Our sustainability values are visible in practice.		
Our events are accessible to more than one audience group.		
Our café story is visible in communication.		
We have capacity to organise the next three months of programming.		

Template 2. Partner mapping sheet

Partner	Type	What they can offer	What we can offer	Possible joint action	Contact / next step

Template 3. Programme planning canvas

Field	Notes
Programme line / event title	
Mission fit	
Audience	
Partner / artist	
Format	
Date and time	
Space setup	
Technical needs	
Budget	
Revenue model	
Communication channels	
Accessibility notes	
Evaluation method	
Decision after event	

Template 4. Event budget sheet

Cost / income item	Estimated amount	Actual amount	Notes
Artist fee			
Moderator / facilitator fee			
Technician			
Extra staff hours			
Communication / design			
Printing			
Photo / video			
Food and drink cost			
Permit / license			
Cleaning / security			
Other cost			
Ticket income			
Consumption income			
Sponsorship / grant			
Donations			
Net result			

Template 5. Staff briefing before event

Briefing point	Information
Event title and time	
Artist / partner / moderator	
Expected audience and capacity	
Ticket / registration / consumption rule	
Table and seating plan	
Where non-event guests can sit	
Technical contact person	
Who welcomes artist and audience	
Conflict or complaint contact	
What staff should tell guests	
What feedback staff should note	

Template 6. Event follow-up report

Question	Answer
What happened?	
Who attended?	
What worked?	
What did not work?	
What did participants say?	
What did staff observe?	
Did the event cover costs?	
Did it support our mission?	
Should we repeat, adapt, scale or stop?	
Next action and responsible person	

Template 7. Code of Conduct self-check

Principle	What we already do	What we need to improve
Inclusivity		
Community		
Environmental sustainability		
Economic sustainability		
Openness and dialogue		
Care and safety		
Fair work and artist relations		
Transparency		
Creativity and experimentation		

18. Glossary

Term	Meaning
Anchor institution	A local actor that provides stable social, cultural or economic value to a community beyond its own commercial activity.
Audience development	A strategic process of widening audiences, deepening relationships and diversifying participation.
Cultural ecosystem	The network of people, venues, institutions, businesses, civic actors and habits that shape local cultural life.
Cultural mission	A short statement explaining why the café organizes culture, who it serves and what value it wants to create.
Good practice	A tested approach that can inspire others, even when it needs adaptation.
Living classroom	An informal learning environment where knowledge is shared through accessible, everyday formats.
Living lab	A small-scale experimental setting where a question is tested with real participants and learning is documented.
Third place	A social space beyond home and work where people can gather, linger and build belonging.
Code of Conduct	A shared framework of principles and behaviours that guides how network members work together and host culture.
Programme portfolio	The balanced mix of recurring, experimental, community, educational and income-supporting cultural formats.
Porous walls	A metaphor for a café that connects its interior life with the public realm and neighborhood around it.

19. Further resources and next steps

The toolkit should be maintained as a living document on the Network of European Café Houses platform.

Suggested first 90-day action plan for a café using this toolkit

Month 1: Complete the self-assessment, mission canvas and ecosystem map.

Month 2: Choose one recurring programme and one partner. Prepare staff briefing and communication template.

Month 3: Run one event, collect three-question feedback, complete the event report and decide next steps.

Network of European Café Houses

Project website: https://networkofeuropeancafehouses.com/