



International network
for contemporary
performing arts

STATEMENT

The new AgoraEU: call for a truly equitable approach

The General Assembly of IETM, held in Oulu Finland 17 June 2026, strongly encourages all the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, and Member States, to establish an AgoraEU programme (Creative Europe) that ensures strong and equal support for all cultural sectors.

The current draft proposals by the European Parliament's CULT Committee Rapporteur suggested a **fragmentation of the programme through the creation of additional strands, including a dedicated strand for the music sector**. This architecture raises questions regarding **transparency and equal treatment in the EU's relationship with different cultural and creative sectors**. While some sectors are singled out for specific recognition, others, including the performing arts, risk being marginalised.

This proposal runs counter to the EU's holistic cultural vision reflected in the Culture Compass, which does not present one artistic discipline as inherently more valuable, more European, or more deserving of dedicated recognition than others.

We call on the EU institutions to ensure that the AgoraEU has a specific objective for each sector, including the performing arts. We remind the negotiators that:

- The performing arts sector is one of the largest employers among the creative sectors, providing more than 1.2 million jobs in the European Union.
- No sector within the cultural and creative sectors suffered more severely from COVID-19 than the performing arts. Performing arts revenues fell by an estimated 90% in 2020, compared to an overall contraction of 31% across the cultural and creative sectors, amounting to €199 billion in cumulative losses.

- Engagement with the performing arts is also under pressure today due to rising costs and rapidly shrinking public funding, which negatively affect both contemporary and traditional performing arts organisations and practices.
- Few sectors embody the original logic of Creative Europe cooperation as strongly as the performing arts. The performing arts ecosystem depends fundamentally on transnational partnerships, touring, mobility, co-production, international collaboration, and the circulation of works and artists across countries.