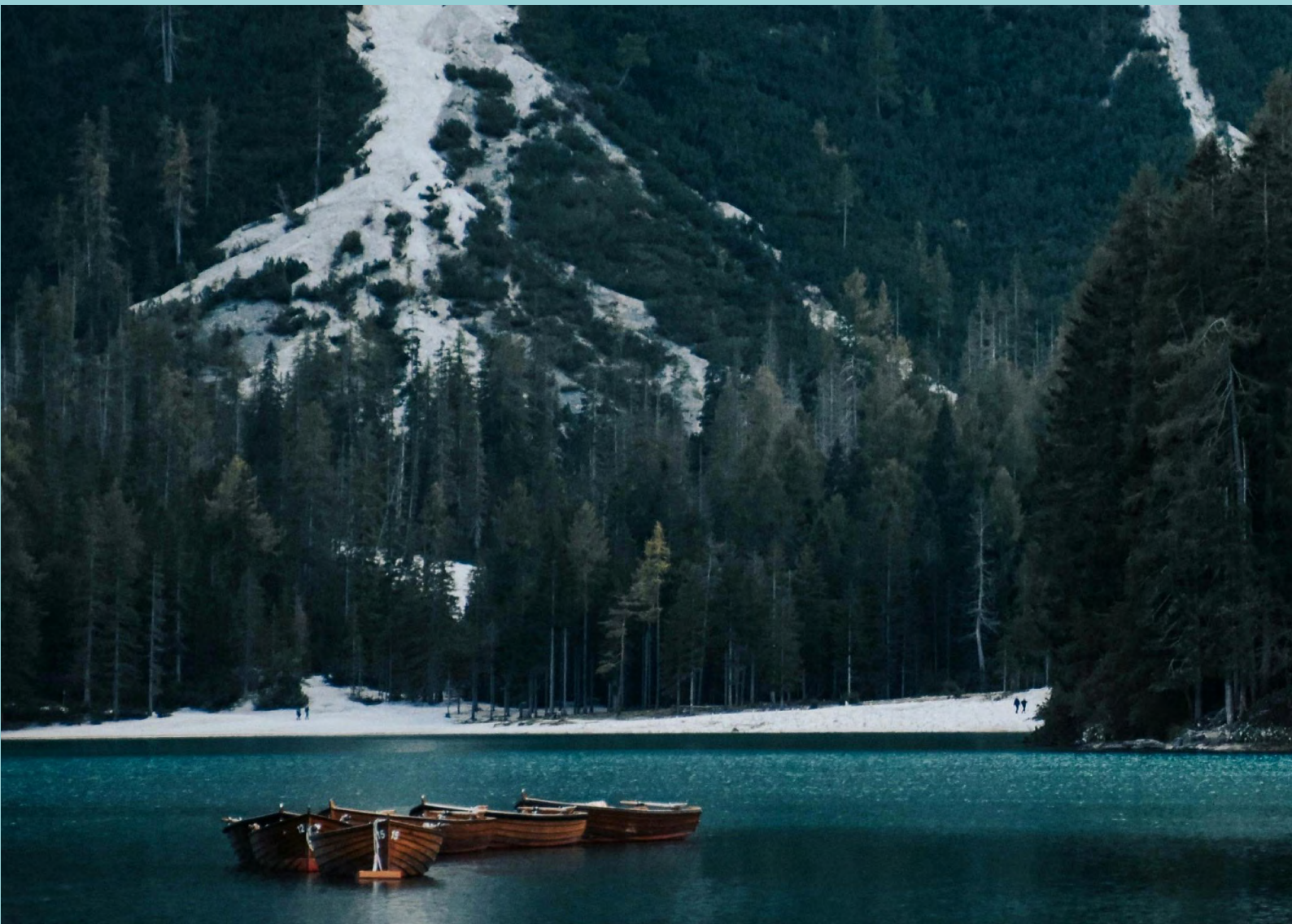


# WL NEWS

**ISSUE 67**

**EXPLORING LEISURE'S GLOBAL IMPACT  
— FROM RESEARCH AND PARTNERSHIP  
TO REAL-WORLD CHANGE**



**OCTOBER 2025**



# Editorial

Are you a  
WLO Premium  
member?  
Submit your  
news here!

Dear members and colleagues,

Welcome to the October 2025 issue of WL News!

This month, WLO celebrates its global engagement through **conferences and partnerships**. We participated in **MONDIACULT 2025** in Barcelona, bringing together leaders in tourism, culture, and wellness. We joined the **HCM Summit 2025** in London, exploring inclusive, sustainable, and health-focused approaches to leisure. And we took part in the **14th World Cities Culture Summit** in Amsterdam, contributing to global dialogue on culture-driven urban transformation. We are also proud to share our upcoming partnership with **Qatar Travel Mart 2025** in Doha later in November.

Within wider network news, we celebrate the recognition of the **LGBTQTIA+ Inclusive Leisure** project at the **Recreation Aotearoa Awards** and announce that **Vancouver Island University** will host the **2026 Canadian Congress on Leisure Research**, themed **"Leisure is Transformation."** We also announce our involvement in the **32nd Encontro Nacional de Recreação e Lazer (ENAREL)** in Brazil.

Recent **research, policy, and industry** updates highlight leisure's global impact. The EU has issued new guidance on sustainable tourism and reviewed progress toward its **Agenda for Tourism 2030**. **UNESCO** has emphasized the importance of culture and STEM education for girls. **COP30** will focus on tourism and climate action, and **UN Tourism** and the **Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA)** have launched awards and training programs that encourage sustainable, inclusive, and innovative practice.

This month's academic publications highlight the **generational value of leisure**: for children, expressive leisure activities support **recovery from trauma**; for youth, sport and civic engagement **build character and empathy**; for adults, shared digital leisure **strengthens family connection**; and for older adults, walking in **safe**, socially connected neighborhoods **supports better mental health**.

WLO also invites members to engage with upcoming opportunities, including applications for the **Board of Directors 2026–2028**, joining the **WLCE Network**, hosting the **World Leisure Congress 2030**, contributing to the **WLO Book Series**, or submitting abstracts to the **LSA 2026 Annual Conference**.

Yours truly,

**Dr. Cristina Ortega Nuere**  
WLO Chief Operating Officer





# WLO News



## WLO partners with Qatar Travel Mart (QTM) 2025

The World Leisure Organization (WLO) is proud to be the conference partner for the [Qatar Travel Mart \(QTM\) 2025](#) for its second year. The event will take place from November 24–26, 2025 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC) in Qatar.

QTM will bring together leading destinations and tourism professionals to explore trends in tourism, hospitality, and leisure. The event will also highlight Qatar's role as a growing hub for global travel and cultural exchange. With an estimated 12,000 visitors expected to attend, QTM 2025 will serve as a key platform for networking and collaboration across the travel industry.

The conference program will focus on new ideas in culture and heritage, hospitality and sustainability, and events and wellness tourism. Attendees will hear from presenters from many backgrounds through keynote sessions, interactive panels, and "Global Village" showcases. These sessions aim to encourage discussion, share success stories, and support new partnerships across sectors and regions.

QTM 2025 will underline the importance of protecting cultural identity and heritage while also creating sustainable and enriching experiences for visitor. It will explore how the hospitality industry is changing through technology, design, and sustainability, and will show how major events and wellness programs can support wellbeing, grow local economies, and strengthen community identity.

Topics discussed will include heritage and identity, digital transformation, sustainable infrastructure, innovation through cross-sector collaboration, events' legacies and the growing importance, active lifestyles, health and wellness tourism.

As a conference partner, WLO will play an active role in connecting participants, sharing expertise, and supporting initiatives that inspire innovation, collaboration, and sustainable growth across the tourism and hospitality sectors.



## WLO at MONDIACULT 2025: Advancing culture and education for inclusive futures

The World Leisure Organization (WLO) attended [MONDIACULT 2025](#), the global conference on cultural policy, held from September 29 – October 1, 2025, joining partners and peers to explore how culture and education can support more inclusive and sustainable futures.

During the conference, WLO followed key events and outcomes, including the [ENCATC](#)-led side event **“Culture and Education as a Key Tool for a World in Crisis.”** This session highlighted the urgent need to equip learners with resilience, critical thinking, and cultural agency.

WLO also reviewed the main resources released by [UNESCO](#), including its first [Global Report on Cultural Policies](#), expert reports on *Culture for Peace* and on *AI and Culture*, and updated frameworks for cultural statistics and arts education. These materials offer important insights for integrating culture into public policy, education, and sustainable development, and they reinforce the role of cultural and creative sectors as drivers of positive change.

After MONDIACULT, an ENCATC talk held on October 31st presented the *MONDIACULT Policy Paper*, which summarizes months of research, dialogue, and contributions from the community.

WLO will continue to build on these discussions, translating the insights into actionable strategies for cultural management, education, and policy worldwide.



## WLO at the HCM Summit 2025 in London

The World Leisure Organization (WLO) was proud to support and attend the [HCM Summit 2025](#), held on October 23, 2025 at the QEII Centre in London. The event brought together senior leaders, innovators, and experts from the **health, fitness, and wellness** sectors for a day of dialogue, inspiration, and collaboration.

With keynote contributions from global industry leaders, the Summit explored key issues shaping the future of **health and leisure** — including **workplace wellbeing, sustainable facility design, mental health through movement,** and the **integration of technology** to enhance participation and inclusion. The **HCM Exhibition of Innovation** also showcased the latest advances in exercise, recovery, nutrition, and programming.

By attending as a supporting partner, WLO reaffirmed its commitment to promoting **leisure as a fundamental pillar of health and quality of life.** The Summit reflected the shared mission of the leisure, health, and wellness sectors to foster **inclusive, active, and thriving societies** through meaningful leisure experiences.





Photo by: Annabel Schipper

## WLO engages in global cultural dialogue at the World Cities Culture Forum in Amsterdam

As part of [EIT Culture & Creativity's Cities and Regions Network](#), WLO was delighted to take part in the [14th World Cities Culture Summit](#) in Amsterdam. The summit brought together more than **55 cities across six continents** to discuss how culture can support **human-centered, creative, and sustainable cities**.

Organized around the theme **"Stronger Together: Culture in a Changing World,"** the summit encouraged participants to rethink cultural futures by asking provocative questions, including: *What if AI wrote our next cultural policy?* and *What if cultural tourism unlocked new opportunities for cities?*

A key highlight of the summit was the launch of the **5th World Cities Culture Report**, presented by the World Cities Culture Forum and now available as an [interactive digital report](#). The report offers a global overview of how cultural policy is contributing to urban development across the world.

One of the highlights of this year's report is the **City Projects section**, which spotlights more than **125 practical initiatives** from over 45 cities across the globe, showing how culture supports **social cohesion, innovation, and urban transformation**.

WLO will continue engaging with global partners to learn, share, and foster dialogue on **the role of culture in shaping inclusive and resilient communities**.

[Explore the interactive report...](#)

# Network



## WLO to support the 32nd ENAREL in Brazil: Advancing leisure research and inclusion

The World Leisure Organization (WLO) will support the **32nd Encontro Nacional de Recreação e Lazer (ENAREL)**, to be held from **November 19–21, 2025**, in Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil. ENAREL is one of the most important technical and scientific gatherings on **leisure and recreation** in Brazil. The event is organized by [Centro Universitário Internacional – UNINTER](#), together with several national partners.

This year's theme — **'Leisure: revisiting concepts, qualifying intervention'** — aims to mobilize professionals, researchers, students, and managers from across the country. Participants will critically examine the meanings, uses, and impacts of leisure in contemporary society.

Through **conferences, round tables, workshops, and scientific paper presentations**, ENAREL will foster dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collective reflection.

Aligned with WLO's mission to promote **leisure as a means to improve quality of life**, ENAREL also supports several [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#), (SDGs), including **Good Health and Well-being** (SDG 3), **Quality Education** (SDG 4), **Reduced Inequalities** (SDG 10), and **Partnerships for the Goals** (SDG 17).

## LGBTQTIA+ Inclusive Leisure recognized at the Recreation Aotearoa Awards

The project **LGBTQTIA+ Inclusive Leisure** in Aotearoa New Zealand, developed within the framework of the [2023 WLO Field School](#), has been named a finalist in the **Outstanding Research, Policy & Planning** category at the [Aotearoa Te Whai Oranga Awards for Recreation](#).

This work is a collaboration between the [University of Otago](#) and [Western Sydney University](#), both recognized as **World Leisure Centres of Excellence**. The project was first shared at the 2025 World Leisure Congress, showing its strong alignment with WLO's mission to promote **inclusive and equitable access to leisure**.

By **amplifying LGBTQTIA+ voices and experiences**, the project shows how inclusive leisure can reduce barriers, support empathy, and create environments where all people feel **seen, valued, and free to participate in leisure in meaningful ways**.



## WLCE Vancouver Island University to host 2026 Canadian Congress on Leisure Research

[Vancouver Island University](#), a **WLO Centre of Excellence (WLCE)**, will host the [2026 Canadian Congress on Leisure Research](#) from May 19–22, 2026, in Nanaimo, British Columbia, on the ancestral unceded territory of the [Snuneymuxw First Nation](#).

Under the theme **“Leisure is Transformation,”** the Congress will explore how leisure can address **social, economic, and ecological challenges**, and how it can support **community transformation**. The event will bring together researchers, practitioners, and “pracademics” to share innovative work, engage in dialogue, and build scholarly networks across disciplines.

The Congress program will include presentations, panels, workshops, and interactive sessions across the **seven dimensions of leisure: Recreation, Travel & Tourism, Parks & Trails, Arts & Culture, Sports, Festivals & Events, and Play**.

This gathering demonstrates the ongoing contribution of **WLO Centres of Excellence** to advancing leisure research globally and promoting **sustainable and inclusive approaches to community well-being**.

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# Research



## Commission publishes new guidance on sustainable rural mobility and ecotourism

*from the [European Commission](#)*

The European Commission has published guidance from the [SMARTA-NET project](#) on sustainable rural mobility and ecotourism. The project aims to support municipalities and rural destinations with solutions, funding, and planning tools to **improve transport access, reduce carbon emissions, and integrate rural mobility into broader policy frameworks.**

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*Workouts are social time for many Brits Credit: iStock\_Drazen Zigic*

## Fitness communities are important drivers for social connections, according to Nuffield Health research

*from [HCM Magazine](#)*

New research by Nuffield Health shows that fitness communities play a key role in improving social wellbeing, especially among remote workers and young adults. The study found that exercising in a social environment **boosts motivation, reduces loneliness, and helps people build meaningful connections** through shared fitness experiences.

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## EU Report Unveils Milestones and Challenges on Tourism Path to 2030

from *EU Tourism Platform*

A new report commissioned by the [European Commission](#) reviews progress toward the **EU Agenda for Tourism 2030**. Covering all **EU-27 Member States**, it identifies key achievements and remaining hurdles. Conducted from December 2024 to September 2025, the study combined desk research with targeted consultations. The findings will help **guide future policy to enhance sustainability, digital progress, and resilience** in EU tourism.

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# Policy



## MONDIACULT 2025: Faced with global divisions, UNESCO calls for culture to be made a priority

from *UNESCO*

At MONDIACULT 2025 in Barcelona, more than **160 countries** met to discuss how culture can support development and crisis response. UNESCO highlighted major investment gaps between high- and low-income countries and presented its first **Global Report on Cultural Policies**. The organization also launched a [Virtual Museum of Stolen Cultural Objects](#) to help fight trafficking and reaffirm the need to **make culture a policy priority** worldwide.

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## Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO calls for unhindered access to education for girls, particularly in science and technology fields

from *UNESCO*

UNESCO Director-General **Audrey Azoulay** and Special Envoy Professor **Peng Liyuan** have celebrated the **10th anniversary of the UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education**. During her visit to China, the Director-General will also sign agreements to establish a **new UNESCO Institute in Shanghai** focused on **science and technology education** — fields in which **women remain underrepresented**.

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## **COP30 in Belém, Brazil to feature Tourism Thematic Days: Advancing climate action through collaboration and regeneration**

*from the [UN Tourism](#)*

COP30, hosted by Brazil's Ministry of Tourism with backing from [UNEP](#), will spotlight tourism's vital role in advancing **climate action**.

Governments, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society will convene to explore strategies that strengthen governance, cut emissions, and build **resilient, low-carbon tourism systems**.

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# Industry



## HCM Summit 2025 unites global leaders to map the future of fitness, health and wellness

from *HCM Magazine*

The HCM Summit 2025 in London united global leaders in fitness, health and wellness to address how the industry is evolving. The event focused on themes such as **longevity, mental health**, and the **changing role of fitness** beyond physical exercise. Delegates explored innovations, investment trends and the shift toward holistic well-being, including **tech-enabled solutions, multi-sensory experiences** and **integrated lifestyle offerings**.

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## UN Tourism and FIA launch Global Awards for Excellence in Sustainable Sports Tourism

from *UN Tourism*

UN Tourism and the *Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA)* have launched the **Global Awards for Excellence in Sustainable Sports Tourism**. The awards, open to UN Tourism members, FIA member clubs, and related stakeholders, will recognize initiatives across four categories: **Most Sustainable Sport Event; Community Impact in Sports Tourism; Innovation in Sports Tourism Development; and Outstanding Public-Private Partnerships**. These awards aim to celebrate best practices and accelerate positive change in sports tourism worldwide.

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## UN Tourism launches online training on Tourism for Rural Development

*from UN Tourism*

UN Tourism has launched two **free MOOCs** on **rural tourism development**, focusing on product design, marketing, and community-led strategies. The courses equip local stakeholders with **practical tools** to build **sustainable, inclusive, and authentic tourism experiences**.

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# Publications



## Publications

Insights from the *World Leisure Journal* reveal how leisure shapes lives across generations and communities. From creative play helping children heal from trauma in the Philippines, to sports and civic action fostering empathy in youth, to family digital leisure strengthening bonds, and walking improving veterans' mental health — these studies remind us that leisure isn't just time off, it's time that transforms.

[Landscapes of safety: an empirical study on expressive leisure and children with post-traumatic experiences: World Leisure Journal: Vol 0, No 0](#)

This study explores how leisure-based activities like drawing, movement, and traditional games help children in the Philippines express emotions and recover from trauma. Working with eight boys who had experienced abuse, the researchers found that creative, culturally familiar play fostered safety, resilience, and hope—demonstrating that **leisure can support trauma recovery beyond clinical settings**.

[Living, doing, and learning in sport, civic, and political activities: Possible paths for positive youth development: World Leisure Journal: Vol 0, No 0](#)

This study of 1,174 students aged 14–19 found that combining **sports and civic activities** supports youth development by fostering **character, empathy, and responsibility**. The research also revealed differences by gender and age group, with varied strengths in confidence, caring, and responsibility across the cohorts. The findings highlight how leisure-based engagement may serve broader youth development goals.

[The role of perception and ICT usage by parental figures in digital leisure engagement: a mediation analysis: World Leisure Journal: Vol 0, No 0](#)

In a study surveying 1,200 Spanish parents, researchers explored how parents' views and habits around digital leisure activities relate to their own involvement. The results revealed that shared digital activities between parents and children accounted for 58% of parents' individual participation, suggesting that **family interaction strongly supports digital skills, relationships, and engagement**.

[Neighborhood characteristics, leisure-time walking, and mental health in older veterans: World Leisure Journal: Vol 67, No 2](#)

This study of older veterans found that those living in **safe, socially connected neighborhoods** who engage in **leisure-time walking** reported significantly better **mental health** and more positive **health perceptions**. The findings highlight the combined importance of **environment, social connectedness, and physical activity** in supporting wellbeing in later life.



# Opportunities



## Open call to join the World Leisure Centers of Excellence (WLCE) Network

WLO invites accredited colleges and universities to submit applications to establish your institution as a **World Leisure Center of Excellence (WLCE)** and join the prestigious global WLCE network.

WLCEs are tertiary institutions offering programs in leisure and leisure-related fields, such as play, recreation, arts, culture, sport, festivals, health and fitness, and travel and tourism. Programs in English are preferred but not mandatory.

Selected institutions will join an international network dedicated to advancing research, education, and professional development in leisure.

Learn more about the [WLCE Network](#) and its upcoming [Open Call](#).



## Open call to host the World Leisure Congress 2030!

WLO invites expressions of interest from communities, cities, or institutions interested in hosting the **World Leisure Congress in 2030!**

If your community is passionate about leisure and eager to be part of a global conversation, this is your opportunity to get involved and make a lasting impact.

To ensure a strong local foundation for the event's success, we encourage proposals developed in collaboration with professional associations, government agencies, and academic institutions.

Learn more about the World Leisure Congress Open Call [here](#).



## Call for Submissions: WLO Book Series

The World Leisure Organization, in partnership with [Routledge](#), invites you to contribute to the prestigious **WLO Book Series** – a leading platform for advancing international scholarship and critical dialogue on leisure.

This interdisciplinary series aims to publish the most up-to-date and innovative critical perspectives on the leisure field. It reflects WLO's broad view of leisure as a multi-dimensional reality encompassing **tourism, sports, culture, and recreation**. The series also explores cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral connections – both within and beyond leisure studies – while developing valuable educational tools for both academic and professional communities.

We're especially interested in bold, interdisciplinary proposals that **connect leisure with health, sustainability, policy, education, and technology**. This is your chance to showcase innovative ideas and help shape the global conversation on leisure.

Don't miss out – learn more and submit your proposal here: [Book Series | World Leisure Organization](#).



## Call for abstracts: LSA 2026 annual conference at Brunel University London

[Brunel University London](#) will host the **2026 Leisure Studies Association (LSA)** annual conference from June 30–July 3, 2026. The theme — **“Creative, Connected Communities of/in/with Leisure: Theoretical & Methodological Advances”** — will bring together scholars, practitioners, and cultural producers to explore how leisure practices shape – and are shaped by – creative and connected communities.

Abstract submissions are now open. The first call began on **October 1, 2025**, and the second begins **January 12, 2026**. Researchers may submit abstracts of up to 300 words via the [Microsoft Form for LSA Conference 2026 Abstract Submission](#), including a short bio (maximum 150 words).

Submissions are welcomed for **academic papers, practice-based research, creative presentations, roundtables, and methodological workshops**, addressing topics such as **creative communities, connected leisure, leisure and social justice, and leisure, health, and well-being**.

The conference will take place at **Brunel University London, Kingston Lane, Uxbridge, UB8 3PH**, under the leadership of co-chairs [Prof. Caroline Scarles](#) and [Prof. Louise Mansfield](#).

Conference updates can be found here: [LSA 2026 Conference page](#).



# Encounter



## Students explore inclusive leisure design in Breda

Ahead of the **18th World Leisure Congress** in August 2025, students from around the world joined experience experts with disabilities in Breda, Netherlands to explore the theme **"Redesigning Leisure: Creating Access and Inclusion for Everyone."**

Through company visits, design sessions, and collaborative activities, participants assessed the accessibility of local leisure organizations and **worked together to design more inclusive solutions.**

Check out the video!: <https://youtu.be/ZnS5MBUUh0o>



# Stay connected with the World Leisure Organization!



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