

IETM Policy Guide: Advancing Green Cultural Policies in an Era of Greenlash

by Elena Polivtseva



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www.formulaprojects.net

Published by
IETM — International
Network
for Contemporary
Performing Arts
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ietm.org

ISBN code
9782930897615

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This publication should be mentioned as follows: E. Polivtseva, “IETM Policy Guide: Advancing Green Cultural Policies in an Era of Greenlash”, IETM, Brussels, March 2026.

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About this Guide

This policy guide aims to encourage, inspire, and support cultural policymakers in crafting meaningful, visionary and time-sensitive greening strategies at a moment marked, on the one hand, by rollbacks of environmental policies, and on the other, by a growing sense of urgency. This guide builds upon the knowledge IETM has generated in the past years — through research, training, dialogues, panels and speeches, through ongoing members’ conversations, and Perform Europe, which IETM has led, in collaboration with other performing arts networks. While the paper addresses cultural policy in general, the key focus is placed on the needs, aspirations and specificities of the performing arts sector. With a primary focus on Europe, the guide is supported by case studies embedded in thematic boxes. These serve merely as examples characterising the current policy landscape rather than role-model practices or one-size-fit-all solutions.

Today's Paradox: a Greenlash Amidst a Polycrisis

In December 2019, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced that the European Green Deal would be Europe's 'man on the moon moment' — a sweeping transformation of the continent's economy, energy systems, and industries, with the goal of making Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 and cutting emissions by at least 55% by 2030. Many initiatives have been put in place to turn this ambition into reality — the European Climate Law, the Just Transition Fund, the Social Climate Fund, the expansion of the EU Emissions Trading System, among others. The 'soul of the Green Deal' has become the New European Bauhaus, announced in 2020, which brings architects, designers, artists, and engineers together to reimagine living spaces and communities for a greener future.

The EU's green ambitions have shaped a multi-level policy environment in which national governments have developed their own green transition plans. In this broader context, a growing number of cultural ministries across Europe have incorporated the green priority into their policy frameworks, giving rise to a range of initiatives aimed at helping the cultural sector reduce its environmental impact (see examples further in the text).

However, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 undermined the assumption on which the Green Deal had been built — that geopolitical stability could be taken for granted while Europe decarbonised and advanced its green transition. The European Green Deal has been steadily losing ground in the past few years, hollowed out by a convergence of political realignment, anxieties about the EU's economic competitiveness, rearmament debates, and escalating geopolitical pressures.

As from 2024, the EU's priorities no longer feature the Green Deal as a standalone axis. The right-wing shift in European public opinion emboldened the conservative and far-right parties to push back against the Green Deal's regulatory ambitions. The new European Commission, guided in part by the Draghi report's call to ease regulatory burdens, responded with a series of 'omnibus simplification packages' that have rolled back several sustainability requirements for businesses. Moreover, the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism — designed as a climate tariff on imports — has been weakened by exempting 90% of companies from its scope. Finally, green NGOs warn that the Commission's new Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034 proposal reduces allocations for climate and nature, further diluting the EU's green commitments.

The retreat from green commitments is not only occurring in the EU — once considered a pioneer of the green transition — but also at the national level and in other parts of the world. We are witnessing not just inertia but an active backlash against environmentally progressive policies and movements - a 'greenlash', as researchers and media frame it.

Beyond the familiar slow implementation of the Paris Agreement, there are now explicit steps backward in green governance and policies. In the United States, President Donald Trump withdrew the country from the Paris Agreement for the second time on the first day of his second term. In Europe, green parties suffered losses in the 2024 elections, reducing the number of seats in the European Parliament and seeing their influence dwindle in several Member States.

Some worrying developments have taken place elsewhere in the world: Argentina dismantled its Ministry of the Environment; Brazil adopted the 'devastation bill', marking the most substantial regression in its environmental policy in decades; Canada has repealed its consumer carbon tax; and the list of examples can continue. Globally, public optimism about climate action is fading: only a minority believe their governments will make progress in reducing emissions, while many are protesting further green measures, perceiving them as threats to their livelihoods and economic security.

However, our planet can hardly afford such a shift away from green progress. According to scientists, if current policies remain unchanged, the world is on track for 2.8°C of warming by 2100, far beyond the Paris Agreement's targets. In 2025, an exceptionally costly and destructive series of natural disasters continued the trajectory of escalating climate-related extremes, with economic damages exceeding the 10-year average. This is happening against the backdrop of a growing number of armed conflicts, having a devastating impact on the environment and increasing in recent years, including the Russia—Ukraine war, the Israel—Gaza war, the civil war in Sudan, the US / Israeli attacks on Iran, and others. Another worrying development is the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence, which, despite its assumed potential to contribute to climate solutions, carries a significant carbon footprint: AI data centres generate e-waste, consume vast amounts of water, depend on unsustainably mined critical minerals, and use enormous quantities of electricity that drive greenhouse-gas emissions. Furthermore, despite decades of debate and attempts to cut fossil-fuel emissions, which continue

to push global temperatures to unprecedented levels, these emissions increased by 1.1% in 2025. The COP30 deal reached in November 2025 refers only indirectly to the phase-out of fossil fuels in its commitments, which are clearly insufficient given the severity of the situation.

Therefore, there is a growing paradox at the heart of our current era. On the one hand, we are getting used to understanding the present as a ‘polycrisis’ - a condition shaped by multiple overlapping disasters, with the climate emergency standing out as the defining systemic crisis affecting every dimension of life. Rising awareness of ecological degradation fuels a sense of time running out and a rapidly intensifying urgency for action. Yet, amid this very polycrisis and the everywhere-echoing call for action, we see a global trend of rolling back environmental policies, or at least of failing to resist a future in which environmental tipping points are breached and critical deadlines missed.

Today, there is a real risk that environmental policies will become even more piecemeal, incoherent, and unambitious, being more PR exercises than genuine efforts toward progress. With the EU and several countries across the world rolling back their environmental policies, climate action is losing momentum before it has ever reached the scale needed to secure the planet’s long-term sustainability.

Some initiatives, however, have been established, including within the realm of cultural policy (see examples further in the text), and the ambition should be not only to sustain them, but also to make sure they are implemented in a meaningful way and amplified.

Importantly, as we are witnessing through our daily work, many organisations and professionals in the performing arts sector continue to engage deeply in rethinking social and economic paradigms. With their imaginative, experimental and agile nature, the performing arts have a powerful role to play in envisioning and demonstrating solutions, and in questioning the predominant political, social and economic models that have contributed to the current crisis. Cultural policy can likewise show how freeing culture from profit- and growth-driven philosophies, and re-centring it as a foundation of people’s lives, can open pathways toward new, more sustainable ways of living together. A renewed cultural policy paradigm can inspire a broader rethinking of notions such as ‘value,’ ‘impact’ and ‘progress,’ give space to imagination, prioritise participation over consumption, and place greater emphasis on practices and processes rather than products.



IETM Berlin Plenary Meeting, 2025. Photo: © Karam Ghossein

Culture and Sustainability

Back in 2019, when the Green Deal was announced, the cultural sector did not wait for policy to catch up. Launched already in late 2019 — almost in parallel with the Green Deal itself — the [SHIFT Culture](#) project (Shared Initiatives for Training on the SDGs), supported by Erasmus+, set out to do something practical: give cultural leaders the actual instruments to change their organisations. [Environmental sustainability](#) was one of the project areas. SHIFT brought together nine European cultural networks to produce eco-guidelines, training manuals, and factsheets, covering resilience, policy integration, and awareness-raising. What began as a training initiative evolved into something more lasting: an eco-certification scheme for cultural networks, tailor-made for the specific reality of international cultural organisations. By February 2026, seventeen European cultural networks, including IETM, had been certified for the third consecutive year, which is a meaningful signal of institutionalised commitment.

However, culture's role in the green transition remains largely unrecognised at the political level. Despite strong and long-standing international advocacy for culture as a sustainable development goal, culture has not been included as an autonomous goal among the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030. Culture is also absent as a distinct pillar of sustainable development in the [UN Pact for the Future](#), adopted in 2024. Nevertheless, cultural ministries and UNESCO continue to promote the concept of an autonomous Sustainable Development Goal for culture, as reflected in the MONDIACULT outcome documents in [2022](#) and [2025](#). Ministries of culture remain strong advocates for reinforcing the links between culture and climate. This intersection was, for instance, highlighted as a guiding principle in the [KwaDukuza Declaration](#) (2025) of the G20 Culture Working Group Ministerial Meeting in South Africa. However, this promotion of culture is not embraced by decision-makers beyond the cultural policy circles.

At the EU level, while the Creative Europe programme requires applicants to contribute to the EU's Green Deal, the Green Deal itself makes no mention of culture and has not clearly recognised the role of the cultural sector in driving social and economic transformation. Creative Europe is expected to contribute to the EU's goal of allocating 30% of its budget to climate action, and it names this as a cross-cutting priority. However, climate mitigation and environmental protection are not explicit programme objectives, there are no indicators to track progress, let alone making green conditionality obligatory for applicants.

Although the [EU Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026](#) lists '*Culture for the Planet: unleashing the power of culture*' as one of its four main priorities, it does not clearly articulate the leadership potential of culture and the arts in the green transition, beyond a brief reference to their role in raising awareness and shifting 'mindsets towards the climate crisis'. Nor does it offer a comprehensive framework for unlocking culture's full transformative capacity. Instead, the Work Plan concentrates on a few specific areas, such as preparing cultural heritage for climate impacts, promoting a 'balanced approach' to the built environment, and improving data collection. While these areas are undoubtedly important, the absence of a strategic, holistic vision for the arts, especially their unique ability to foster imagination and transformative thinking, is striking.

The Commission's proposal for the new [AgoraEU](#) programme, the EU's programme set to replace Creative Europe after 2027, fails to advance in making explicit and meaningful connections between culture and environmental sustainability. The climate crisis appears only in a general section on 'preparedness' to various crises, alongside health emergencies, security threats, and technological accidents. Beneficiaries are expected merely to 'navigate' the green transition, not to reimagine or lead it.

The [Culture Compass](#), the EU's new strategic framework for culture launched in November 2025, does recognise that 'cultural actors should be empowered to lead the green transition'. This is a welcome acknowledgment and a notable improvement over the [New European Agenda for Culture](#) (2018), which did not address environmental sustainability at all. Still, the Culture Compass lacks the boldness needed to harness this leadership. For example, having a clear ambition to integrate the arts into high-level political forums where new social and economic paradigms are discussed, or by outlining how - both strategically and practically - culture can be placed at the heart of the EU's green policies. Instead, its planned actions remain narrow, including a workshop on the role of culture in sustainable living; continuation of the New European Bauhaus initiative; measuring environmental impact in the audiovisual sector; and heritage preservation. At the international level, Culture Compass is not set to advocate the recognition of culture as a sustainability goal, although the EU plans to promote culture and heritage within international climate adaptation agendas.

As research shows, national cultural policy documents across the EU most often reference environmental sustainability in terms of reducing the ecological footprint of the cultural and creative sectors; preparing them for climate-related hazards; promoting alternative materials and resource use; and acknowledging their potential to raise awareness and inspire climate action (CAE 2024). There is also a growing number of funds and programmes, many pilot or one-off, at national and municipal levels encouraging cultural organisations to address sustainability themes in their work (see the examples in boxes below). These measures are important, yet they fall short of recognising at a more holistic level the transformative power of the arts: their ability not only to raise awareness but to imagine and test solutions, pilot innovations, enact and embody value shifts, and guide other sectors and communities.

In the past several years, greening requirements have appeared in many funding and reporting criteria at national and municipal levels. Cultural and creative sectors are expected to play a role in the green transition following guidelines or recommendations, or complying with specific requirements - either through funding applications, or reporting processes, or both. However, such expectations are usually imposed within existing funding provisions (EFA 2025). Moreover, studies indicate that cultural funding rarely includes dedicated budgets for green mobility, even though debates about sustainable touring are longstanding (OTM 2024). Meanwhile, greening ambitions can impose significant financial strain on cultural organisations and undermine their own sustainability if not supported by adequate frameworks and additional funding, for such additional expenses as those needed for recyclable materials, sustainable catering, waste management systems, carbon footprint measurement, eco-certification, and more.

The problems extend beyond cultural funding. Cultural and creative sectors are not only insufficiently supported in their efforts to become greener; they are also burdened with multiple, often conflicting expectations. Economic development (including tourism), social cohesion, community building, health and wellbeing, cultural diplomacy, innovation - these and other policy agendas are in principle all relevant to the cultural field, but they do not always align. These agendas are driven by different policy areas with little holistic dialogue about culture's transversal value. Without a shared understanding of culture's true value across policy areas, priorities clash and become difficult to fulfil. For example, the drive to boost tourism and maximise visitor numbers discourages slower, more sustainable artistic practices. Using culture as soft power to promote national identity promoted by governments may conflict with translocal, ecologically minded approaches to cross-border collaboration.

Limited budgets are stretched across multiple priorities, and for cultural operators, simply ticking the 'green' box - let alone rethinking their practices in a profound way - can be difficult when layered with many other priorities.

This incompatibility of priorities echoes broader challenges within the UN's SDG framework, which itself brings together goals that are not always mutually compatible. Critics of the SDGs often highlight the inherent tension between economic growth and ecological sustainability, both of which are embedded in the framework as core objectives. As Justin O'Connor, of Cultural Economy at Adelaide University, has argued, the SDG system has not proven effective in advancing global sustainable development; therefore, efforts to embed culture within it as a separate goal may not be the most productive focus. This does not mean there should be no ambition to affirm culture as a standalone pillar or vector of development; rather, **it suggests that the time may have come to reimagine the very concept of development itself.**

Today, in times of stagnation in climate action and the overall failure to implement the SDGs, the critical question is not only how cultural policy can integrate green criteria in a realistic and supportive way, but increasingly: **How can cultural policy empower the arts to help reimagine what 'green' and 'sustainability' mean? How can cultural policy promote new concepts of economic development and social progress? And what role should culture - and cultural policy - play in a time of 'greenlash'?**



IETM Sofia Plenary Meeting, 2024. Photo: © Teodora Tzanova Fedyan

Performing Arts as Agents of Change

The performing arts possess unique capacities to drive societal transformation toward environmental sustainability, combining creativity, imagination, agile formats and narratives, communal experience, and emotional engagement in ways that scientific data alone cannot achieve. Contemporary performing arts, in particular, have been leading the cultural field in bringing diverse sectors and disciplines together to pilot new ideas, rethink collaboration paradigms, and redefine art inspired by sustainability, balance, and care - for the planet, natural world, community life, and humans.

Since 2020, IETM has been leading an innovative funding scheme - [Perform Europe](#) - together with other performing arts networks: the European Festivals Association, European Dance Development Network, Circostrada, and Pearle*, as well as the research partner IDEA Consult. Funded by the European Commission, Perform Europe is a unique European funding instrument dedicated specifically to financing sustainable and inclusive touring projects in the performing arts sector, across the 40 countries participating in Creative Europe.

Throughout the Perform Europe journey, the partnership has gathered substantive knowledge about how artists, venues, and companies in theatre, dance, outdoor art, circus, and performance approach sustainability in their dramaturgies, art-making, operations, and cross-border touring. This knowledge demonstrates that **the relationship between art and greening is far more transformative and systemic than merely measuring and reducing the carbon footprint of business-as-usual activities**. The performing arts sector employs a multi-layered strategy to greening, combining ecological practices (in mobility, production, and materials), rethinking touring and performance models, embedding community engagement and inclusion, and shifting organisational culture. At the same time, performing arts organisations leverage its unique strengths - imagination, storytelling, and embodied experience - to reimagine what sustainable culture and societies can look like.

As Perform Europe's [research](#) shows, artistic strategies are central to sustainable transitions in the performing arts. Projects often focus on embodied subjectivity, framing ecological or social issues through lived, bodily experience, engaging underrepresented communities, and valuing local or marginalised knowledge systems. Rather than touring finished shows rapidly in resource-heavy circuits, projects often extend time spent in each location, collaborate with local artists and communities, adapt formats to local contexts, and use digital or hybrid alternatives - although remaining critical to the tendency of 'dematerialising' the digital world.

Many productions aim to build long-term relationships with local communities, making processes inclusive, accessible, and responsive to local needs. This involves research, open listening, co-creation, and resource sharing, representing a shift from one-off, visitor-oriented performances to embedded cultural practices rooted in local contexts. These projects are also often valuing the natural world, which includes recognising the agency of raw materials, questioning human-nonhuman hierarchies, and forming relationships with more-than-human actors and spaces.

At the organisational level, there is a move toward care-based, collaborative, and flexible working models: partnerships that value equality, shared leadership, and mutual respect; planning that allows adaptation; collective learning; and long-term thinking. Rather than maximising output, the focus is on sustainability, fairness, and social impact, even if that means producing less frequently or more modestly.

Even when artists do not explicitly address climate issues - 'climate as a topic' - they often integrate creative sustainability into the frame, design, and dramaturgy of their productions. Performances can be more tourable, have longer lifespans, and be adaptable to different local contexts, reducing the need for people, sets, and materials to cross borders. Time can also be used more creatively: for example, travel time can be incorporated into the artistic process or used for audience and community engagement.

Contemporary performing arts are defined by their core strengths: creativity, courage, agility, and responsiveness. These qualities are pivotal for fostering innovation and implementing unconventional, sustainable, and inclusive approaches. What is often missing, however, is the time and space to document and share successful methods, disseminate findings to society, and translate micro-level experiments to other sectors.

Perform Europe's Learning Trajectory

Perform Europe is an EU-funded initiative under Creative Europe that has generated a growing body of knowledge resources since its launch in December 2020. Together, these resources trace a clear learning trajectory: from mapping the status quo, through articulating a vision for change, to equipping practitioners with tools for action.

1. Perform Europe Insights: Sustainability through Innovation - 2021

The first publication of Perform Europe, produced by the Consortium (IETM, EFA, Circostrada, EDN, IDEA Consult). It brings together the main learning points of the project's first six months (December 2020–May 2021), drawing on the research and mapping phase to diagnose the status quo of European performing arts distribution.

2. Research Results of Perform Europe - 2021

The main research report of Perform Europe's pilot phase. More comprehensive and data-rich than the Insights report, it focuses on the findings of a three-step Mapping phase conducted from December 2020 to June 2021.

3. Perform Europe First Edition Policy Recommendations - 2022

At the end of the first edition of Perform Europe, June 2022, the consortium sent these policy recommendations to the European Commission. Many of them have been guiding the work of Perform Europe since, and they are potentially relevant to other EU funding programmes, EU member states and the performing arts sector at large.

4. Resources on the Fight Against Climate Change in Performing Arts - 2023

A collection of reports, toolkits, and guides from key European performing arts organisations, covering the theme of climate change.

5. Perform Europe Conversation Starter - 2023

The toolkit is designed to help potential partners meet, reflect, and structure a collaboration before or during proposal development. It can be used by existing partnerships and by organisations who have not yet defined a joint project.

6. Perform Europe Toolbox: Hands-On Tools for Inclusive and Green Touring - 2026

The Perform Europe Toolbox is a collection of practical resources designed to support performing arts practitioners, networks and policymakers looking to rethink international touring in their own context. It brings together tools that were developed, tested and refined during the second edition of Perform Europe. These tools are based on real experiences and lessons learnt from the 42 selected partnerships.

7. The Perform Europe Guidebook - 2026

The Guidebook explores the ambitions that shaped the Perform Europe projects, the challenges they encountered, and the strategies and tools they developed along the way. By connecting these experiences to wider organisational and policy contexts, it highlights how everyday touring practices relate to broader changes in the sector. It invites readers to reflect on their own role in shaping touring models that are slower where needed, fairer where access is limited, and stronger in defending the values that underpin cultural exchange in Europe.

8. Levers for Future Policy Development - 2026

This volume addresses policymakers to explore recent developments, emerging risks, and potential leverage points to better support transformative touring practices in the performing arts.

→ Discover more insights and learnings on Perform Europe's [Learning Platform](#).



Perform Europe's Impact Event, 2022, Photo: © Mathilde Laurent

Towards A Green Cultural Policy

To date, we have not identified a visionary and fully comprehensive approach to greening cultural policy. Instead, the policy landscape (primarily in Europe) is characterised by the following trends:

- The focus is too often placed narrowly on helping the cultural and creative sectors reduce their environmental impact, adopt new measurement tools, and prepare to navigate the consequences of climate change. Although this focus is vital, it is rarely complemented with a profound recognition of the transformation and innovation potential of the arts.
- Requirements to demonstrate green thinking in funding applications and reporting are rarely supported by additional funding. The result is an additional pressure on artists and cultural organisations. This is aggravated further by shrinking budgets and rising expectations to remain visible, competitive, productive, to tour, and to attract large audiences while moving constantly from project to project.
- Environmental sustainability is too often treated as a thematic niche rather than a fundamental principle that can shape artistic aspirations and modes of working in the cultural sector. Specific funds and project grants for 'green art' support environmentally conscious makers, but if the rest of funding structures and modalities remain conventional, such targeted approach will never lead to the integration of sustainability into the core values and practices of the sector.

Specific sustainability funds and programmes, 'green' criteria and guidelines, and various transition and adaptation measures are, in themselves, positive and logical steps toward a greener cultural sector. However, **when these initiatives are not aligned with broader cultural policy objectives or embedded in a holistic strategy, they may unintentionally create top-down expectations rather than fully supporting bottom-up innovation.**

Today, at a time when global political efforts toward greening have lost momentum, and when some long-standing leaders of environmental action, including the EU and several of its member states, are slowing the pace of their green transitions, **there is a risk that cultural sustainability policies may become even more fragmented, piecemeal, or primarily procedural rather than transformative.**

To support genuine green transformation and innovation within the arts, a new cultural policy paradigm is needed. This paradigm must extend beyond the technical task of measuring and reducing the impact of standard cultural activities. It should be guided by a vision of a truly sustainable arts ecosystem, one that is sustainable artistically, socially, environmentally, economically, and humanly. The purpose of such a policy is not only to support the sector in its own green transition, but also to empower the arts to serve as a model for sustainability thinking, something that requires a positive, realistic, and imaginative lens.



IETM Focus Luxembourg, 2023 Photo: © Marion Dessard

A green cultural policy for the 21st century should rest on several core principles:

FIRST, it must politically and practically acknowledge two truths: **art plays a vital role in the green transition by inspiring imagination and hope; but the current working conditions for artists are unsustainable.** Recognising the value of culture must therefore go hand in hand with creating a fair, stable environment that enables the arts to act as a genuine catalyst for green transformation. No new green requirement should be introduced without assessing its economic impact on the sector.

SECOND, **green transformation, inclusivity and improved working conditions must be treated as interconnected priorities.** Sustainability in the arts cannot come at the expense of the sustainability of the arts (Rodrigues, V., & Ventura, A. 2024). Beyond providing adequate resources for greener operations, policy should support fairer and more durable working practices: valuing open-ended processes, shifting from overproduction to thoughtful creation and community engagement, producing less, and extending the lifespan of artistic works. Longer-lived works reduce the pressure of constant output and allow cultural workers to reach broader audiences rather than repeatedly targeting the same small segments of society.

THIRD, **artists' knowledge and perspectives must be embedded in broader government agendas.** At a moment when culture can inform new paradigms of sustainable development, policy-makers should advocate for the arts in high-level strategies on

social, economic, and environmental futures. This requires not only supporting innovative artistic practices but also harvesting and sharing the insights they generate, and involving artists directly in policy discussions and processes.

FOURTH, **cultural policymakers should partner with the arts sector rather than police it.** Climate challenges are collective, and policy-makers must take responsibility as supporters, providing guidance, resources, and space for experimentation instead of shifting pressure onto artists alone. This approach builds reciprocal relationships between funders and practitioners, grounded in a shared mission.

FINALLY, **climate justice must guide all policy.** Since the impacts and responsibilities of the climate crisis are unevenly distributed, climate action must protect the most vulnerable and be rooted in human rights. In international arts collaboration, this means adopting nuanced mobility practices, democratising knowledge, including elevating Indigenous and other marginalised knowledge systems, and fostering solidarity and shared spaces. Art can amplify silenced voices and challenge power structures, and policies should prioritise engagement with disempowered communities and ensure they have real agency in creative processes and narrative-making (J. Baltà Portolés & I. Van de Gejuchte 2023).

Pacific Regional Culture Strategy (PRCS) 2022–2032 of the Pacific Community

The *Pacific Regional Culture Strategy (PRCS) 2022–2032* of the Pacific Community is one of the few global examples of strategically connecting culture and sustainability. This strategy positions culture as a central pillar of sustainable development in the Pacific and emphasises that environmental sustainability cannot be achieved without cultural sustainability. Recognising that Pacific peoples' identities, livelihoods, knowledge systems, and wellbeing are deeply intertwined with land, ocean, and ecological health, the Strategy frames culture as both a foundation for resilience and an active driver of environmental stewardship. It seeks to strengthen cultural systems so they can support communities in navigating climate change, environmental threats, and rapid social and economic transformations.

The PRCS highlights that cultural and natural heritage are inseparable in the Pacific context. Cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, languages, and artistic practices are intimately linked to ecosystems

and natural resources; they shape how communities understand environmental change and how they respond to it. Because of this, safeguarding culture is also a means of safeguarding the environment. The Strategy therefore promotes the revitalisation of cultural knowledge, especially traditional ecological knowledge, as a key asset for climate adaptation, resource management, and sustainable development.

The Strategy also views culture as a catalyst for sustainability, arguing that cultural values, creative expression, and heritage practices strengthen social cohesion, wellbeing, and community resilience. It calls for cultural perspectives to be integrated into national development planning, environmental policy, and climate strategies. This includes applying cultural knowledge in areas such as sustainable tourism, heritage conservation, responsible resource use, and community-based resilience initiatives.

→ Read the [Pacific Regional Culture Strategy](#)

Five elements of a green cultural policy

To date, we have not identified a visionary and fully comprehensive approach to greening cultural policy. Instead, the policy landscape (primarily in Europe) is characterised by the following trends:

Research, including IETM's commissioned publication and knowledge harvested from the Perform Europe trajectory, as well as multiple conversations with the membership undertaken over the past several years, reveal that the greening of the cultural sector is most effective and balanced if the following elements are in place:

1. Systemic approach

It is essential that cultural policy-makers approach the greening of the cultural sector as a strategic and systemic process, closely connected to broader government sustainability policies and aligned with the principles and objectives of the wider cultural agenda. Such a greening strategy must be holistic and comprehensive in its own right, encompassing multiple dimensions, such as greening of funding mechanisms; information provision and guidance; skills development and capacity-building; mitigation and preparedness measures; sustainable infrastructure; measurement tools and evaluation support; channels for an ongoing dialogue and consultation between policy-makers and the cultural sector; and methods for continuous knowledge transfer between the arts field and other sectors. Such a strategy should be developed in a close dialogue with the cultural sector, as well as experts from other relevant policy fields.

The implementation of a green roadmap or agenda for the cultural sector requires a mixed and gradual approach. In contexts where no strategy is in place yet, the process could begin with expert-led workshops and practical information, followed by the development of guidelines, courses, and other capacity-building activities, then the introduction of minimal requirements for organisations and events, and finally the enforcement of binding regulations for recipients of public funding. At the same time, good practices should be explored, innovative and bold initiatives proactively supported, and space provided for experimentation and in-depth engagement with the topics of climate and environment. These processes do not require the entire sector to participate, but collective learning should emerge from these targeted initiatives, and knowledge transfer should be facilitated.

Nordic Green Roadmap for Cultural Institutions (Nordic Council of Ministers)

In 2023, the Nordic Council of Ministers published the Nordic Green Roadmap for Cultural Institutions. This is an evolving tool designed to guide cultural institutions' sustainability efforts over time. It supports organisations of different greening levels in creating their own timelines and pathways for sustainability work, encouraging regular review and updates as progress is made and as new opportunities or challenges arise.

The roadmap outlines key steps toward greener operations and provides a set of practical recommendations for Nordic governments. These recommendations highlight what can be done at governmental level to better support the sector, including dedicated sustainability funding, green building standards, carbon offsetting mechanisms, sustainable procurement policies, education and training programmes, collaboration platforms, policy integration, research and development funding, and public awareness campaigns. A systems-thinking approach underpins these measures, emphasising that sustainability for cultural institutions is not only about ecological action but also about economic resilience, social responsibility, community engagement, accessibility, education, local partnerships, and diversity.

The Roadmap is organised into thematic sections, such as Energy & Water, Materials & Waste, Food & Beverage, Travel & Transport, Carbon Footprint, and Community. Throughout the document, cultural organisations can find actionable steps and practical strategies for advancing sustainability. When implementing these measures, institutions are encouraged to prioritise actions that align with their mission, capacities, and resources, while recognising their role within a broader social and environmental ecosystem. The Roadmap also includes additional resources to support further learning and implementation.

→ Read the [Nordic Green Roadmap for Cultural Institutions](#)

Zero Programme (German Federal Cultural Foundation)

Germany's Zero Programme is an initiative of the German Federal Cultural Foundation that invites cultural institutions from a broad range of disciplines to participate in a coordinated sustainability campaign aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the long term. The programme runs from 2022 to 2027 with a total budget of € 8 million.

The Zero Programme is structured around three interconnected modules. First, the application-based Zero Fund supports cultural institutions in developing climate-neutral production methods and experimenting with new aesthetics that have the smallest possible climate impact. The goal is to finance artistically ambitious projects that are produced in ways consistent with climate protection. The Zero Fund is aimed at cultural institutions and professionals who already engage with environmental sustainability and are eager to further investigate climate-friendly approaches to cultural production.

Second, the Zero Academy provides professional training and qualification for those involved in funded projects. Through joint workshops, a 'convoy process' and ongoing consultancy by experienced experts,

participating organisations can learn from one another, deepen their climate literacy, and develop institutions-specific environmental strategies. The Academy also documents programme results and organises events to make exemplary practices visible at national level, helping to embed climate considerations into everyday cultural management.

Third, regional network meetings bring together local political and administrative stakeholders with cultural organisations, independent artists and civil-society actors to share experience, build partnerships and discuss how culture can strengthen climate protection at the local level.

The Zero Programme builds on the Foundation's wider environmental policy, which has included EMAS ecological management certification since 2012 and a comprehensive climate assessment in 2020 with the goal of achieving climate neutrality by 2030.

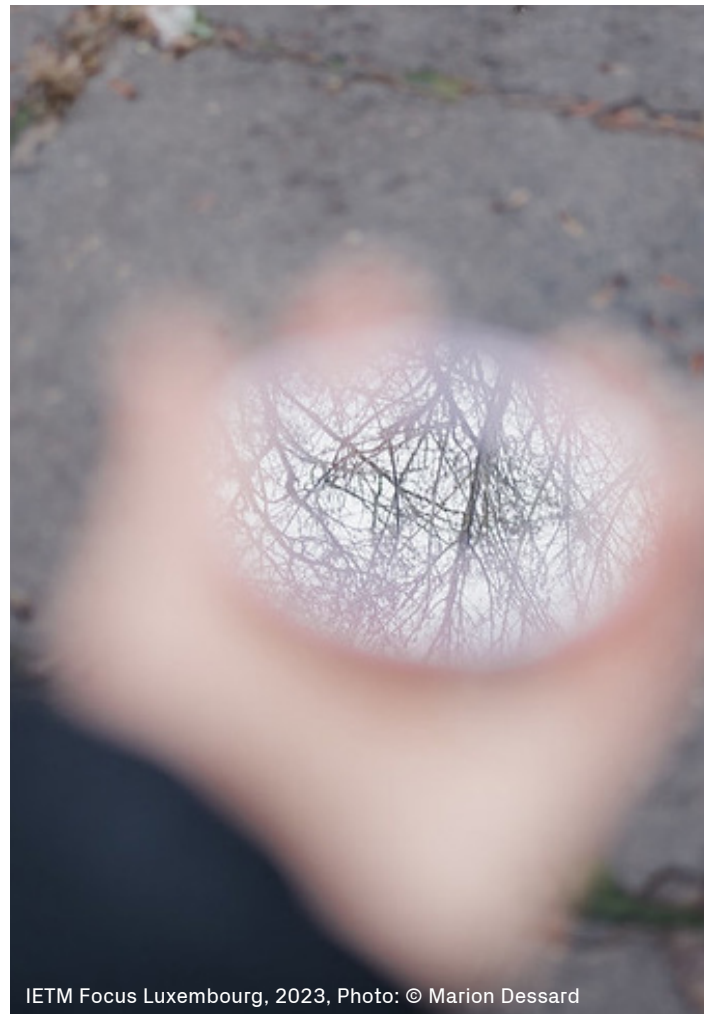
→ Read more about the [Zero Programme](#) and the [Environmental Policy of the German Federal Cultural Foundation](#)

Climate and environmental programme for the cultural sector (Arts and Culture Norway)

Commissioned by the Ministry of Culture and Equality in May 2024, the climate and environmental programme for the cultural sector aims to promote concrete action that accelerates the sector's green transition. Arts and Culture Norway is tasked with sharing knowledge and implementing practical measures, working in close dialogue with key national and international stakeholders.

The environmental themes identified in the Climate and environmental programme for the cultural sector cover both negative footprints such as transport, purchasing and energy, and positive footprints such as dissemination and climate justice. The programme is structured into three strategic focus areas: 1) reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; 2) resource use and circular solutions; 3) adaptation to physical climate risks. Priority measures include: creating an online portal for the green cultural sector; producing new guides and tools for the cultural sector; undertaking courses and a conference programme; introducing environmental requirements for recipients of state funding; establishing an innovation fund for green transition.

→ Read the [Climate and environmental programme for the cultural sector](#)



IETM Focus Luxembourg, 2023, Photo: © Marion Dessard

2. Green funding

2.1. From over-production to sustainable practice

A 'green' funding is not merely about inciting artists and art organisations to reduce their carbon footprint. Instead, a **truly 'green' funding aims to enable the art sector to embed sustainability into the core of its artistic values and aspirations**. This involves adopting a mindful pace of work, allowing time for research and developing meaningful local connections, building communities based on principles of care and resource-sharing, extending the lifespan of artistic work, fostering networks with diverse sectors, and planning for the long term while remaining open to current impulses. Such approaches can help artistic practices to move beyond wasteful methods - in the broadest sense - in production, touring, and audience engagement.

It is essential to shift away from overproduction and continuous project delivery toward valuing reflection and re-centering the process. Art thrives when it has the time and space to contemplate, integrate and resonate socially, experiment, and learn from failures. Creative processes should be flexible, responsive to social needs, and valued over mere outputs. An organisation's relevance should be understood through the lens of the quality of its work and the strength of its community, not by volume of production, number of tours, and tickets sold. Systemic change requires redistributing resources, with increased funding allocated across research, preparation, exploration, alliance-building, training, education, production, mediation, strategy development, and accessibility, beyond merely focusing on a project-based trajectory, promising a final output.

Implementing a basic income for art professionals should become standard, complementing, not replacing, existing structured and project funding. Financial stability or the arts field can be an important catalyst of sustainable thinking and doing: reduced financial pressure might free cognitive resources to consider long-term ecological impacts; freedom from purely economic decisions could allow artists to choose sustainable materials and processes; time for experimentation could facilitate development of eco-friendly methods.

2.2. From trend-driven funding to sustainable artistic practice

Many funding schemes promote specific topics within the arts, encouraging artists to address them in their projects. These topics can include social inclusion, health and wellbeing, peace, youth, environmental sustainability, AI, and more - depending on the current priorities of the whole-of-government agenda. When these priorities shift, artists and organisations often feel compelled to reorient themselves and adopt new thematic directions in order to remain supported. Rapid shifts can erode existing connections and communities, and devalue the time invested in previous research and exploration, which is essential for meaningful and sustainable artistic practice.

It is therefore important to maintain coherence in guiding values and priorities and to move away from incentivising responses to specific themes. Instead, funders should trust the sector to pursue its own lines of inquiry, which in the performing arts are anyway often deeply engaged with urgent social issues and closely connected to global agendas. **What funders can focus on in their programmes, rather than pushing applicants from theme to theme, is supporting and promoting particular methods of collaboration and ways of working** - such as reciprocity, equality, fairness, local engagement, and experimentation.



IETM Sofia Plenary Meeting, 2024, Photo: © Teodora Tsanova Fedya

Funders support the greening of the cultural and creative sectors in various ways. Some establish dedicated funds or programmes for 'green' projects - either initiatives that address environmental themes or projects undertaking specific sustainability processes, such as upgrading energy systems, creating resource-sharing spaces, designing greening policies, or developing footprint calculators. Other funders embed sustainability across their existing schemes by topping up project budgets to enable sustainable travel and materials, introducing specific green criteria for applicants, or requiring sustainability reporting.

A funding strategy that rethinks funding modalities themselves (as outlined in 2.1 and 2.2) while meaningfully **integrating all the approaches above** would be the most effective way to promote a profound, lasting, and future-oriented green transformation within the sector:

- **Green-focused programmes**, including pilot schemes, are essential for experimentation, testing new solutions, advancing in the field, developing tools and platforms, and addressing specific challenges through research and thematic collaboration.
- At the same time, **embedding sustainable thinking and practices into all other funding programmes**, through conditionalities, criteria, and reporting, is crucial for positioning sustainability as a core principle of cultural and artistic work.

These two approaches must be connected, ensuring the transfer of knowledge from experiments and pilots and continuously adapting green requirements and funding instruments accordingly.

When it comes to green conditions, requirements, and criteria, at least three elements are essential:

FIRST, there must be a clear and shared understanding of what 'sustainable practice' means when applied to touring, production, creation, dissemination, and other practices. Information should be gathered and communicated about the carbon footprint of various activities, both physical and digital, and sustainable alternatives should be clearly outlined. Governments can consider adopting guidelines already developed by the cultural and creative sectors, where they exist, or actively support and fund the creation of such resources.

SECOND, funders must ensure a fair and equitable approach for institutions, organisations, and collectives of all sizes, capacities, geographic contexts, financial means, and levels of experience with greening. Depending on the context, open guidelines can be recommended, allowing applicants to explain how they will apply them or whether they already have their own strategy. The principle of climate justice must guide the design of such criteria, acknowledging privilege, inequity, and resource imbalances across the field, and ensuring that green requirements do not worsen existing disadvantages.

FINALLY and crucially, funders must robustly calculate the costs required for organisations and artists to comply with sustainability requirements and factor these additional expenses into programme design. Applicants should, therefore, be explicitly encouraged to include 'green budgets' in their project proposals.

ARF – Climate-fit cultural organisations (Austria)

The 'ARF – Klimafitte Kulturbetriebe' is a funding programme in Austria, backed by €15 million from the EU's Recovery and Resilience Fund. ARF is designed to support cultural organisations in making ecological investments, to reduce their CO₂ emissions and contribute to the environmental and climate targets of the European Green Deal and the Austrian Energy and Climate Plan.

Eligible projects include: upgrading to climate-friendly heating, ventilation, and cooling systems; switching to renewable energy sources; installing energy-efficient lighting; carrying out thermal building renovation; and other measures aimed at reducing carbon emissions. In addition to physical investments, the programme can also support related intangible costs - such as consulting or planning services - up to 10% of the eligible investment costs.

To qualify, an organisation must be based in Austria, use its premises mainly (≥ 80% of the time) for cultural purposes, earn most of its income from arts or cultural activities, and include the planned measures in a sustainability concept. Applicants also need to commission an energy audit, submit a detailed implementation plan (with cost, timeline, and financing), and register their measures in a sustainability strategy.

→ Read more about the [ARF – Klimafitte Kulturbetriebe programme](#).

ARF – Climate-fit cultural organisations (Austria)

In 2025, Kulturanalys Norden, the Nordic knowledge centre for cultural policy, published a policy brief outlining how sustainability is integrated into the cultural policies of Nordic governments. The brief shows that several governments have introduced sustainability-related conditions into their public funding for cultural organisations. For example, Finland requires all state-supported cultural agencies and activities to follow national sustainable development guidelines and the national strategy for achieving the 2030 Agenda. In Norway, the government stipulates that funding provided to cultural authorities, initiatives, and funds must support the development of an innovative, sustainable, and diverse cultural landscape.

In 2023, the government of Åland launched a EUR 230,000 investment programme for cultural and artistic projects, with selection criteria prioritising

alignment with its national Development and Sustainability Agenda. In the same year, Åland allocated EUR 2,107,000 to associations and individual cultural practitioners, with funding decisions influenced by considerations such as sustainability, innovation, gender equality, and accessibility.

Despite these developments, the policy brief notes that none of these funding conditions provide clear information on how such priorities actually shape funding decisions or define the specific requirements applicants must meet to receive government support.

→ Read [Policy Brief ‘Sustainability in Cultural Policy in the Nordic Countries’](#).

WAYS – Towards Fair and Sustainable International Partnerships programme of Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation)

WAYS is a funding programme designed to foster long-term, fair and sustainable artistic collaborations between cultural institutions or independent groups in Germany and partners in non-European regions (notably Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, Oceania, and Central, South, and Southeast Asia). The programme aims to address the complexity of international co-productions and partnerships: beyond joint artistic work, it encourages an open dialogue about expectations, resources, decision-making, and sustainability — including fair distribution of rights and equitable working structures.

WAYS is structured in three funding stages (across two application phases):

- It begins with an Initiation Fund to support research and partner scouting. This stage allows cultural organisations to explore potential collaborators abroad, engage in visits, discussions and workshops, and jointly draft a ‘Roadmap of Collaboration’ to define fair, shared working conditions. One of the [questions](#) guiding the development of this Roadmap is *‘How do you plan to compensate for your CO2 footprint resulting from your collaboration? Where might your partnership leave an environmentally friendly and impactful handprint?’*
- From there, successful initiatives may advance to the **Fellows-at-Large Fund**, which finances two-year fellowships, allowing artists or cultural practitioners

from non-European countries to work in Germany, or vice versa, with their partner institutions. The aim is to develop and test sustainable and equitable cooperation models in practice.

- The most long-term stage is the **Tandem Fund**, supporting four-year transcontinental partnerships that enable co-curated, jointly developed artistic projects and sustained intercultural exchange under shared, fair and sustainable working practices.

The programme covers a broad array of contemporary art fields — from performing arts, visual arts, and music to literature, architecture, cultural history, and interdisciplinary projects.

Complementing the funds themselves, WAYS includes accompanying measures to promote broader visibility and exchange: this includes planned a series of Academies (knowledge-transfer and networking initiatives for funded organisations) and two global ‘World Summits’ scheduled for 2028 and 2030, aimed at reflecting on fair global cultural exchange and sharing lessons learned. In total, for the period 2023–2031 the Federal Cultural Foundation has allocated roughly € 27.59 million to support all parts of the WAYS programme.

→ Read more about the [WAYS programme](#).

3. Capacity-building, guidance and advice

The role of cultural policy-makers in a green transition should not be reduced to demanding creative solutions for complex problems. Instead, their role should be to **foster a supportive environment within which the cultural sector can learn, navigate complexities, overcome moral obstacles and develop the necessary skills and courage to lead positive transformations.**

Embarking on a green transition is not an equally easy task for everyone in the cultural and creative ecosystem. Beyond additional financial resources and motivation, environmental sustainability in practice requires knowledge and a broad range of skills, such as environmental literacy, sustainable production and event management, green mobility and logistics, recycling and circular practices, environmentally responsible archiving and storage, sustainable budgeting, communicating environmental goals, risk assessment, and sustainable leadership, among others.

In the spirit of support and partnership - rather than pressure - governments can play a leading role by promoting lifelong learning, awareness-raising, and practical guidance on green skills within the cultural and creative sectors. Since many cultural organisations cannot afford to hire an in-house environmental officer, and freelance workers have even less access to such support, **it is essential that cultural ministries, arts councils, and other public bodies responsible for cultural policy and funding provide effective assistance for the sector's learning trajectories and the development of practical green skills.** It is also important that governments approach this theme as dynamic and rapidly evolving, staying aware of changing skill gaps and information needs within the cultural sector and addressing them proactively by organising, promoting or funding workshops, training modules and other capacity-building opportunities related to green skills and capacities.

Governments use a range of mechanisms to provide this support. Some agencies appoint environmental officers or create dedicated green teams within their departments. These professionals usually focus on making the ministry's or agency's own operations more sustainable, but their role can also extend to the wider cultural sector. Their responsibilities may include developing cultural sustainability policies; designing environmental programmes, criteria and funding conditions; setting up reporting systems; and organising training, workshops and peer-learning activities on topics such as sustainable production, green mobility, carbon accounting, eco-design and resource management. They may also develop or commission guidelines, toolkits, checklists and online knowledge platforms for cultural organisations and artists, as well as offer tailored advice or coaching to institutions undergoing ecological transition.

Other government agencies work closely with external expert organisations that provide these services to the cultural sector. Such bodies may emerge bottom-up through collaboration among sector stakeholders, or be initiated directly by the government. Their purpose is to offer an effective, centralised, and accessible channel through which cultural practitioners can obtain information, learning platforms, skills development opportunities, tools, guidelines and spaces for dialogue to advance their greening efforts.

Center for Sustainability in Cultural Life (Denmark)

Since 2024, the Danish Ministry of Culture has tasked the Institute for Cultural Analysis with establishing the Center for Sustainability in Cultural Life. This Center supports and coordinates the cultural sector's transition to sustainability, across theatres, museums, design, music, festivals and more, backed by annual government funding (1.5 million DKK for two years) plus additional foundation support. The Center's mission is to map the current state of 'green transition' among cultural organisations throughout Denmark to understand what sustainability measures are being implemented, where there are gaps, and what strategic or methodological recommendations are needed.

To do this, the Center carries out systematic data collection and analysis. One project is the 'Green Survey', which gathers information from cultural institutions about their environmental efforts in operations and artistic production, and documents the types of climate and environmental actions already underway, along with the challenges and needs experienced by the sector.

The Center also serves as a hub for knowledge sharing, professional development, and peer learning: it commissions and publishes case studies, practical guides and toolkits; organises webinars; and fosters collaboration across sub-sectors.

→ Read more about the [Center for Sustainability in Cultural Life](#).

Environmental Programme of Julie’s Bicycle and Arts Council England

Since 2012, Arts Council England (ACE) has partnered with Julie’s Bicycle to deliver a comprehensive Environmental Programme designed to help the arts and culture sector respond to the climate and nature crisis. The programme provides tools, training, resources, and guidance to support cultural organisations in reducing their environmental impact, building resilience, and embedding sustainability into their governance and practice.

The programme is designed for ACE-funded National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) and Investment Principle Organisations (IPSOs), but many of its resources are also freely available to the wider cultural and creative sector.

Key elements of the programme include:

- **Creative Climate Tools:** a freely available set of carbon calculators and sustainability-tracking instruments tailored to the needs of artists and cultural organisations, helping them measure energy use, emissions, resource consumption, and more.
- **A Resource Library** with guides, templates, case studies, reports, toolkits and practical advice on greener production, circular use of materials, sustainable touring, and climate justice.

- Training, capacity-building and leadership programmes, including the **Creative Climate Accelerator (CCA)**—a training and mentoring initiative to equip individuals with the skills to lead climate action projects within their organisations.
- **Transforming Energy:** a strand dedicated to helping building-based cultural organisations decarbonise, improve energy efficiency, and work toward net-zero goals. It offers technical support, energy-management training, and planning for capital investments in energy infrastructure.
- Governance and resilience support, such as the **Board Environmental Champions** programme, which helps board members and leadership embed environmental responsibility in organisational governance.

Through its nearly 15-year partnership with ACE, Julie’s Bicycle’s Environmental Programme has helped hundreds of cultural organisations reduce their carbon footprint, cut energy use, save money, and build capacity for sustainable practice.

→ Read more about the [Environmental Programme](#) of Julie’s Bicycle Arts Council England.

Sustainability support of the Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF)

The Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF) has made sustainability a core priority across the Flemish audiovisual sector. It supports filmmakers, exhibitors, festivals and film schools through tailored guidance, training, research partnerships and practical tools for greener production. Based on sector research and best practices, VAF has developed a methodology for sustainable filmmaking that includes information sessions, guidelines, checklists, an inspiration guide and the European eco-calculator [Eureca](#), an instrument that helps the audiovisual industry to better understand and evaluate the environmental impact of their filming as well as to make their production processes more sustainable. It is a pilot project emerging from the European project Green Screen, financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

From 2023, productions receiving majority production support (excluding podcasts and games) are required to follow a four-step sustainability process.

- First, producers attend an online information session introducing sustainable logistics and the Eureca tool.

- Second, they create a sustainability action plan in Eureca before submitting their technical file.
- Third, during production, they implement and document their sustainable choices, monitoring progress in Eureca; fiction films and series must also calculate their CO₂ impact.
- Finally, at project completion, applicants evaluate the sustainability process in Eureca and submit their environmental impact results, which are reviewed by the VAF sustainability coordinator. The final payment is only released once all steps are completed.

VAF also collaborates closely with Flemish film schools, sharing knowledge with students and benefiting from research conducted by universities and student groups. Studies have explored motivation around sustainability, lifecycle analyses of film productions, and the environmental impact of costumes, set design and material choices.

→ Read more about [VAF’s sustainability programme](#).

4. Data-gathering, assessment and measurement frameworks

For an effective green transition in the cultural and creative sectors, **it is essential to build consistent awareness and understanding** of several key elements: the environmental footprint of different activities across cultural sub-sectors, the effectiveness of the methods used to reduce that footprint, and the scale of progress achieved over time. It is equally important that cultural organisations, regardless of size or type, share **a common understanding of what constitutes a negative or positive environmental impact, how they can work with it and measure it.**

Many governments worldwide are conducting or commissioning studies in this area, and maintain systematic, long-term data collection. In several countries, specific frameworks, methodologies and tools have been developed or piloted to help cultural and creative actors measure their footprint and track their sustainability progress. These efforts must be an integral part of any strategy aimed at making the cultural and creative sectors more sustainable.

Moreover, strong data collection and knowledge production are essential for demonstrating the cultural sector's value as a partner to other policy areas in addressing climate change and contributing to a more sustainable future. This can include integrating learning pathways, research methods and knowledge-sharing processes into projects that support green practices and innovation. For example, instead of relying on standard funding reports, funders can adopt more effective ways of capturing a project's insights and presenting them in formats that are accessible and engaging - not only to the art community, but also to audiences beyond the arts sector.



IETM Focus Luxembourg, 2023, Photo: © Marion Dessard

Sustainable Impact Tool (Switzerland)

The Sustainable Impact Tool, set to launch in 2026, is a free digital platform designed for cultural institutions and creative projects in Switzerland, developed with the support of Pro Helvetia and the Migros Culture Percentage. It enables artists, cultural organisations and project teams to systematically assess both the ecological and social sustainability of their work, whether at the scale of an entire organisation or for individual productions, tours or events.

The platform is built around a series of digital modules that allow users to calculate their CO₂ footprint and, as the tool evolves, to report on additional aspects of social sustainability. It provides a structured system for collecting and analysing information on sustainability efforts, with the flexibility to navigate across different projects and topic areas. Data can be stored continuously, and once input is complete, the tool generates a comprehensive sustainability report.

The first part of the modules focuses on the existence and content of a sustainability strategy or concept, which can either be described directly in the tool or uploaded as a document. For some modules, having such a concept is a prerequisite for receiving full benchmarking scores. The second part involves quantitative and qualitative data collection, based on indicators aligned with international standards such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). The final section allows users to compile a list of measures to reduce environmental impact or strengthen positive developments in social sustainability, with the option to add additional actions as needed.

The environmental modules provide the basis for calculating emissions at project or institutional level. The social sustainability modules, aligned with a holistic reporting approach, will continue to be refined during the pilot phase, running until the end of 2026.

→ Discover the [Sustainable Impact Tool](#).

5. Preparedness, mitigation and adaptation measures

Governments worldwide are increasingly recognising that the cultural sectors face existential threats from climate change. As climate hazards intensify and the need to both resist and adapt grows, **it is essential that mitigation and preparedness strategies are fully embedded within the broader cultural policy framework and aligned with wider governmental sustainability agendas.** Such strategies must address the wide range of risks and crises that can destabilise the sector, with climate- and environment-related challenges forming just one part, alongside economic, health-related, security and other shocks. These strategies can only be effective if they are backed by additional funding, including a force majeure reserve, and by greater flexibility in planning and budget implementation.

While the entire cultural ecosystem is affected by the climate crisis, different creative sectors face specific needs and vulnerabilities, including the performing arts. It is therefore crucial to develop a balanced and equitable approach that reflects these differences, considering, for example, the specific challenges of touring, the weather sensitivity of outdoor events, and the energy-intensive nature of performing arts venues.

Effective measures can include:

- Emergency and continuity funds to help performing arts organisations respond to extreme weather events such as heatwaves, storms, or flooding, especially in the case of festivals and outdoor performances;
- Risk-assessment training to help organisations identify and manage climate-related vulnerabilities and encourage the development of adaptation plans focusing on audience safety, heat and air-quality management, and alternative performance formats when standard operations become unsafe or unviable;
- Dedicated funds to stimulate improvements in performing arts infrastructure, such as insulation upgrades, renewable energy systems, efficient lighting, and water-saving technologies, and to encourage the use of environmentally responsible materials in renovation and new construction projects, in line with general government standards and sustainability goals.

National Endowment for the Arts's 'Disaster Readiness & Recovery for the Arts and Culture Sector' programme (USA)

The NEA has a long-standing commitment to supporting the arts and cultural sector before, during, and after crises, such as natural disasters, security emergencies or other large-scale disruptions.

The programme includes grantmaking for disaster planning, preparedness and mitigation, as well as support for emergency response, recovery efforts, and healing-arts initiatives that contribute to community resilience. For example, recent funding has supported emergency preparedness training for cultural organisations, resilience workshops for artist residencies, and arts-based community recovery projects following disasters.

Beyond direct funding, the NEA participates in national emergency-response networks — including federal heritage and disaster-recovery task

forces and coalitions focused on preparedness and emergency response — to help shape policy, coordinate with government disaster-management agencies, and integrate the arts sector into wider recovery and resilience efforts.

To support readiness and resilience at grassroots and organisational level, the NEA promotes planning tools and resources designed specifically for arts organisations. These include readiness-plans, toolkits for emergency preparedness, and guidelines to help cultural institutions prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.

→ [Read more about the 'Disaster Readiness & Recovery for the Arts and Culture Sector' programme](#)

The Bad Weather Fund of the Performing Arts Fund (the Netherlands)

The Slechtweerdfonds (Bad Weather Fund) is a revolving fund introduced by the Fonds Podiumkunsten (Performing Arts Fund) in 2016 to provide emergency financial support to festival organisations that suffer significant losses due to unforeseen weather conditions.

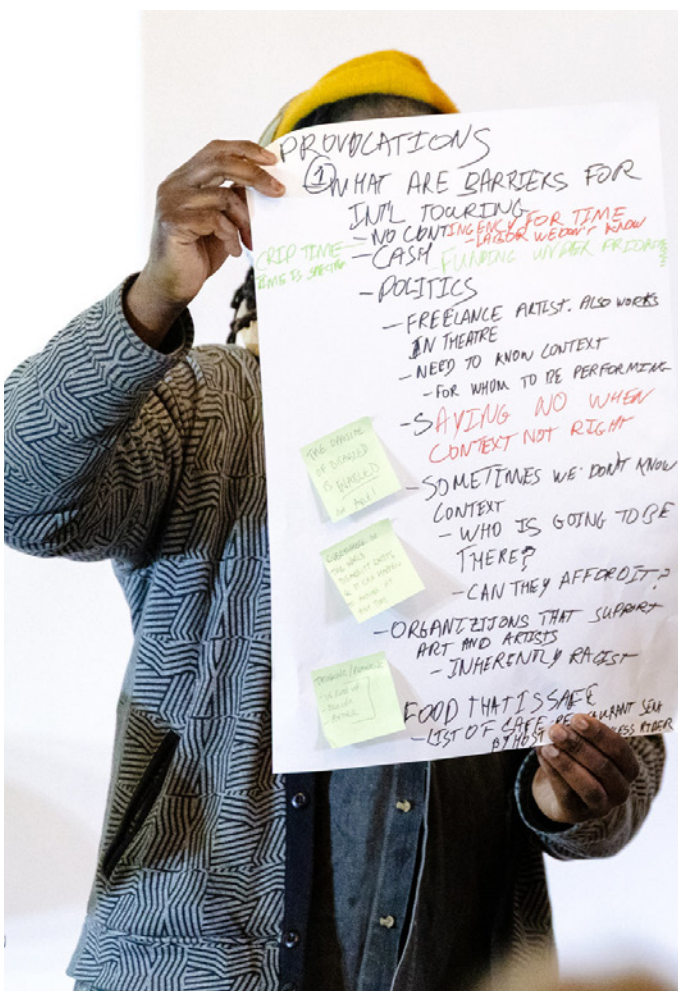
Its main purpose was to ensure that festivals experiencing a shortfall of income, caused by things like low attendance or lost catering revenue, or extra unplanned costs such as renting equipment or extra security, can continue operating. It is designed to safeguard the continuity of festivals when weather-related disruptions threaten their viability, not to relieve them of their overall responsibility.

Eligible applicants are festival organisations that receive multi-year subsidies from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) or one of the national cultural funds. To receive a Bad Weather grant, festivals must demonstrate that their deficit was clearly caused by unforeseen weather, that the deficit threatens their continuity, that the loss is not covered by insurance, and that they have a credible

recovery plan. The fund's initial capital was € 500,000. Because it is a revolving fund, grants are to be repaid by the beneficiary, when financially possible.

The amount requested is evaluated case by case. As a rule of thumb, aid up to 20% of the festival's average annual turnover (and up to €100,000) is considered realistic for repayment; larger requests are assessed on their own merits to ensure repayment is feasible. To apply, a festival must contact the Performing Arts Fund and provide documentation of the financial shortfall's origin, its scale, and a liquidity recovery plan. The board may grant aid even in exceptional cases, even if some formal criteria are not fully met, if doing so serves the fund's objective of preserving festival continuity.

→ Read more about the [Bad Weather Fund](#).



IETM Focus Bradford, 2025, Photo: © Nida Mozuraite



Key elements of a holistic approach to greening the cultural sector

1. Develop a holistic green strategy

- Embed sustainability into cultural policies in alignment with broader government sustainability goals and the wider cultural agenda.
- Include multiple dimensions: green funding, guidance and information, capacity-building, sustainable infrastructure, preparedness and mitigation measures, measurement and evaluation tools, ongoing dialogue with the sector, and knowledge transfer across sectors.
- Develop the strategy collaboratively with cultural actors and relevant policy experts.

2. Implement a gradual roadmap

- Adopt a differentiated approach to various organisations depending on their size, capacity and expertise.
- Promote and organise expert-led workshops, practical information, and guidance; and develop training courses, and capacity-building activities.
- Introduce minimal sustainability requirements for organisations and events, and for some organisations - binding regulations for recipients of public funding - depending on the readiness of the sector to comply with them.
- In parallel, support innovative initiatives and experimentation to facilitate sector-wide learning and progress.

3. Adopt green funding practices

- Shift focus from overproduction to sustainable artistic practices, allowing time for research, community-building, experimentation, and long-term planning.
- Recognise quality, impact, and community relevance over volume of outputs; rebalance the focus from products to processes.
- Fund production and creation, while equally investing in research, preparation, alliance-building, training, education, mediation, strategy development, and accessibility.
- Strive for financial sustainability in the sector: establish a basic income for art professionals alongside structured and project funding.
- Support thematic freedom, focusing on sustainable ways of working - reciprocity, fairness, local engagement, and experimentation - rather than forcing responses to shifting funding trends and topics.
- Embed clear sustainability criteria, reporting obligations, and funding top-ups into existing schemes. Calculate and fund the minimum costs needed to comply with sustainability requirements and encourage 'green budgets' within applications.



IETM Focus Luxembourg, 2023, Photo: © Marion Dessard

4. Strengthen skills and capacity-building

- Promote lifelong learning in green skills, including environmental literacy, sustainable production, green mobility, carbon accounting, recycling, eco-design, sustainable budgeting, and leadership.
- Provide support via in-house green officers, teams, or partnerships with external organisations offering guidance, toolkits, training, and advice.
- Continuously monitor evolving skill gaps and organise targeted workshops, courses, and peer-learning opportunities.

5. Measure, monitor, and share knowledge

- Build sector-wide awareness of the environmental footprint of cultural activities, the effectiveness of reduction strategies, and overall progress.
- Develop shared understanding of negative impacts and effective mitigation strategies.
- Conduct systematic data collection, leveraging frameworks, tools, and methodologies to track sustainability performance.
- Use findings to advocate for the cultural sector as a partner in broader sustainability and climate action policies.

6. Prepare for mitigation and adaptation

- Integrate mitigation and adaptation measures into cultural policy frameworks and ensure alignment with broader governmental sustainability agendas.
- Address the full range of risks that can destabilise the cultural sector, including climate, economic, health-related, security and other shocks.
- Back preparedness strategies with additional funding, including a force-majeure reserve, and allow greater flexibility in planning and budget implementation.
- Recognise the diverse needs of different cultural and creative sectors, and develop sector-specific adaptation and mitigation strategies.

7. Offer risk-assessment and adaptation-planning training

- Establish dedicated funds to upgrade infrastructure and promote sustainable materials in renovation and construction.
- Advocate for the integration of the arts in sustainability agendas
- Partner with and unite the cultural sector in efforts to counter the global backlash against greening policies and movements.
- Continuously promote the value of the arts as leaders and partners in reimagining political and economic paradigms.
- Include artists in political forums and discussions on sustainability.
- Highlight and share the knowledge and solutions developed within the arts sector in broader policy discussions on sustainability.

ANNEX I

Overview of IETM’s activities and resources on environmental sustainability 2022-2026¹

Training programmes

IETM Green School 2023

IETM offered extensive and practical training for members on greening tools and sustainable practices. IETM members dove into various aspects on how to embark on a journey of green transitioning. Together with experts and through peer to peer learning, the participants explored different aspects of green transition. They received practical knowledge on how to use various greening tools, such as environmental calculators, and intangible yet highly relevant knowledge on how to approach climate justice and cultural shift in different contexts. They also learnt how to support sustainable production and creative processes, content and stories.

IETM Green School 2025—2026

After a successful 2023 programme, the IETM Green School 2025—2026 is offering IETM members inspiration on art and activism, artistic disobedience and eco-creativity; dialogue and critical exploration of our art and aesthetics in times of climate crisis, mounting inequalities and climate injustice; tools to empower artists and cultural professionals to take action on the climate and ecological crisis in their communities. The programme consists of sessions led by prominent experts in the field, such as Kumi Naidoo, human rights and environmental justice activist and Tanja Beer, an ecological designer and community artist. In 2026, IETM Green School with Fossil Free Culture NL, hosted by Frida and David Limaverde, will consist of three two-hour workshops unfolding over several weeks.

Events

IETM Aarhus Plenary Meeting 2023

In June, the IETM Aarhus Plenary Meeting 2023 invited participants to discuss and digest the ethical and practical role of the performing arts – and of the artist – in the face of climate emergency. The Meeting presented a programme that aimed to provoke new thoughts and inspire action, awareness and positive impact. Participants dove into existing arts practices, discussed production methods and exchanged artistic strategies that walked the talk.

IETM Focus Luxembourg 2023

This edition of the Focus meeting was the final event in IETM’s first year of environmental transitioning, and brought members and professional guests together for a joint brainstorm. Participants benefited from the targeted programmes and accumulated knowledge gathered by the network through all its activities in 2023 and worked towards formulating network-level and individual eco-commitments.

IETM Sofia Plenary Meeting - 2024

Sensing Earth: Cultural Quests Across a Heated Globe

In his keynote, Pascal Gielen explored the growing tension between cultural mobility and ecological sustainability, highlighting how the arts sector depends on physical exchange while contributing to environmental strain. He framed this dilemma within a broader reflection on the interconnectedness of nature, culture, and human mental well-being, questioning whether current models of international collaboration remain viable.

Sensing Earth Workshop

This workshop encourages practitioners to further reflect on the environmental, organisational and political aspects of their practice, and to explore tangible new ideas for the development of greener, more resilient and ecologically connected performing arts.

IETM Oulu Plenary Meeting 2026

In June 2026, IETM will gather the international performing arts community in Oulu, Finland, to explore change in a city glowing with art, ideas and dialogue as it celebrates its year as European Capital of Culture. Inspired by Oulu 2026’s theme of Cultural Climate Change - which celebrates culture as a force for renewal - we’ll focus on the practical realities of what our cultural ecosystem needs to make that change real: how we create, collaborate and sustain our work.

¹ This list includes only major activities, with dozens of other small-scale initiatives, member conversations, and speaking engagements on the topic taking place throughout this period. Other key sustainability-focused activities of IETM — Perform Europe and SHIFT certification — are covered in previous sections of this report.

Publications

Lost in Transition - Report from the IETM Focus Luxembourg Meeting 2023 Report

The report captures the essence of the Luxembourg Focus discussions and outlines the conclusions reached during the various sessions, which were held in six working groups over two days and were facilitated by seven performing arts professionals. The report gives a first glance into IETM's two fold green vision: that of a green art sector and that of a green cultural policy.

Climate Justice: Through the Creative Lens of the Performing Arts

This research by Jordi Baltà Portolés and Isabelle Van de Gejuchte reflects and explores various aspects of climate justice, offers an overview of current literature and shares examples and practices from different contexts through a worldwide peer to peer consultation. The research drew from the key takeaways and discussions of three regional focus groups which took place across the course of 2023 in Southern Africa, Latin America and Asia.

Governance

Environmental Working Group

IETM Environmental Working Group, bringing together a group of members and coordinated by the Secretariat, aims to work towards a more sustainable and green future of the performing arts, and making the arts sector a leading force in environmental processes.

IETM Environmental Sustainability Policy

IETM's Environmental Sustainability Policy, adopted at the General Assembly in 2023, applies to all staff, freelancers, volunteers and Board members involved with IETM activities. The IETM Green Team is responsible for the implementation of IETM's annual Environmental Sustainability Action Plan. The Green Team consists of a minimum of three Secretariat team members from different departments and one Board member. IETM's Environmental Sustainability Policy focuses on reducing its carbon footprint — especially from travel and events — by limiting physical gatherings, choosing sustainable venues, encouraging greener transport, and improving digital practices. Alongside measuring and lowering emissions over time, the policy also supports members in adopting green practices, promotes inclusive climate action, and advocates for both the role of culture in sustainability and broader systemic change.

