



IETM REPORT

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VALUING THE ARTS

IETM Satellite meeting in Paris, 7-8 March 2016

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Valuing the arts

Which **new arguments** in favour of the public funding for the arts and culture?

How to involve **experts** from the artistic field in the decision-making processes?

What are the valuable **indicators** for evaluating the arts?

Those are the three questions 58 participants from across Europe and beyond – arts sector representatives, researchers, policymakers and intermediaries organisations – were asked to work on during the two-day [IETM Satellite meeting](#) that took place in Paris on March, 7th-8th 2016.

This meeting, organised with the support of the French and Croatian ministries of Culture, followed up on [a first encounter](#) held in February 2015 in Brussels.

The Brussels meeting gathered policy makers and decision makers on the topic of The Art of Valuing Several models of measuring the impact of arts projects being presented, the meeting produced confronted voices in favour and against the effort of measuring the impact of the arts. The question whether there is any evidence for evidenced-based research was raised by [Pascal Gielen](#), who also stated that it is hard to measure sense-making processes. Others were convinced that the arts need to use measurements to legitimate their action and claim for public money and to better distribute the limited funds available.

If no definitive answers emerged from this first set of discussions, solid theoretical and empirical foundations allowed for a next step to be taken towards the formulation of new arguments, strategies and demands for the arts.



picture by Komar & Melamid's 'Most Wanted & Least Wanted Paintings' project

To do so, the Paris meeting offered participants an **open and participatory platform** to develop a collective view on **why and how to advocate for the arts in local, national and European policymaking processes**. During those two days, working groups allowed for the diversity of voices and experiences to be heard, while developing a common vision for future actions.¹

¹ This report was prepared with the help of the notes of the meeting taken by Marie Le Sourd (On the Move, Brussels), Goran Tomka (Faculty of Tourism and Sports, University of Novi Sad) and Elena Di Federico (IETM, Brussels).

01.

DECONSTRUCTING AND RECONSTRUCTING THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE

To launch the debates, **Milena Dragičević Šešić** (University of the Arts, Belgrade) introduced the topic with a provocative and inspiring speech on why and how to defend the arts. Deconstructing the policy discourse in which cultural professionals have been trapped for too long, new arguments for the arts were proposed, repositioning culture as a public good and reactivating its role at the heart of public interest.

For decades, the arts and cultural sector has had to navigate policy frameworks. It had to develop arguments fitting those frameworks to legitimate its existence and defend its impact. To develop a new vision and a new advocacy discourse, the arts sector should free itself from those pre-existing frameworks and get back to the basics: why do we still need to advocate for culture, and to whom?

When the Berlin Philharmonic organises a concert for refugees or when refugees guide visitors in Berlin Pergamon Museum, what is the impact? How do you measure it, and when?

Has culture lost its symbolic value? Has long-term impact no legitimacy anymore in the public discourse? Have we accepted that culture is nothing more but a contribution to the entertainment industry?

If we refuse those pre-conceptions, we have to go beyond the traditional Cultural Policy advocacy arguments (national prestige, civilising mission, economic importance, correction of the market, responsibility in the welfare state). We also have to refuse to fit in new 'policy boxes' (culture as a tool of economic development, of social change, of urban innovation, of sustainable development, etc.) that pre-determine the artists' actions and leave no space for innovation.

As illustrated by the radical example of Cambodia, where culture in all its forms was officially forbidden (even mothers were prevented to sing lullabies), or by the work of the Russian artists Komar & Melamid (whose paintings are provocatively based on the preferences expressed by the public through online questionnaires), we have to go back to the central question of how society understands and values the arts.

In a sector facing great precarity, we have to build on collective intelligence and on the flow of ideas and experiments at work within the cultural sector that stimulates civic engagement (such as the work of Jochen Gerz and his genuine participatory projects).

Culture should be defended as a human right, as a space of critical thinking, as a right to dignity and dissent, as a space of debate of core social values, as the guardian of societies' past – a past they sometimes risk, or would like to, forget. Policymakers should create the platforms where all those voices can be heard.

Freeing ourselves from the vocabulary that has been taking over cultural policy discourses and the language of the arts sector itself (democratisation, creative industries, mainstreaming, etc.), we have to reclaim the values that confront the realities of contemporary Europe (interculturalism, solidarity, loyalty, liberty, equality, brotherhood and unity), and that re-legitimises the public role of, and public interest for, culture.

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02.

MANAGING DATA AND USING STATISTICS

As policy discussions remain preoccupied with measurements, hard data and statistics, two presentations followed, focusing on cultural statistics and making sense of them.

Péter Inkei from the Budapest Observatory presented the Cultural Climate Barometer 2015 which asked citizens for their opinion on their cultural ecosystem. This new instrument, tested for the first time in 2013, collects opinions and perceptions.

The latest round of the survey took place in November-December 2015. The majority of the 170 respondents to the online questionnaire were subscribers to the monthly newsletter of the Budapest Observatory. This pool of cultural operators and stakeholders is characterised by an international orientation (they all read English) and an interest about cultural developments in Europe. Their task was to mark five out of the 27 problematic factors that they find most relevant to their environment, and optionally to mark up to five out of the 27 favourable aspects. An offline round of consultation also took place in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine.

The full results of the survey can be consulted on line but an interesting output is the **difference of views that still exist between Western and Eastern Europe**. If for both regions, too low government budgets for culture remain the most important problematic factor, in the West, the 'Marginal place of the arts in school curricula' and the 'Diminishing resources for local (municipal) culture' are key, while in the East the 'Excessive political influence in cultural matters' is still very high on the agenda.

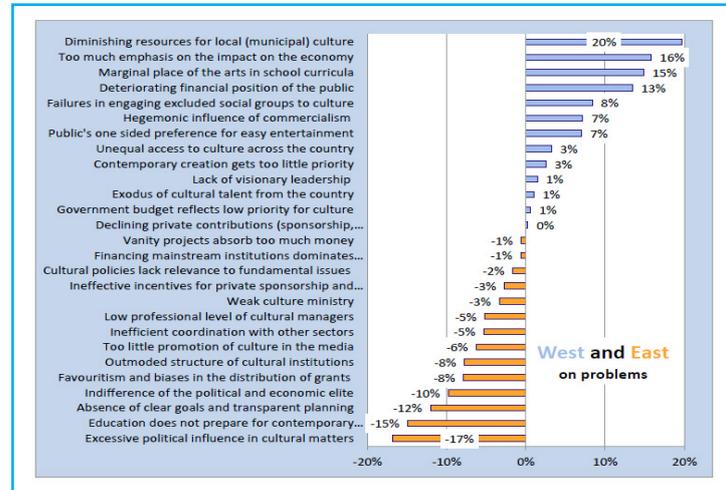
Other interesting results of the Barometer are the difficulty respondents faced at the time of assessing positively their cultural environment (it seems to be a lot easier to identify challenges!), and the differences in their responses depending of the type of respondents (researchers, visual or performing artists, etc.).

Valentina Montalto presented the latest KEA European Affairs' ['Feasibility study on data collection and analysis in the cultural and creative sectors in the EU'](#). After 20 years of efforts on the collection of EU cultural statistics, this study – commissioned by the EU institutions in the framework of the Regulation establishing the Creative Europe programme - aimed at screening the existing Eurostat statistics, mapping alternative sources of quantitative data, benchmarking cultural observatories, and making recommendations for future actions.

The study identified a number of **challenges for the collection of EU cultural statistics**, such as: the fact that the international classification (NACE and ISCO) is not adapted to the cultural and creative sectors, some subsectors are very poorly covered in terms of statistics (heritage, museums, libraries, performing arts), the low priority of cultural data for statistical bodies, or the high number of micro-companies in the sectors.

To better grasp the cultural and creative sectors' value, and fill the gaps in existing statistics, the study identified alternative sources of data, and proposed to collect information on new key features of the sectors such as those linked to the digital environment.

The report concludes with a set of recommended actions – from the most modest to the most ambitious – on the way forward towards the development of robust statistics for the cultural and creative sectors in the EU. It also recommends to: (1) link data collection to policy priorities, (2) update statistical classification to better capture the cultural and creative sectors, (3) address poor statistics in some subsectors, (4) develop measure to apprehend new digital trends across the value chain,



picture from Budapest Observatory's *Cultural Barometer 2015* - fusing Eastern and Western views about problematic factors

and (5) use 'big data' to fully grasp the value of the new economy.

Inspired and informed by the presentations, participants were invited to work in different group configurations on arguments, indicators and processes to be used to influence policymaking and to come up, at the end of the two days, with concrete actions to be implemented by the sector.

The discussions took place in round tables, gathering the participants alternatively in mixed group (policymakers together with professionals from the field) and peer groups (policymakers and professionals at separate tables). Three parallel groups gathered three times along the two days to discuss one or all three topics mentioned above; the groups were moderated by **Emina Visnic** (Pogon, Zagreb), **Valeria Marcolin** (Association Culture et Développement, Grenoble) and **Sehran Ada** (Santralistanbul / Istanbul Bilgi University).

03.

NEW ARGUMENTS FOR
THE PUBLIC SUPPORT
OF THE ARTS

Extensive discussions on the need, quality and use of new arguments for the public support of the arts took place in the different working groups. Participants agreed that arguments should be at the heart of any advocacy action, but that they had to be prioritised.

What are the arguments that are really 'culture-specific' (ethics, freedom, critical thinking, being with others, etc.)?

Are the economic and instrumental arguments used extensively in the last years really the good ones? (It was noted several times that they were not that successful up till now...)

Are we always too late in developing arguments in an ever-changing environment (new generation of artists, new technologies, etc.)?

Instead of trying to understand and use the politicians and policymakers' language, should arts professionals try to make them understand their language?

And once we agree on arguments, how do we deliver them? How do we assume positions of power from which what we say is going to be heard?

The language to be used depends to whom we talk to (policymakers, artists, audiences or society as a whole). But the key arguments remain the same and are very numerous: arts and culture stimulate debate, it is about risk taking, it pushes boundaries, it stimulates innovation and creative thinking, it contributes to well being and social cohesion, it is fun, etc. Are they actually too many arguments, which means that no one has a clear vision of why culture matters? **Shall we stick to a few selected arguments** that would allow the



one of the round table discussions during the meeting

arts, like sport or education for example, to be recognised in their specificity (contributing and questioning the democratic processes, constructing and deconstructing individual and collective identities, stimulating imagination, etc.)?

Beyond defining and choosing arguments, **establishing partnerships** with policymakers from the cultural field to support them in establishing partnerships with policymakers from other sectors in the defense of culture budgets was mentioned repeatedly as key for an efficient lobbying action.

The importance of **building legitimacy towards audiences and society at large**, and not only towards policymakers, was recognised as indispensable to achieve long-term impact. **Solidarity within the sector** (between institutions and independents, across subsectors, etc.) was also considered as necessary to build a strong and credible voice for the arts.

When having to prioritise arguments, a 'long list' came up (intrinsic, democratic, instrumental, etc.), and a majority of participants agreed on the fact that **the arguments exist** ('books are full of them'), **but they are not used properly**: 'We need

methodologies rather than arguments!'. Some examples were put forward, such as the use of 'champions' from outside the arts world (scientists, lawyers, teachers, etc.), establishing cross-sectorial co-operations, or demonstrating the impact of the arts on the ground ('experiences sharing') rather than only using dry facts and figures.

Finding the right arguments for public support of the arts is therefore just a small part of the wider advocacy effort.

Arguments have to be used in a relevant way and at the right moment to achieve results. Opportunities to influence policy making processes exist, the arts sector just has to organise itself to make sure to be present when decisions are being taken: 'We have to be in the room, and we have to be smart!'. Developing a positive narrative, moving from 'demands' to 'pledges', was also mentioned as a new way to present the sector: 'Instead of just asking for money, we should also say what we offer in exchange'.

Advocating for the arts is therefore all about strategies. **Working together, showing our strengths, opening up to the public for support, using the media** are the resources the cultural sector possesses, and the ones that should be put to use.

Understood as a highly dynamic process, advocacy should be based on tools (such as arguments) but also on tactics and strategies. Because it is a highly contingent, contextual and relational process, it should adapt to the different contexts, based on ad hoc partnerships, and aim at concrete objectives.

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04. THE ROLE OF SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES IN DECISION-MAKING

The value of involving the sector and its 'expertise' in decision-making processes - at the level of policymaking but also when distributing funds and evaluating policy and funding decisions - was recognised by all as crucial to improve the quality and impact of cultural policies. The different working groups discussed extensively about which models can ensure that such contribution is fair, qualitative and as democratic as possible.

The examples put forward by the participants showed that, at the moment, decision-making processes in the different EU countries know different levels of involvement of the sector: from the most untransparent (political decisions with no consultation) to the most ambitious (genuine participatory processes where common decisions are negotiated with all concerned and with regular feedback during implementation). In all configurations, challenges exist and have to be acknowledged before moving to any recommendations.

Involving sector representatives enhances **transparency** and the level of **trust** between policymakers and their constituency. When a proper dialogue takes place between the experts engaged, consultation processes also build solidarity within the sector.

But involvement in funding decisions can also create **conflicts of interests**. Strict regulations are therefore necessary on how long and in which conditions one can stay in a consultation framework (only if not applying for own funding, for a limited duration, on a rotating basis to allow for a diverse representation, etc.). The selection and representativeness of sector 'experts' is therefore key, as well as clear and transparent rules on the compensations given to take part in consultation processes.

The models to be privileged depend of course greatly on the national context and on the size of the sector in the different countries. Tailor-made solutions must be privileged but keeping in mind **what makes the value of participatory processes: informing political decision with artistic visions and a knowledge of the needs on the ground.**

Removing the potential gate keeping position of sector representatives and involving audiences and the broader public in decision making was also discussed but it raised more questions than answers: How and when to consult audiences? To collect feedback on what exactly, and does it really make sense? The involvement of other stakeholders (other ministries and representatives from other sectors, academics and researchers, etc.) into cultural policy processes was also discussed, as well as the pros and cons of such participation.

An agreement was reached however on the fact that what really matters, in any consultation process, is the transparency of the experts' appointments, of the functioning, and of the decisionmaking to ensure the democratic quality of the conversations and of the decisions taken.

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05.

WHAT INDICATORS
FOR EVALUATING THE ARTS

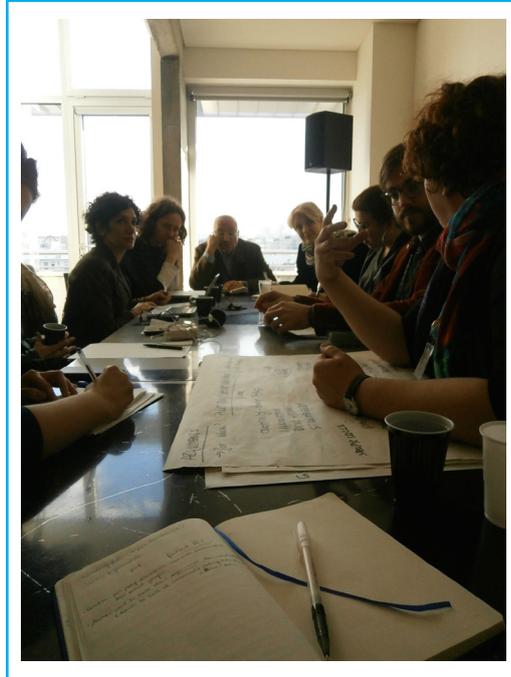
The discussions on indicators were concerned with their elaboration, their potential instrumentalisation to serve political agendas, but also their positive use in advocacy processes.

As indicators serve policy objectives, the importance of **defining them collectively** - to agree on what we want to measure and why - was underlined as key, and as too often neglected in current discussions on data collection and statistics.

Promoting qualitative indicators (demonstrating the intrinsic value of culture) was also underlined as indispensable in a context where numbers are praised and surveys too often overlooked by policy-makers. **Could indicators be valued for the qualitative insights they offer, and could we elaborate quantitative data that make sense beyond immediate policy priorities?**

Defining harmonised indicators at European level was also identified as a key challenge. **Developing instead local, regional or national indicators** - maybe even specific to some subsectors only - might be more strategic if statistics have to be used in efficient advocacy actions.

Collaborating with other sectors to position the impact of the arts in a broader societal picture was mentioned as a way to enhance the impact of arts indicators (contribution to well being next to health indicators, for example, or to skills development when coupled with education indicators). Regarding social impact, the importance of a **long-term approach** was mentioned - once again opposed to short-term political agendas.



discussion during the meeting

The risk of positioning the arts within a fixed grid of indicators was finally highlighted, as they limit the potential impact of the arts and often reduce risk taking and innovation. How to convince society and policymakers that the value of the arts is in the 'unknown' and in our capacity to think 'out of the box', while contributing to a number of democratic and societal goals? This question brought participants back to the intrinsic value of the arts, and to the fact that we cannot recognise any 'spillover effects' without recognising the intrinsic value first.

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06.

IDEAS FOR CONCRETE ACTIONS

When reaching the end of the group conversations, participants were asked to select a limited number of concrete recommendations to be implemented individually and/or collectively after the meeting.

- **Get out there!**

In order to convince the broader public of the value of the arts, **the arts sector has to be visible in the public space and make its voice heard**. The audience has to feel the sector struggle and be part of its game. Engaging in dialogues can happen anywhere: in theatres, in the media, in the streets, in schools, when having dinner with friends - every interaction counts.

It was suggested to **run an on going campaign for the arts** that would articulate its message around the slogan '**What culture means to you**'. It would be viral – using online tools – but also focused to fit national contexts, and should be articulated from the national level onwards to allow for a coordinated action at EU level. Building networks, coalitions and platforms of joint action at local level would be key to make sure the resulting cultural policy initiatives match the demands on the ground.

Effective **awareness-raising strategies** should be based on the **wealth of existing researches**, surveys, reports, and case studies already available. Those tools should be reviewed and the message to be developed on their basis adapted to the local needs.

The cultural sector is rich of the diversity of its voices but, **when responding to urgent calls for action** at local, national or international levels, we should manage to **speak with one voice**. The sector's many dimensions and specificities should however not be neglected. **Transparency** is key at the moment of deciding who takes the lead to articulate the message.

- **Establish partnerships**

Strategies for making the sector more visible through **large-scale collaborations and joint actions** were recommended. Partnerships with other sectors (environmentalists, trade unionists, education and health professionals) to defend a broader vision of society in which the arts have a role to play could help advance progressive agendas, and make the arts more visible in societal discourses.

The positioning of culture in other sectors would also aim at **getting support from other policy streams** such as the EU development funds, youth policies, or tourism. With this objective in mind new alliances would have to be established such as with the young generations (e.g. European Youth Parliament) or with thematic European organisations (e.g. the European Travel Commission, bringing together national tourism boards).

The arts sector could better organise itself in platforms, associations, intermediary organisations etc. to create synergies and partnerships within the sector, and then **develop a transversal strategy** that would use **existing platforms and organisations** (civil society initiatives, national commissions of UNESCO, etc.) to unleash their full potential.

- **Initiate critical research**

A wider approach to research was also argued for, using an 'eco-system approach' that takes into consideration the various interconnections at play within the sector. Supporting **independent** research that do not necessarily tick all the policymakers' 'boxes' (or fit their hidden agenda) but that offers a genuine picture of the sector, possibly initiated by the sector itself.

Research & development envelopes should be increased within the budget of cultural organisations to develop **sector's owned advocacy tools**. Scientific research into 'happiness indicators' and 'emotional public responses' should also be supported to diversify the indicators of the intrinsic value of the arts.

- **... but most of all, continue to make arts**

After exhausting oneself talking policy making, calls for getting back to the basics of making arts were also made. As being both in and out the advocacy process is key to preserve the critical and vital power of the sector. *Stop explaining, start performing!*

07.

WRAP-UP AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

To open up perspectives for future actions, comments on the proceedings of the two days were offered by **Nina Obuljen Koržinek**, research associate at the Institute for Development and International Relations in Zagreb, and currently in charge of developing the programme of the next IFACCA World Meeting in Malta (October 2016).

- **Not talking only to ourselves:** To engage in constructive discussions on the value of the arts, it is important that the sector makes its voice heard in different places and towards different types of interlocutors.
- **Using arguments that make sense to us:** When only using the arguments that are expected from us, we start hating ourselves. We have to shift the discourse so that it is broadly understood but also make sense to us.
- **Testing ideas on a broader scale:** Intermediary organisations could be strong allies in collective advocacy actions for the arts, but they still need to be convinced of the potential impact of such actions. The upcoming IFACCA Summit in Malta (18-21 October 2016) could be a great opportunity to convey the message.
- **Minding the danger of too general campaign messages:** When developing a discourse that we believe can match different contexts (national, European, international), we run the risk of missing the target. Clear messages should pursue clear objectives in a language that is accessible to all.
- **Using arguments that make sense today:** Great changes are currently at work (the digital shift, deep societal and political evolutions), changes that we do not fully grasp yet. The sector

has to free itself from the 'old arguments' used to legitimate support for the arts in the last decades and focus on new ones (human rights, public interest, social continuity, etc.).

- **Putting cultural expression / production back in the centre:** Using, for example, the new paradigm developed by the 2005 Unesco Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.
- **Recognising the intrinsic value first to allow for spillovers:** We have to know the basic impact of the arts before looking at the instrumental value of our action.
- **Picking our battles:** Is EU level advocacy really needed when cultural policies are still developed at national, regional and local levels?
- **Rethinking the way we engage in trans-sector partnerships:** Engaging in broader societal campaigns is difficult for the cultural sector, as is the recognition of the specificities of the arts for other players. How to build partnerships that make sense to all? And how to develop transversal actions in a time where all budgets are under pressure, not only the culture ones?
- **Focusing on the status of the artist and on access to culture:** Without artists and audiences, there are no 'spillover effects'. Creation and accessibility are the elements of the value chain more often at risk of being cut. They are the ones we should fight for in the first place.
- **Building alliances with policymakers:** As they are not always 'the enemy'... Partnerships between arts professionals and cultural policymakers are a first step towards stronger cultural budgets. But decisions are sometimes taken outside the formal policy processes... We therefore have to recognise the importance of developing actions towards the media and the general public.

On the basis of such a wealth of ideas, a last round of interventions put forward a number of additional recommendations such as the invitation of representatives from other sectors to upcoming cultural gatherings or the engagement of arts professionals in cross-sectoral fights (such as the defense of education or the fight against the increased precarious working conditions across Europe).

As a first collective action, the **Alliance for Culture and the Arts - An urgent appeal to put Culture at the forefront of the European project** was put forward as a concrete initiative, already supported by 25 international cultural networks, to carry many of the messages discussed during this two days towards EU policymakers.

Other initiatives will follow, and IETM remains open to any proposals aimed at supporting the collective effort.

The meeting concluded with a call for action by the arts representatives: 'We should continue to demonstrate the energy and value of the arts through our discourses but also through our capacity to take risk and offer artistic disruptions. We should not always ask for more but also show how strong we already are.'

08.

CONCLUSIONS

From the wealth of ideas that emerged during the two days, a number of key recommendations could be taken forward:

- **Enhancing our presence and speaking out loud**

Making the arts visible in the streets, raising awareness in an original way - using existing advocacy arguments and research material, running an on going campaign for the arts... The arts world should find a balance between speaking with one voice and making sure that the diversity of our voices is heard.

So, what action(s) to be implemented first? With which message, and by whom?

- **Partnering to shape broader societal agendas**

Partnerships can not only reinforce the arts sector and its demand but also contribute to support progressive agendas. Strategic partnerships can help transfer culture to other sectors; the arts world should develop a transversal strategy, using existing organisations and platforms.

Which priority partnership(s) for the arts and on which topic(s)?

- **Defining our own indicators**

The arts world should stop being trapped by evaluation grids and reclaim the definition and analysis of the arts' value and contribution to society. Research budgets should be increased in cultural organisations so as to allow for the development of meaningful evaluations.

How to find the means to lead your own qualitative research?



final plenary discussion at the end of the meeting

- **Continuing doing arts**

The intrinsic value of the arts, and its spillovers, can only be demonstrated when actually experiencing the arts (in theatres, in the streets, in schools, etc).

Which relevant artistic intervention(s) could be implemented at local, national and international level to reach a broader slice of population – and how can we act in a coordinated way across Europe/internationally (if needed)?