



POLICY PAPER

Successor Programme for Creative Europe

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What role for Creative Europe?

Creative Europe is the only programme of the European Union solely dedicated to supporting cultural and creative sectors (CCSs). The general objectives of the programme are 'to safeguard, develop and promote European cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage' and to 'increase the competitiveness and the economic potential of the cultural and creative sectors, in particular the audio-visual sector'¹. So far, Creative Europe has been an essential driver of innovation within the European CCSs.

As the current programme cycle ends in 2027 and discussions on its successor have begun, it is essential to consider Creative Europe's place and role within both the EU's broader policy context and the European cultural sector. Importantly, it's crucial to reflect on how the programme contributes to promoting and safeguarding Europe's cultural diversity in the face of global shocks and rapid changes.

Together with other European and international cultural networks, we have long advocated for integrating culture into key EU policy areas. On one hand, we celebrate that over 20 EU funding programmes now include culture, and culture is referenced in various strategic documents². On the other hand, the latest research commissioned by the European Parliament reveals that the cross-cutting role of the cultural and creative sectors (CCSs) is still under-recognised, and their 'transformative potential' remains largely untapped in EU strategies³. For instance, major initiatives like the European Green Deal and the strategy to make Europe fit for the digital age do not directly position CCSs as key drivers of transformation. However, as acknowledged by the European Commission, the success of these initiatives depends on a strong contribution from the cultural and creative sectors⁴.

Creative Europe in its turn is tightly oriented towards supporting the EU's key policy areas. Its calls for proposals and annual programmes clearly broadcast the expectation that programme beneficiaries contribute to the EU Green Deal and comply with the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, as well as take on board the priorities of the 2023 European Year of Skills, build on the legacy of the European Year of Youth 2022, and contribute to the EU's international

¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2021 to 2027) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013, art. 3

² European Commission 2021, The CulturEU funding guide, EU Funding Opportunities for the Cultural and Creative Sectors 2021-2027

³ IDEA Consult, imec-SMIT-VUB, KUL-CiTIP, Amann S. and Heinsius J. 2024, Research for CULT Committee – EU culture and creative sectors policy – overview and future perspectives, European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels

⁴ European Commission 2022, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions on the Cultural Dimension of Sustainable Development in EU Actions, p. 2

relations⁵. As featured in the Annual Working programme of Creative Europe 2024, 'the programme will likewise support culture's role in achieving the Commission's priorities, such as health and wellbeing, particularly mental health, thereby also complying with the overarching objectives of the 2030 Agenda/Sustainable Development Goals [...]'⁶.

Thus, Creative Europe is shaped by concrete features of the broader political context, expecting CCSs to contribute to various policies and actions, yet these same policies often fail to offer meaningful political recognition for culture. While recognising that all EU funding instruments are designed to contribute to the EU's overarching strategic framework, and that it is crucial for Creative Europe to support the significant transformations in European societies and economies, we see an imbalance between the limited recognition of the role of CCSs by various policies and the pressure placed upon them to contribute to those.

How does this imbalance impact the fulfilment of the objectives of Creative Europe? As numerous conversations with our membership reveal, instrumentalising the arts without properly recognising their power and agency and providing adequate support to them across various policy fields, limits the space for art to thrive⁷. This stifles cultural diversity, which is not just about the diversity of national cultures that enrich Europe. **The notion of cultural diversity also encompasses the multiplicity of themes, concerns, and approaches. It includes diverse visions, artistic styles, languages, and working models.** The cultural landscape of artists and workers across 40 countries is rich with varied perspectives that must be nurtured and brought forward.

As the EU's primary and only specific programme for culture, Creative Europe must prioritise fostering, developing, and highlighting the diversity within the vibrant and varied cultural fields of the Creative Europe countries. To achieve this, **the programme, while remaining aligned with the EU's policy framework, must welcome and reflect a wide variety of discussions, topics, and concepts, free from overly rigid priorities and content-specific objectives.**

Specifically, the future of Creative Europe should incorporate clear yet inclusive cross-cutting priorities related to how the sectors operate (see our proposal below) without prescribing specific themes or topics. This approach would allow the diverse European cultural and creative sectors from 40 countries to tell their own stories, bring forward unanticipated debates, and address issues and concepts that matter to them both locally and for their cross-border partnerships.

Our proposal is not to remove culture from the EU's strategic goals. On the contrary, the EU should embed culture in its core policies and programmes, harnessing its potential for climate

⁵ Creative Europe Programme (CREA), Call for proposals, European networks of cultural and creative organisations, 2023, p. 7

⁶ European Commission 2023, Amending implementing Decision C(2021) 3563 on the financing of the Creative Europe Programme for 2021-2025 and the adoption of the work programmes for 2021, 2022 and 2023, p. 11

⁷ IETM 2024, Lost in Transition. Report from the IETM Focus Luxembourg Meeting, p. 3.

action, social cohesion, strengthening democracy, fostering rural and urban development, advancing research and innovation, and more. Yet, **the only EU programme dedicated to culture must provide enough space to Europe's cultural diversity, which is a dynamic and evolving concept and which cannot rely on strictly predefined content frames and expectations.**

Cross-cutting priorities

We advocate for an EU programme for culture that prioritises green transition and fair practices within CCSs as cross-cutting objectives. **We see those two areas as intertwined and influencing one another.** To ensure these priorities are implemented effectively and inclusively, it is essential to:

- **acknowledge the vast diversity and significant inequalities within the arts sector across the 40 countries currently participating in Creative Europe.** This includes disparities in access to resources like funding, expertise, and knowledge; varying levels of government support for these specific priorities; differing levels of awareness within the sector; and national factors such as legal frameworks, infrastructure availability, and socio-economic conditions.
- **allocate a substantial additional budget to support the implementation of these priorities, recognising that both green transition and fair practices require considerable financial investment.** A comprehensive analysis followed by a financial plan should be conducted to estimate the necessary costs for Creative Europe to effectively contribute to the green transition of the CCSs and champion fair practices.

Green transition

Scientists continue sending us warnings about the rapidly degrading state of our environment, and the effects of climate change are manifesting itself in a damaging manner, across the entire world, including in Europe⁸. The Climate Change Conference (COP28) hosted by the United Arab Emirates in 2023, assessed the world's progress towards implementing the Paris Agreement and acknowledged that the efforts undertaken globally are insufficient to reach the stated goals⁹. The conference concluded with a commitment to a more radical phasing out of fossil fuel usage by 2050 and increasing financing of global climate action. Even if approaches and

⁸ European Environment Agency, 28 June 2024,

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/topics/in-depth/climate-change-impacts-risks-and-adaptation?activeTab=07e50b68-8bf2-4641-ba6b-eda1afd544be>

⁹ United Nations Climate Change n.d., COP 28: What Was Achieved and What Happens Next? <https://unfccc.int/cop28/5-key-takeaways#:~:text=Having%20shown%20that%20progress%20was.to%20accelerate%20action%20across%20all>

political strategies differ, combating climate change will remain an urgent priority for governments, societies and economies all across the world.

The European Commission priorities for 2024-2029 are still being in progress, yet it is clear that the commitments made as part of the EU's Green Deal will continue shaping the policy focus of the Union. EU's key programmes, such as Erasmus+, COSME or Horizon Europe, are working towards identifying green indicators and methods to measure their programmes' contribution to the Green Deal objectives¹⁰.

The cultural and creative sectors must keep pace with the green transformation of societies. Projects like Perform Europe¹¹, which we have been coordinating with other performing arts networks, and our Creative Europe network project NIPA (the New International in the Performing Arts), have shown a strong interest in climate issues within the performing arts. This interest is reflected in bold experiments with new, sustainable working models, deep explorations of climate topics, and innovative approaches to green transformation coupled with just transition, both within the sector and in broader society. Moreover, cultural and media organisations have been quite active in the development of guidance documents, tools and other resources to inform their members, partners, beneficiaries and other relevant sector stakeholders about good environmental practices on environmental governance, travel, energy, etc.¹²

However, there are several gaps at the policy level that stall the progress in the green transition of CCSs:

- Despite the growing discursive endorsement of the green theme for CCSs, research shows that funding support specifically dedicated to green transformations within CCSs, such as the adoption of environmentally sustainable ways of travelling is still very scarce¹³.
- Several national governments have adopted strategies for the greening of CCSs¹⁴, some of which are supported by specially dedicated funding instruments¹⁵. As mentioned

¹⁰ European Commission 2023, Greening of the Creative Europe programme, p. 16

¹¹ Creative Europe's flagship project, co-led by IETM along with Circostrada, the European Dance Development Network (EDN), the European Festivals Association (EFA), and Pearle*; see more: <https://performeurope.eu/>

¹² European Commission 2023, Greening of the Creative Europe programme, p. 10

¹³ Ellingsworth, J., Persson, B. and Rodrigues, V. (March 2024). Cultural Mobility Yearbook 2024. Brussels: On the Move, available at on-the-move.org/resources, p. 7,

¹⁴ For example, the French Ministry of Culture has developed an 'Orientation and Inspiration Guide' for the ecological transition of culture for the period 2023-2027. See more: Ministry of Culture, France n.d. Themes - Ecological transition, <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/en/Thematic/ecological-transition>

¹⁵ The national government in Austria has introduced the Climate Fit Cultural Enterprises funding programme, which provides incentives for ecological investments in the cultural sector. See more: Ministry of Arts, Culture, Public Service, and Sport, Austria n. d., Arts and Culture - Focus - EU/International - EU Recovery and Resilience Facility - Climate-fit cultural institutions, <https://www.bmkoes.gv.at/kunst-und-kultur/schwerpunkte/eu-international/eu-aufbau-und-resilienzfaezilitaet/klimafitte-kulturbetriebe.html>

above, the sector itself has been active in developing green standards and strategies¹⁶. However, there is still a lack of coherence at the EU level in terms of defining the strategy towards greening of cultural sectors in Europa, let alone clarity on specific criteria defining the 'green practice'.

- Creative Europe is expected to help achieve the Union's goal of allocating 30% of its budget to climate change. The programme recognises this as a priority for the cultural and creative sectors. However, because climate mitigation and environmental protection are not explicitly listed as objectives of the Creative Europe Programme, there are no indicators to track progress¹⁷. There is also no shared framework for determining what makes one project 'greener' than another.
- There is a lack of data on the aggregated impact of CCSs on the environment¹⁸, and insufficient understanding of the diverse issues the various sectors face and their specificities when it comes to the green transition. For example, sectors like digital art are primarily concerned with their carbon footprint in the digital realm, while dance and other performing arts disciplines grapple with the challenge of rethinking cross-border mobility - one of the most polluting activities, yet central to their practice.
- The multiple conversations with our members confirm that the challenges impeding the greening of CCSs include the perpetual survival mode; geographic inequalities; differences between sectors; and the lack of general knowledge and expertise¹⁹. Cultural workers are concerned that funding opportunities do not sufficiently accommodate higher costs related to greening, leaving the burden on the beneficiaries to find ways to finance their projects while aiming at greater sustainability²⁰.

At the same time, **having explored the tremendous potential in the performing arts to test new models of green and inclusive practices, we do believe that Creative Europe can become a laboratory for green and just transition offering solutions for other sectors.** Therefore, for Creative Europe to be a full-fledged contributor to the Green Deal and at the same time support the innovation within the CCSs, we recommend that:

- The successor programme integrates the green transition as a cross-cutting issue and potentially as a guiding requirement. It is crucial that such a requirement is defined in a clear, realistic and inclusive way, mindful of the differences between various strategies

¹⁶ The Eco-Certificate for Networks developed as part of the SHIFT project funded by Erasmus+, is one of the examples of such work conducted at the cross-border level. See more: <https://shift-culture.eu/achieve-environmental-sustainability-in-your-work/shift-eco-guidelines-for-networks/>

¹⁷ European Commission 2023, Greening of the Creative Europe programme, p. 39

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 38

¹⁹ IETM 2024, Lost in Transition. Report from the IETM Focus Luxembourg Meeting

²⁰ European Commission 2023, Greening of the Creative Europe programme, p. 48

and definitions already adopted at the national level, as well as gaps between countries and sectors. Such a requirement must:

- ◆ take on board the vast knowledge and expertise already created within the CCSs, including as part of pan-European projects, such as Perform Europe and SHIFT;
 - ◆ be shaped based on insights of a specially dedicated sector dialogue; analysis of the gaps within CCSs in 40 different countries; and additional research on the scale and nature of the environmental impact of different CCSs;
 - ◆ be guided by the principle of inclusivity and justice, in line with the 'just transition' strategy of the EU's Green Deal and in resonance with the climate justice principle, which implies an equity approach to tackling global inequalities and discriminations while addressing the climate crisis problem. The climate justice principle integrated in Creative Europe should stimulate awareness about existing inequalities within Europe and beyond and foster a solidarity approach within sectors to sharing resources. Moreover, in line with our research findings, the actions promoted as part of the climate justice principle can be:
 - applying principles for mobility contextually and giving mobility priority to those who generally face more obstacles to travel, or who have more challenging contexts at home, and providing top-ups to compensate for the extra costs;
 - developing adequate training programmes on climate change and climate justice locally and globally for arts organisations and performing artists
 - co-designing policy discussion on the topic of arts and climate change with disadvantaged communities²¹.
- The successor programme must reflect the understanding that greening of CCSs is not only about sticking with environmental procedures, certificates and manuals. **Any culture funding programme that is about supporting a green transition, must restrain from pushing the sector into the mode of overproduction and valuing scale and speed of projects.** First of all, transitioning from overproduction and project delivery to reflection and practice is essential. To become a catalyst for change, art requires the necessary time and space to contemplate, integrate itself into the social fabric, experiment and learn from failures. Creative pathways need to be flexible and responsive to social impulses. The emphasis should shift from prioritising results and outputs to

²¹ J. Baltà Portolés, I. Van de Geuchte "Climate Justice - Through the Creative Lens of the Performing Arts", IETM, Brussels, November 2023.

valuing processes. An organisation's significance should be determined by the quality of its work and the strength of the community. Therefore, a Creative Europe programme that fosters sustainability must:

- ◆ value quality over quantity
- ◆ encourage and support slow mobility
- ◆ stimulate an extended life-span of productions and other cultural initiatives
- ◆ allow for flexibility within projects, to be attuned to current developments on the ground

→ It is essential to stress that if there is no additional budget to support the 'green requirement', the sustainability of CCSs themselves, faced with pressures to address climate issues, will be in danger. **The future Creative Europe that is ambitious about driving the green transition within CCSs must be reinforced with additional budget required to support all elements of the green transformation.** This includes supporting the use of sustainable materials, eco-friendly providers, and greener travel options, as well as covering human resource costs linked to 'slow travel', developing greening plans and strategies, creating new storage spaces for recycling sets and costumes, and hiring experts to measure an organisation's carbon footprint, among other needs.

Fair practice

Multiple studies reveal that working conditions in CCSs are highly challenging and precarious²². Despite various policy and legislative efforts across Europe and globally to address these issues, a more profound and ambitious approach is needed. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the topic of working conditions in CCSs has gained significant attention in EU policy discussions. Three key documents from the European Parliament issued between 2020 and 2023 have highlighted the most pressing issues and proposed relevant solutions.

The most recent resolution - adopted by the European Parliament in November 2023²³ - called for designing a legislative directive on decent working conditions in CCSs; enhancing exchange of best practices among Member States; and introducing social conditionality²⁴ of the EU funding for culture.

²² One of the most recent studies undertaken at the EU level is the report by Panteia and Culture Action Europe 'Creative Pulse: A survey on the status and working conditions of artists and CCS professionals in Europe', published in early 2024.

²³ European Parliament 2023, EU framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors, European Parliament

²⁴ In line with the Parliament's proposal, social conditionality would be 'covering among others, the obligation to remunerate CCS professionals fairly for their work, including time devoted to research, rehearsals, preparation and application retroactively, taking in consideration the specificities of the applicants and the CCS as a whole, as well as paying due attention to not disproportionately increasing administrative burdens'.

Early this year, the European Commission sent its response to this Parliament's resolution. Precisely, the Commission responded that it 'takes into account the elements raised in the report regarding social conditionality, while respecting the legal base of the Creative Europe and the Horizon Europe programmes and in particular the provisions of the Financial Regulation'²⁵. While it is clear there is no room for profound changes in the current programmes in this regard, the Commission emphasised that it 'will consider reinforcing the social conditionality in the next cycle of Union programmes'²⁶.

We greatly appreciate this consideration and fully support linking EU funding programmes for culture to social conditionality. **Creative Europe, as a key driver of innovation and progress within Europe's cultural and creative sectors, must lead by example in mainstreaming fair practices and driving real change.** It should inspire other funding programmes at the EU, national, and local levels to follow suit.

According to our research, 'fair pay' is a prominent topic of debate in many European countries, and this debate has intensified since the COVID-19 pandemic. These discussions play a crucial role in raising awareness and breaking long-standing taboos within local art communities. However, practical implementation presents significant challenges. Questions like what constitutes 'fair' pay, how compliance can be monitored and ensured without additional funding, are some of the key issues stalling progress²⁷.

Our research has further revealed that many art councils and ministries of culture across Europe as well as globally, such as those in Austria, England, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and more, mainstream 'fair pay' in the guiding principles of their funding programmes, specifying that their beneficiaries are expected to comply with certain standards of fees paid to people involved in the project. However, **references to fair pay as part of funding strategies and programmes only lead to real change on the ground if they are specific about what 'fair pay' means in terms of rates and calculation modalities, and if they are topped up with additional budgets to bridge the pay gap estimated in the field**²⁸.

Introducing the 'fair pay' principle in a cross-border context, where participants come from countries with varying socio-economic standards and different legislative and collective bargaining frameworks, adds an even greater level of complexity. Perform Europe has been instrumental in promoting and testing fair work practices through cross-border projects in the performing arts sector. However, while Perform Europe has showcased many innovative initiatives, it has also underscored **the urgent need within the European performing arts sector**

²⁵ European Commission 2023, The status and working conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals, European Commission

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ E. Polivtseva, "Fair Pay in the Arts: the Talk of the Town or the Elephant in the Room?", IETM, Brussels, June 2024.

²⁸ Ibid

to establish a common understanding of fair practices, or social conditionality, amidst the complex and diverse landscape of the 40 Creative Europe countries.

The next phase of EU funds will only commence in 2028, but a lot of time is needed to determine how social conditionality can be effectively implemented at the EU level. Establishing unified standards, such as pay rates, or even reaching a more broadly shared understanding of 'fairness,' might prove challenging given the diverse landscape of the EU's 27 member states, let alone at the level of all 40 countries participating in Creative Europe. Therefore, to effectively implement social conditionality through the future EU programme for culture, it is essential to acknowledge and address the complexity of this issue at early stages. Precisely, it is essential to pay attention to the following areas:

- There is a need for clear common definitions and indicators of such notions as fair remuneration and decent working conditions, which could be effectively applied across borders. The European Commission intends 'to map the existing definitions of cultural and creative sector professionals across the Member States with a view to contributing to a common understanding to be reflected in EU policy-making and cultural statistics'²⁹. **We urge the Commission to broaden this ambition by fostering a shared understanding of fair working practices within CCSs. This encompasses understanding what artistic and cultural labour entails, and a shared vision on fair practice contract models, equitable pay policies, fee calculation methodologies, and more.**
- To implement social conditionality³⁰, **Creative Europe has to propose a common guideline for applicants and beneficiaries on how fair practices can be addressed within their project.** In line with our research, we recommend the following:
 - ◆ The conversation on the promotion of fair pay through Creative Europe, should not start with defining the level of fees. It should rather start with developing and mainstreaming a common definition and understanding of artistic labour. This includes reinforcing the perception of an artist as a professional and art as work - among policy-makers, organisations and artists themselves.
 - ◆ It is also crucial to reach a shared understanding of what artistic labour entails: what it takes to plan, research, rehearse, create, produce, and disseminate artistic work. It might not be so much about the amount of the fee but about what is considered as work and thus what hours or days need to be remunerated.

²⁹ European Commission 2023, The status and working conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals, European Commission

³⁰ In line with the Parliament's proposal, social conditionality would be 'covering among others, the obligation to remunerate CCS professionals fairly for their work, including time devoted to research, rehearsals, preparation and application retroactively, taking in consideration the specificities of the applicants and the CCS as a whole, as well as paying due attention to not disproportionately increasing administrative burdens'.

- ◆ It is important to adopt a mindset where all aspects of remuneration are addressed before project initiation. Remuneration fees should be calculated and included in both the budget and project design from the start. Fair treatment issues discussed in advance must go beyond financial compensation to include in-kind support, accommodation, per diem allowances, workspace provisions, local transportation, and broader professional relationships, such as inclusion, power dynamics, and gender equality.
 - ◆ A common guideline for international partners could include standard questions about local conditions, such as national minimum wage, sector-specific rates, cost of living, availability of funds for collaboration, and social security and labour frameworks for artists. Understanding these factors would help partners identify gaps between their situations and guide them in defining appropriate fee rates within the partnership.
- The implementation of social conditionality requires a substantial increase in the Creative Europe programme budgets, clearly allocated to meeting fairer contract conditions rather than merely increasing the number of funded projects.
 - To elevate social conditionality beyond voluntary application, an efficient monitoring system is essential. An effective implementation can also be stimulated through raising awareness about the importance and urgency of fair treatment for cultural workers - across all sectors of the creative ecosystem and at every level of policymaking.

It is essential to stress that even if the financial component is key in the definition of fair practice, Creative Europe should embrace social conditionality in a broader sense, promoting gender equality, ethical work culture, and inclusion of people with disabilities and from underrepresented groups. This means that Creative Europe must:

- Offer access cost top-ups, as advocated by Europe Beyond Access³¹ and embraced by Culture Moves Europe
- Promote the development of anti-harassment protocols and standards, as well as wider inclusion strategies

Therefore, **the groundwork for transitioning the EU's funding programmes for culture towards social conditionality should start promptly, well in advance of the onset of negotiations for the new Multiannual Financial Framework.** These preparatory activities may encompass research initiatives, pilot projects within the EU to assess fair remuneration and innovative social conditionality models, pan-European sectoral dialogues, and awareness-raising initiatives like conferences and workshops. Leveraging existing cross-border initiatives aimed at promoting

³¹ Europe Beyond Access is a 4-year programme designed to internationalise the careers of disabled artists and revolutionise Europe's performing arts scene. Learn more: <https://www.britishcouncil.nl/programmes/arts/europe-beyond-access>

fair practices in transnational contexts, such as Perform Europe, alongside some Creative Europe platforms and projects, can offer valuable insights and guidance during this preparatory phase.

International dimension

The current global landscape is marked by conflicts, uncertainties, and shifting power dynamics. The EU's strategic outlook, under Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, recognises and addresses this reality. Strengthening the EU's role as a global leader and enhancing its international partnerships is a key focus of her agenda³². The European Council envisions the EU playing a bold role in advancing global peace, justice, stability, democracy, human rights, and the Sustainable Development Goals across international forums³³.

To fully leverage the EU's global position and promote international dialogue, culture is essential. Citing Josep Borrell, 'three-quarters of the world's major conflicts have a cultural dimension. Bridging the gap between cultures is urgent and necessary for peace, stability and development'³⁴. The European Commission's communication 'Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations'³⁵ adopted in 2016, marked a significant breakthrough. This document not only recognised culture's contribution to advancing international relations but also adopted a bottom-up, people-to-people approach, moving away from hierarchical and centralised strategies, typically reduced to showcasing national cultures abroad.

The bottom-up approach to international cultural relations is increasingly essential in today's world, where the urgent need to develop relevant, context-specific, and global solutions for promoting planetary sustainability, peace, and societal well-being is more pressing than ever. Many cross-border projects have shown that transnational cultural practitioners play a key role in imagining societal transformation. They act as intermediaries, bridging local ideas with the global stage and facilitating a dynamic exchange between global perspectives and local contexts³⁶.

The approach introduced by the Commission in 2016 is integrated into the guidelines of the Creative Europe programme, which highlights the role of civil society and co-creation in international cultural relations. It promotes 'sustainable partnerships on an equal footing' and encourages beneficiaries not only to increase the number of cultural cooperation activities and projects but also to enhance their visibility and outreach. The projects are expected to build the

³² Ursula von der Leyen 2024, Europe's Choice Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2024-2029, pp. 25-28

³³ European Council 2024, Strategic Agenda 2024-2029, p. 3

³⁴ Goethe Institute n.d., For the Future: Make Cultural Relations Count in a Post-Crisis Global Society, last seen 12 September 2024, <https://www.goethe.de/ins/gb/en/kul/erp/mcc.html>

³⁵ European Commission 2016, Joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council, Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations

³⁶ Nordic Culture Fund, Globus, Dimension 04, Enabling Change Through Transnational Art Practices, <https://globus.nordiskkulturfond.org/dimension/change-through-transnational-art-practices>

capacity of CCSs to 'be (more) active outside the EU borders, within and beyond the Creative Europe participating countries'³⁷.

IETM is one of the few Creative Europe networks with an international membership base: our members are spread across 63 countries worldwide, 38 of which are outside the EU³⁸. In the past few years, we have expanded our international work, inter alia thanks to our flagship programme Global Connect³⁹. Global outreach has been crucial for strengthening our activities, enriching our conversations, and diversifying our perspectives over the past decades. **Today, as the world faces multiple crises, it is vital for European cultural professionals to embrace innovations from other parts of the world, exploring new philosophies and strategies for positive change.** Equally, it is essential for European CCSs to advance justice and equity in global processes and partnerships.

Through the NIPA and Perform Europe⁴⁰ projects, we have detected the following⁴¹:

- Collaborations involving non-EU organisations and professionals are powerful hubs of learning, fostering new ideas, broadening perspectives, and driving innovation in practices. They make conversations - whether on climate change, fairness, or digital technologies - more inclusive, multifaceted, and relevant to global debates, breaking free from an EU-centric perspective.
- Participation in EU projects is highly valuable for professionals based outside the EU, not only for financial sustainability but also for learning, development, and shifting focus toward new advocacy priorities at the local level, such as green funding and practices, fair pay, gender equality, disability issues, inclusion in the arts, and more. Raising awareness and promoting these issues can have a multiplier effect on local civil society.
- There is tremendous interest in the sector to rethink the modus operandi of international collaborations in light of current global challenges, especially the climate crisis. Rather than simply promoting national cultures or relying on fast-paced and unsustainable touring systems, a translocal approach is gaining traction. This approach prioritises the

³⁷ Creative Europe Programme (CREA), Call for proposals, European networks of cultural and creative organisations, 2023, p. 11

³⁸ The countries represented within the membership of IETM are: Afghanistan, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Congo, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Palestine, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States.

³⁹ Please learn more about the programme here: <https://www.ietm.org/en/projects/ietm-global-connect>

⁴⁰ All 40 Creative Europe countries are represented in the selection of the open call of Perform Europe 2, and 13% of the total budget was allocated to projects involving Ukraine.

⁴¹ We will present our complete vision for 'The New International in the Performing Arts' as the final outcome of the NIPA projects by the end of 2024.

(re)connection of professionals with their localities and aims to convey their local narratives within an international conversation.

- Translational collaborations in the arts are still marked by profound inequalities and the lack of structured and continuous financial support. The patchwork nature of public support for international collaborations impacts the sustainability and longevity of global partnerships and collaborations⁴².

Therefore, we believe that the future of Creative Europe should incorporate a strong international component. Precisely, we recommend that:

- Expanding the number of countries participating in Creative Europe becomes a priority. Additional calls for international projects, such as the one for the Western Balkans in 2020, should be organised in a more structured and continuous manner, embracing various regions inclusively.
- The focus should not only be on the number, visibility, and outreach of international projects supported by Creative Europe, as specified in the programme's guidelines, but also on their sustainability, long-term vision, and the depth of their connections with local art scenes and communities.
- The international dimension of Creative Europe should not be constrained by country-specific priorities, allowing organisations to build global relationships based on their artistic and strategic interests, as well as their existing connections.
- The notion of "equal footing" referenced by the current Creative Europe should be embraced in a more concrete, practical, and ambitious way, including:
 - ◆ mainstreaming principles of solidarity and justice within the programme, encouraging participants to share resources and address issues such as mobility, inclusivity, and fair pay based on contextual specificities;
 - ◆ exploring and integrating global diversity in narratives and perspectives on critical issues like climate change, international relations, and inclusivity, and providing space for diverse viewpoints gaining importance in the international cultural space, such as those on decolonisation and indigenous knowledge;
 - ◆ This includes shifting the paradigm of international cultural relations to recognise translocalism, which values deeper connections with and understanding of local realities and communities. This approach supports more sustainable models of

⁴² This resonates with the findings of other organisations, for instance, as captured in the report of the Nordic Culture Fund based on the input of Globus 2023 projects: <https://globus.nordiskulturfond.org/process>

work. Practically, it prioritises the creation of networks, research into context-specific issues, and the connection of artists with local communities across borders, replacing the focus on one-off showcases of national cultures.

Importantly, we do not advocate for making the topics mentioned above thematic priorities for projects in the future programme. Instead, **we recommend that the guidelines be formulated in an open, clear, and inclusive manner, encouraging a diverse range of projects that integrate equity and sustainability in international collaborations to apply, without being constrained by region- or country-specific focus or an EU-centred perspective on global issues.**

Key elements of the programme

The current Culture strand of Creative Europe includes Cooperation projects, Networks, Platforms, and various sector-specific initiatives. We advocate for strengthening these funding streams, inter alia through a more clear delineation of the purpose and rationale of each of them.

The purpose of Cooperation projects

Interactions with our diverse membership and observations of their modus operandi show that Creative Europe cooperation projects have significantly contributed to the growth of numerous initiatives and organisations, as well as thousands of careers in the performing arts in Europe.

The most impactful projects are those focused on creating and exploring new cross-border structures or initiatives - such as topic-specific networks, forums, platforms, and capacity-building programmes - or enhancing existing ones that address specific gaps in the field. Despite the value of these initiatives, there is a lack of structured opportunities to learn from them, replicate them in other contexts or sectors, and scale them up. Effective learning would involve more than just mapping or presenting individual projects; it would require a thorough and synthesised analysis of the lessons learned and issues addressed within these diverse projects.

Therefore, we recommend the following:

- The cooperation projects stream should remain a key component of the future programme to achieve its core purpose: fostering, developing, and showcasing the diversity of issues, models, and concepts within Europe's vibrant and varied cultural fields.
- Instead of narrowing the thematic priorities for projects, the successor programme should welcome a wide range of perspectives and topics. At the same, it should be more specific about the project goals, that should focus on creating or testing something innovative that addresses specific gaps in the cross-border field. It's important to note

that while each project doesn't have to result in something entirely new, it can still serve as a foundational step, pilot phase, experiment, or feasibility analysis.

- The project reporting method should be revamped to focus on extracting key insights and lessons from each project, contributing to a central knowledge bank for Creative Europe initiatives that test new models, set up new initiatives, and develop new structures. This evaluation approach could include interviews and discussions with various stakeholders involved in the project, producing knowledge that is accessible to all. A system that synthesises learning from Creative Europe projects would be more strategically valuable than the detailed reports written by beneficiaries that do not contribute to a common good.
- The cooperation project strand should maintain its three-tier system: small, medium, and large scales. This approach accommodates a broader range of target groups and supports a wider variety of projects, than the previous system of two-type projects (small and large).

The future of Networks

Creative Europe networks play a vital role in advancing and internationalising Europe's cultural and artistic sectors, and serve as a bridge between these sectors and EU institutions. They identify key concerns and needs within the field and convey them to EU policymakers, while also keeping the creative community informed about significant EU developments and providing them with data and arguments for national advocacy. The EU's recognition of the networks' policy and advocacy functions is evident in the latest Creative Europe call for networks, which encouraged applicants to enhance their representation and policy roles further.

For decades, our core mission has been to foster transnational partnerships and champion the value of the performing arts. IETM has consistently provided a platform for the international performing arts community to address pressing issues and develop collaborative solutions. However, with Creative Europe's project funding model replacing the structured support scheme, - aimed to support operational costs, we find ourselves increasingly constrained by rigid pre-planned project-based procedures. This shift challenges our ability to remain agile and responsive, limiting our capacity to address emerging needs, test new models, and provide timely, flexible support to the global performing arts community.

When functioning as 'projects,' networks are less agile in addressing new topics raised by the EU or responding to unforeseen developments. In March 2020, as we had to pivot from our planned activities, both EU institutions and networks adapted quickly. We found a creative rhythm that led to new ideas, innovative research, and collaborative efforts, including securing recovery funding for the cultural sector.

Therefore, we highlight the following points:

- It's time to reconsider networks' project-based funding model and explore the possibility of returning to a structured funding approach.
- The application process for networks - many of which have long demonstrated their significant role in the sector, their EU-added value, and their ability to deliver impactful activities - is overly laborious and competitive. When transitioning to a structured funding approach, the application process should focus on the applicant's ability to represent a specific sector or segment of the cultural ecosystem, address its key emerging issues effectively, and contribute to its development on a transnational scale.
- If it is recognised that European cultural networks' key aims are policy representation, cross-border development, and ongoing support to emerging needs of respective sectors or segments within the CCS, some of the current applicants, which have a different focus, would be better suited for the renewed cooperation project stream. Therefore, it is important that the network application procedure becomes more clear about what kind of entities are sought through the network call.

Sector-specific initiatives

Currently, the EU delivers several initiatives aimed at specific cultural and creative sectors, such as music, performing arts, books and publishing, architecture, cultural heritage, and more⁴³. Some of the sector-specific tools benefit from the Creative Europe budget, others are funded through other funding instruments. There is a great variety in financial sizes, structures, objectives, and activities of these initiatives.

Even if cross-sectoral collaboration is key to the advancements of the cultural and creative ecosystem, sectoral differences and sector-specific needs and challenges are the reality. These sectors apply varied economic models, differ in the employment size, the ways in which they interact with audiences and the extent they rely on public funds. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the various creative sectors in a different way, with some ending up at the bottom of their survival and others increasing turnover. It is, therefore, logical that a public funding programme for culture accommodates tailor-made tools to support specific cultural and creative sectors. It is, thus, also natural for the EU programme dedicated to CCSs to offer sector-specific support instruments. Typically, such instruments are introduced when there is a challenge or a need within a specific sector that cannot be addressed through the existing modalities of Creative Europe, such as cooperation projects, networks or platforms.

⁴³ European Commission n.c., Culture and Creativity - Cultural and Creative sectors, last seen 12 September 2024, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-and-creative-sectors/cultural-and-creative-sectors>

However, observing the landscape of sector-specific initiatives that has been shaped up in the past few years, there is a lack of clarity regarding the principles and rules about the budget division, as well as the choice of the approach taken to support the various sectors through their customised funding mechanisms. There is no doubt that each sector faces specific challenges, many of which were revealed through the commissioned studies, and that the programmes designed to address them - often through bottom-up - are valuable and effective. Yet, it would benefit the the entire cultural ecosystem ecosystem, if the future EU funding for culture:

- Recognises the need for a structural, inclusive and strategic sector-specific approach, in parallel to the core all-encompassing support for CCSs delivered through cooperation projects, platforms and networks
- Supports each sector in line with revisited rules and principles, concerning how the budget is allocated and how the governance model is designed
- Focus on the issues that are truly best addressed at the sector-level and are sector-specific, and continuously revisits which needs emerge across various sectors and thus can be addressed through a joint approach

Budget of Creative Europe

This paper outlines key features of the EU's future cultural programme. It's crucial that we critically assess what has worked and what hasn't, and take bold steps toward creating a programme that is both relevant and ambitious.

We recognise that the current budget for Creative Europe falls short of what is needed. Priorities such as a comprehensive green transition for the cultural and creative sectors, implementing social conditionality, and developing an inclusive sectoral strategy require substantial financial investment.

Moreover, the current size of Creative Europe is inadequate compared to the sector it serves. With over 8 million people in the EU working in art, culture, heritage, and media—contributing 4% to the EU's GDP—its €2.64 billion budget is minimal compared to other EU programmes. For example, Erasmus+ has a budget of €26.2 billion for 2021-2027, and Horizon Europe's budget is €95.5 billion.

Therefore, we urge EU policymakers to significantly increase the budget for the future cultural programme to enhance its impact and support the cultural and creative sectors across the EU.

IETM – International network for contemporary performing arts is one of the oldest and largest international cultural networks, representing the voice of over 500 performing arts organisations and individual professionals working in the contemporary performing arts worldwide. Their mission is to advocate the value of the arts and culture and empower performing arts professionals through access to international connections, knowledge and a dynamic forum for exchange. They also work to stimulate the quality, development and context of the contemporary performing arts, in all their diversity.