Shaping a resilient and inclusive cultural future

content

editorial

Welcome to the 7th edition of the ENCATC Cultural Policy Tracker, where we explore the dynamic intersections of data, equity, diplomacy, and technology in the cultural sector. This edition brings critical insights from ongoing research and policy developments, highlighting how we can harness these forces to shape a more resilient and inclusive cultural future.

The Asia-Europe Cultural Diplomacy Lab, which recently concluded its second edition in Prague, Czech Republic, offers a blueprint for fostering international cultural collaboration. This initiative, designed and implemented by ASEF and supported by ENCATC as a strategic partner, brings together cultural leaders from Asia and Europe to engage in meaningful dialogue and cooperation. The outcomes and recommendations from this Lab, highlight the importance of cultural diplomacy in promoting mutual understanding and addressing global challenges while keeping regional contexts and geopolitical realities in the forefront; and underscore the need for ongoing support and exchange programs that enable cultural practitioners to share best practices and innovate together.

Pivoting the conversation to the untapped potential of data as a critical tool in cultural policy, Valentina Montalto's article, "Cultural Data: Your Ally, Not Your Foe," highlights a paradox: while cultural data is increasingly collected, it often fails to drive actionable insights. She advocates for a shift from mere data collection to strategic data application, enabling cultural entities, especially those in smaller cities, to enhance engagement and drive informed decision-making.

editorial

The issue of equitable compensation in the arts is a long standing one, and once again takes centre stage in the IETM report, "Fair Pay in the Arts: The Talk of the Town or the Elephant in the Room." The author Elena Polivtseva provides insightful recommendations on successful fair pay advocacy as well as the responsibilities of the public funders. Bringing the omnipresent discussions on AI to the fore, the Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO), building on its "Innovation and Integrity: Museums Paving the Way in an AI-driven Society" conference, provides key recommendations to policymakers to ensure that museums can foster innovation while upholding ethical standards.

The very timely article by author Dimitra Kizlari comments on the developments in the major European Institutions, namely the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of the European Union and the European Council in the aftermath of the European elections and analyses the state of cultural policy in the EU and Europe.

As we navigate the evolving cultural landscape, these insights and recommendations provide valuable guidance. By embracing data, advocating for fair compensation, fostering international collaboration, and integrating AI thoughtfully, we can build a more robust and inclusive cultural sector in Europe and beyond. We invite you, our readers, to continue to explore, innovate, and advocate together for the transformative power of culture.

Yours truly,

GiannaLia Cogliandro
ENCATC Secretary General

How Do We Navigate Cultural Diplomacy?

Key Learnings, Challenges and Takeaways
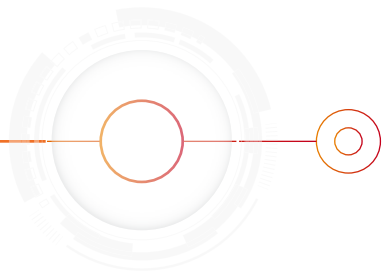
Asia-Europe Foundation, ASEF

What was ASEF LinkUp 2024 about?

Between 10-13 June 2024, 18 participants from the independent arts sector and the government sector across Asia and Europe gathered in Prague, Czech Republic for the second edition of ASEF LinkUp | Asia-Europe Cultural Diplomacy Lab. Organised jointly by ASEF and the Arts and Theatre Institute (ATI), academics, policy officers and cultural practitioners from 15 countries exchanged ideas, shared knowledge and approaches, and engaged in conversations with local professionals on the topic of international cultural cooperation.

Over 4 days, the participants explored and discussed what, why and how artists, cultural professionals and institutions can deepen their international cultural relations practice. Together, they also proposed several areas for improvement that can guide stakeholders involved in cultural diplomacy, and worked towards a set of take-aways that should inspire international cultural cooperation.

Why are cultural relations between Asia and Europe important?

The context of Asia and Europe is a complex one, involving different realities and long-term historical legacies. In today's increasing geopolitical tussle, nurturing international cultural relations between the two regions is vital to create a new, more relevant and resilient form of support for Asia-Europe cultural collaboration.

Underpinning the discussions were insights from recent important events such as the UNESCO MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration, which provided a new momentum for the global policy dialogue on culture for sustainable development. In this context, the participants stressed how the culturally diverse backgrounds of Asia and Europe can offer guidance in addressing global challenges such as **climate change**, **migration**, and **social inequality**.

Format and methodolgy

Over the 4 days, the 18 Lab participants formed a **social learning space** that drew on their diverse backgrounds and experiences, to consider **principles**, **challenges** and **recommendations** for the improvement of international cultural cooperation.

The Social Learning approach used Liberating Structures such as **Impromptu Networking, 1-2-4-All, 25-to-10, to allow the inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives**, as well as **Case Clinics** (following the refined model by Community Engagement Fellows / Travis Tennessen) to allow in-depth engagement into issues related to the collective wisdom and allowing everyone to learn. Supporting the social learning space, the group worked with two facilitators and members of the group took leadership roles such as Agenda Activists, Community Keepers and Social Reporters (as conceived by Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner).

> *Supporting the social learning space,*
> *the group worked with two facilitators and*
> *members of the group took leadership roles."*

The sessions were divided into discussions about the **principles** of cultural diplomacy and international cultural relations (to make visible the sometimes-implicit diverse understandings and assumptions), the **challenges** faced by the cohort of fellows (to learn from each other and find solutions as a group), and possible **recommendations** for the future of international cultural cooperation.

Principles for cultural diplomacy and international cultural relations

The group of 18 cultural professionals and government sector representatives offer the following guiding principles in navigating the complex terrain of Asia-Europe cultural cooperation:

1 Acknowledge that "we are not just working across borders but also across systems"

🔗 **Adopt a holistic approach to cultural relations**

Cultural relations must be viewed within both local and transnational contexts. This dual perspective ensures that cultural projects are inclusive and relevant to diverse communities.

Take into consideration international frameworks (such as the universal protection of nature supported by international conventions established by bodies such as UNESCO) while adapting to the local context.
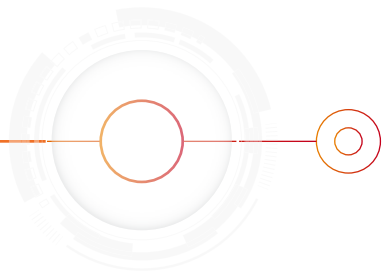
Effective cultural diplomacy requires cooperation across many stakeholders, ranging from the state, government institutions to civil society organisations and individuals to create policies that uphold freedom and cultural integrity.

💬 **Invest in empowering local voices and practices**

Promote **decentralised approaches** that ensure **equity of opportunity and access** to resources for all participants, regardless of geographical, economic, or cultural backgrounds.

Surface, challenge and dismantle colonial legacies and power structures that shape international cultural relations.

2 **"Putting more emphasis on encouraging the phase of preparation of international cultural projects, so that the actors would be able to create common cultural products"**

Commit to relationship building and trust

Invest **time** in building and nurturing meaningful relationships among cultural practitioners, policymakers, and communities (i.e. longer and slower exchanges).

Emphasise the importance of **trust, empathy, and mutual respect** in all interactions. Build and maintain trust within the international cultural community through transparent and accountable processes.

### Encourage a culture of openness and continuous learning

Respect the actual needs, aspirations and voices of all stakeholders involved in cultural projects, ensuring that all perspectives are valued and integrated, where possible.

3 **Recognise that "the result of cultural cooperation should be better than if we did something on our own"**

Prioritise solidarity, co-creation and sustainability

Foster a strong support system among cultural practitioners and organisations to act collectively in times of crisis and beyond. Advocate for sustainable relationships that ensure the long-term impact and viability of cultural cooperation initiatives.
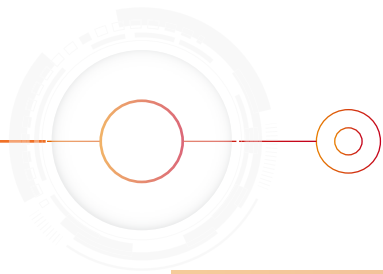
Challenges of international cultural cooperation

Navigating funding inequalities – funders often require equal partnerships in collaborative project applications. This however does not always take into consideration the inequality between regions/countries.
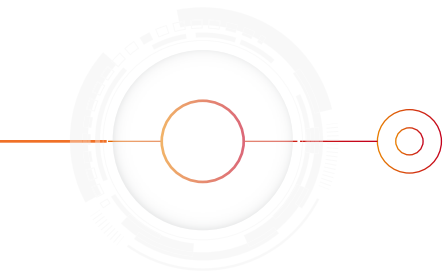
- Balancing the resources and needs of funders with the goals and values of cultural projects to maximise impact.
- Developing mechanisms to measure both the qualitative and quantitative impacts of cultural cooperation in the long term.
- Ensuring there is cultural and artform expertise on the panels and decision makers of funding applications.

Striking a balance between bureaucracy, political turnover, the needs of the community and artistic creativity – where is the ime for artistic research and development and where an we incorporate this into our programmes?

- Reducing bureaucratic barriers that hinder creative processes, particularly for independent artists and small organisations.
- Advocating for policies that allow cultural practitioners to focus more on their creative work.

Supporting bottom-up involvement to ensure diverse perspectives are integrated, whilst facilitating wider cross sector engagement.

- Developing and implementing ethical frameworks that are inclusive, trauma-informed, and sensitive to cultural differences.
- Ensuring that methodologies do not exclude or harm participants and that the language used is respectful and agreed upon by all partners.

Disparities in mobility and accessibility – especially where certain regions have easier access and travel to other regions which opens up opportunities, but this is not the case in the reverse direction.

- Contributing to addressing the imbalances in travel opportunities, to ensure that all regions have a more level playing field in cultural exchanges.
- Creating pathways for professional development that do not rely solely on existing mobility privileges.

Addressing the challenge of high political turnover that resets our efforts in awareness raising advocacy and capacity building towards governments.

- Ensuring continuity in cultural projects despite high political turnover by embedding cultural diplomacy within long-term strategic frameworks.
- Building resilient partnerships that can withstand changes in government and policy.

Measuring the qualitative impact of cultural projects in the long run.

- Aligning project proposals with community needs and government policy aims, ensuring transparency and accountability in funding processes.
- Articulating the value of international cultural relations on the community, policy and societal levels.

"How Can We Advance Cultural Diplomacy?" Innovative Approaches and Collaborative Strategies

1. Strengthen participatory approaches to policymaking

"How do we speak to power and how do we engage cultural actors and artists in framing work as policy directives?"

Co-Creation of Policies:
Encourage cultural practitioners to engage in policymaking, ensuring that policies reflect the needs and experiences of the arts, heritage, cultural and creative sectors.

Regular Dialogue with Policymakers:
Facilitate ongoing interactions between artists, cultural professionals and policymakers, including participation in cultural events to foster mutual understanding. This includes developing spaces for mutual exchanges amongst the government sector, policymakers and civil society.

Integration of Cultural Policy in Education:
Advocate for the inclusion of cultural policy and international cultural relations studies in university curricula, particularly in political science, cultural management and arts programmes.

2. Strengthen multilateral regional cooperation in culture

"Systems are not always set up to support cultural diplomacy."

ASEAN-EU Conference:
Organise a high-level ASEAN-EU conference focused on culture and sustainable development to foster mutual support and collaboration.

Regular Funding:

Investing in long-term support for cultural exchange initiatives like ASEF LinkUp to ensure sustained dialogue and collaboration.

3. Measure and evaluate long-term impact

"Who decides what is culture? Who decides what matters?"

Qualitative and Long-term Evaluation:

Implement methodologies to capture the qualitative impact of cultural projects, considering both short and longterm effects.

Transparency and Accountability:

Ensure transparency in funding processes and maintain a system of checks and balances to uphold independence and accountability.

4. Build Capacity and Networks

"In order to ensure a long-term equitable access and opportunity to cultural actors from all regions and all socio-economic contexts, we strongly recommend policymakers to work with different domains (foreign policy, immigration etc.) and ensure mobility, administrative and bureaucratic support to those particularly from the Global South."

Cross-sectoral Engagement:

Facilitate engagement between the arts, economy, and politics to broaden the impact and support for cultural projects.

Fellowship and Alumni Networks:

The creation of a community among participants to ensure continuity of dialogue, learning, and collaboration beyond a project/activity.

Role of Intermediaries:

Identifying and nurturing intermediaries who can bridge cultural producers and policymakers, facilitating more effective communication and collaboration.

Empathy Training:

Develop tools and training programmes to enhance empathy and understanding among cultural practitioners, policymakers and funders.

5. Address Power Dynamics

"The notion that policymakers and governments hold all the power can be challenged since we as artists and cultural practitioners also hold bargaining power and social power."
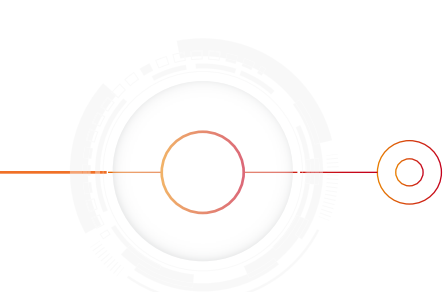
Conclusion

ASEF LinkUp | Asia-Europe Cultural Diplomacy Lab provided a vital platform for exploring the complexities of cultural diplomacy and cooperation between Asia and Europe. Participants emphasised the need for **sustained dialogue, equitable opportunities, and the dismantling of traditional power structures**. By fostering an inclusive and collaborative environment, the Lab contributed signifi cantly to the development of innovative and sustainable approaches to cultural diplomacy. Future eff orts should continue to build on these foundations, advocating for a more just and balanced global cultural landscape.

The complete report can be accessed on ASEF's website.

AUTHOR

ASIA-EUROPE
FOUNDATION

ASEF is an intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation which brings together the peoples of Asia and Europe to address common global challenges by advancing mutual understanding and collaboration between the people of Asia and Europe through opportunities that enable an exchange of ideas; acting as an interface between civil society and ASEM governments and consequently, contributing to the ASEM process by generating unique recommendations for officials' consideration. In the field of culture, ASEF connects arts communities in Asia and Europe through online platforms, virtual residencies, arts festivals and bi-regional dialogue. It promotes cultural relations by connecting artists, cultural professionals, arts organisations, public institutions, networks and museums in Asia and Europe and responds to current gaps in cultural cooperation between Asia and Europe by providing access to information, enabling building of capacity, facilitating dialogue and knowledge sharing and promoting artistic diversity.

Fair Pay in the Arts: The talk of the town or the elephant in the room?

Elena Polivtseva

Introduction

Navigating the realm of artists' working conditions is like exploring a colourful mosaic of concerns. From socialsecurity to labour relations, taxation, and artistic freedom, the landscape is complex and varied. While some issues fall under cultural ministries, others are managed by other government departments. In this intricate picture, cultural institutions, unions, and artists themselves all play vital roles. Finally, the perception of artists' labour by the general public is also a massive factor in shaping policies and allocating budgets.

Fair remuneration is an issue that intricately involves all of the aforementioned stakeholders. When legal frameworks are ineffective or non-existent, it depends on everyone's stance and commitment. Collective bargaining can be a significant tool in the arts sector to regulate remuneration, reducing the number of low-paid workers. However, some countries lack comprehensive union practices, leaving certain sectors or types of workers, for instance freelancers, outside their scope or reliant on recommended minimum fees. In many places in the world, the lack of clarity, transparency, and shared understanding around remuneration in the arts continues to foster exploitative practices and undermine the sustainability of artists' livelihoods and careers.
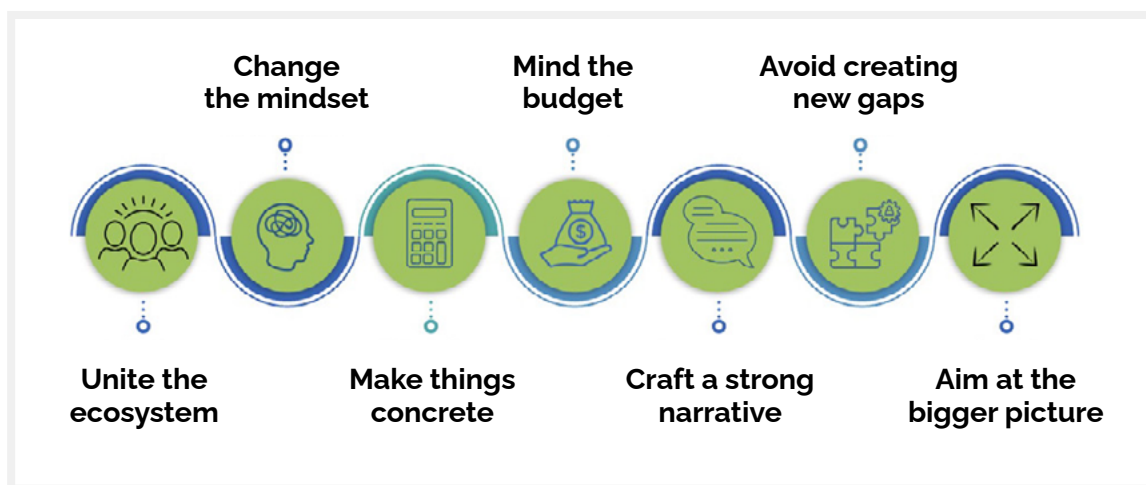
The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have made this debate unavoidable. Over 10 million cultural jobs have vanished, revealing and intensifying fragilities within the cultural sector[1].

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[1] UNESCO 2022, p. 44

Despite the implementation of numerous new policies and frameworks aimed at improving the situation, studies worldwide continue to identify structural deficiencies within the cultural ecosystem[2]. There is a need for concrete and ambitious actions that surpass mere declarations and partial measures.

Through the publication "Fair Pay in the Arts", IETM, Brussels, June 2024, author Elena Polivtseva, aims to extract insights into the various roles that public funders, artists, unions, resource organisations, and institutions, can undertake in promoting and enacting fair pay practices. In particular, two sets of recommendations are detailed in the article below, including Seven Elements for Successful Fair Pay Advocacy, and Six Tasks for the Public Funder.

Seven Elements for Successful Fair Pay Advocacy

Change the mindset   **Mind the budget**   **Avoid creating new gaps**

Unite the ecosystem   **Make things concrete**   **Craft a strong narrative**   **Aim at the bigger picture**

1. Unite the ecosystem

It is crucial to develop a robust and interconnected art ecosystem with shared understanding of current issues and envisioned solutions. To put it simply:

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[2] Examples include UNESCO's report on the implementation of the 1980 Recommendation on the Status of the Artist (2023), the EU Report on Working Conditions, the ILO paper on the African cultural and creative economy, and many national studies, such as the 'Good work review' by the Creative PEC (UK), report 'Profile of Creative Professionals New Zealand' by Creative New Zealand, Arts and Culture Barometer by the Arts and Culture Promotion Finland, and many more.
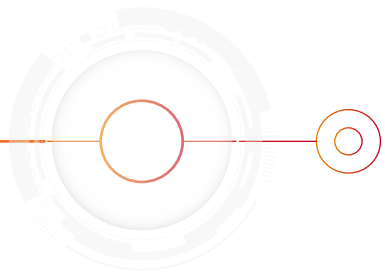
an agreement must be reached that people in the arts sector deserve better pay. We must strive for all artists being represented through unions and other sector organisations equipped with advocacy tools and access to media and acknowledge that individual responsibility of every worker is also crucial. Comprehensive change can only occur if artists boldly adopt new practices, cultivate shared awareness, and extend it throughout the entire arts ecosystem, including those parts which stand outside of collective bargaining and public funding.

2. Change the mindset

In contexts where fair remuneration is not enforced, the arts sector needs to be on the same page to overcome the multiple resistance points. There are several levels at which the sector should change its own mindset: understanding of what art labour is composed of; shifting the indicators of 'success' from overproduction towards care for people; and accepting to scale down production and output in case there is not enough money to remunerate everyone fairly. Awareness-building is not only about shifting artists' expectations regarding the amount of fees and their readiness to reject poor offers. It is also about instilling new methods of planning and designing the project from the start, as well as changing production cycles entirely, sharing resources, adopting new organisational models, and more.

3. Make things concrete

To implement positive change, it is essential to understand the terrain of action and the scale of the problems we are trying to solve. One of the crucial starting points of the fair pay processes and debates should be figuring out the current 'fairness gap'. It is necessary to map out the sources of income in the arts, investigate the type of contracts used - with a particular attention to payment models; contract types; and the amounts paid compared to the recommended rates if such exist. It is then useful to define the official level of fair pay and calculate whether the current annual spending on fees and salaries matches this level. Should there be a shortfall, the advocacy objective must be to bridge this financial gap. Importantly, the minimum rate should not be promoted as final, and progressing from the minimum level should be encouraged.

4. Mind the budget

It's widely understood that fair pay and available budgets are intrinsically interconnected. However, it's not a widespread truth that one shouldn't request more money without the intention to ensure fair pay, and one shouldn't advocate for fair pay without requesting more money. It is crucial to promote budget increase as an essential foundation and condition for changing pay practices in the sector. Those are also related to mentalities and habits within the artcommunity, and change should be happening regardless of fluctuations in public funds for the arts. Yet it is essential to be vocal and clear about the fact that rising fees require sustainable budgets. The sector must be particularly vigilant regarding the government's promotion of fair pay that is not accompanied by increased budgets or changes in output expectations.

5. Craft a strong narrative

Advocacy for artists should not alienate them as a special category which deserves special attention. This can generate backlash among the wider public and further undermine the professional image of artists. On the question of 'why fair pay' the answer should rather be directed to workers' rights, rather than the features of the art sector that make it different or special. The focus should be placed on bridging the gap between artists and other workers - in terms of their access to social security, level of remuneration, and acceptance of their activities as labour. It is precisely those protection, remuneration and perception gaps that differs the arts from other sectors.

6. Avoid creating new gaps

The focus should be on spreading fair pay policies evenly across the entire country. While the feasibility of establishing a nationwide remuneration policy varies by country, initiating discussions across all regions and actively bridging territorial awareness gaps is essential. Hosting country-wide debates on the topic can serve as a productive starting point. Additionally, advocating for agreements, strategies, and visions that apply nationally, even if not legally binding, can play a significant role. Increasing awareness among artists in different regions and encouraging them to adopt successful practices from elsewhere is crucial.
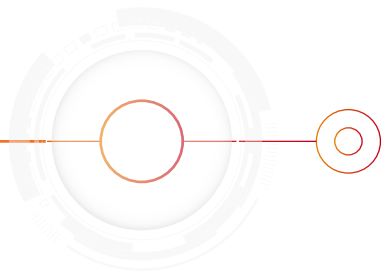
7. Aim at the bigger picture

While many in the sector would say they do not have the capacity to engage in advocacy and politics, it is yet important to assess how their preferred fair pay reality fits within the current political, social and economic landscape. This is equally about various other conditions which prevail; such as the lack of healthcare and childcare, housing and cost-of-living crisis, as well as the overall socio-political system - including the values, priorities, and discourse it broadcasts and embodies in policies. It can be beneficial to work with other sectors to try to influence political and economic paradigms, while proposing and 'rehearsing' solutions for a better future.

Six tasks for the public funder

Make fairness a criteria

Offer vision and leadership

Allocate a sustainable budget

Rethink rules of the game

Raise awareness

Bring the sector and serouces together

1. Make fairness a criteria

It is crucial for public funders to play a role in promoting fairness in the arts by broadcasting fair pay principles through their funding programmes. This can involve establishing fair pay as a criterion for funding applications or embedding a recommendation to pay employees and freelance contractors in line with certain

standards. By asking applicants to provide a much more detailed budget which demonstrates how fair remuneration will be ensured throughout the entire project, funders stimulate essential conversations and change in approaches to project planning. Such exercise leads to shifts in mindsets and operations.

2. Allocate a sustainable budget

One of the vital nuances related to funders' role in promoting fair pay actions and directly impacting their implementation is availability of finances. Introducing fair pay recommendations or criteria in funding programmes must be accompanied by additional budgets specifically dedicated to increasing workforce fees up to recommended levels. When budgets are not increased but organisations are asked to produce as much as usual while paying artists higher fees, this recommendation is either ignored or implemented in an unsustainable way. It is also important that there is an understanding that raising of funding for fees should not be an ad hoc action, but part of a long-term strategy.

3. Raise awareness

The structured effect of funders' fairness initiatives on the arts ecosystem as a whole depends on how large the portion of the sector they financially support is. In countries where the cultural sector relies heavily on public resources, funders naturally have a greater impact on promoting fair practices. In places where a substantial part of the sector is not supported by the government, the role of public funders can also be significant - championing transparency around working practices, boosting overall awareness, and helping the sector to reach a shared understanding.

4. Bring the sector and resources together

Art funders can play a part in bringing the sector's resources together, centralising and disseminating the information artists need to access to get equipped with knowledge and tools. They can stimulate exchange of best

practices among various sectors, and identify the gaps in the ecosystem. The intention should be to bring all standards, rules, and models together, compile the information and practical tools that exist and build a channel for the sector to access this knowledge and make use of it.

5. Rethink rules of the game

Funders should look into their current funding practices and reflect on what must be changed to eliminate practices that aggravate working conditions in the arts sector. These could be over complicated application process and reporting methodologies, schemes that generate high competitions and are not rewarding enough compared to the amount of work required to apply for them; short-term project grants, and more. Funders' priority should be to empower key organisations to more strategically support artists instead of investing their time and energy into fundraising and reporting. Furthermore, treating people fairly should be prioritised over producing more art. Funders should prompt and support adopting slow programming and touring models, and withdrawing from overproduction marathons.

6. Offer vision and leadership

While art communities should be the drivers of designing practised codes and fair pay policies', it is essential that policy-makers help them resolve the many dilemmas that exist in this space and move forward. Some challenging decisions need to be taken, as government agencies can make things concrete and provide the sector with strategic vision that would help answer puzzling questions. This needs to be the leadership underpinned by the sector, and not a top-down relationship.

The complete publication can be accessed on IETM's website

https://www.ietm.org/en/resources/reports/fair-pay-in-the-arts-the-talk-of-the-town-or-the-elephant-in-the-room

AUTHOR

Elena Polivtseva is an independent researcher and a passionate culture advocate. She worked as a Senior Researcher at IFACCA (International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies) and a Head of Policy and Research at IETM (International network for contemporary performing arts). Elena authored several publications on cultural policies and funding strategies, and artists' working conditions. She was one of the co-initiators and a project manager of Perform Europe, a Board member at Culture Action Europe, and a Consultant at UNESCO. Believing in the power of knowledge-driven advocacy, she is dedicated to ensuring that insights from the cultural field inform and shape effective policies.
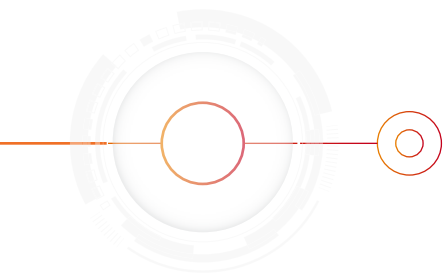
Cultural Data: Your Ally, not Your Foe

Valentina Montalto

Cultural Data: Much Ado about Nothing?

I recently came across this statement: 'Yes, our city produces yearly reports but they contain very simple data… no one takes it seriously and there is no appreciation for data-driven decisions. We are used to looking for data that confirm rather than challenge our thoughts'.

This reflects a major paradox we live in - with cultural data becoming a source of contemplation, not of transformation[1]. A paradox that has been very well depicted by a recent project on evidence-based policies carried out by the World Cities of Culture network:

"Recent decades have seen a burgeoning in the generation of cultural statistics, economic impact assessments and mapping studies, along with huge advances in measurement and research techniques. At the national and city government level, this has boosted awareness of the sector and resulted in an increase in cultural investment across the world. But beyond advocacy, the practice of using data in cultural planning is less rich and building the evidence-base can be challenging. On a day-to-day basis, the data required to inform key questions are often more granular and detailed than what is typically captured in the main measurement systems."

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[1] Maria Lusiani, Fabrizio Panozzo, Andrea Santini, "L'osservatorio regionale delle arti performative per la Regione Veneto. Una proposta fondata sulla ricerca", in *Economia della Cultura*, 2023, n. 1. https://www.economiadellacultura.it/anno-xxxiii-2023-n-1/
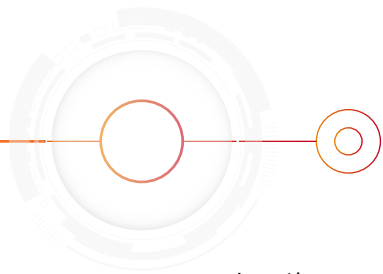
In other words, while more and more culture-related data are being collected, they are most of the time not followed by action that makes culture more relevant or better performing in terms of impacts. At the same time, very specific and granular data, that may answer very precise policy questions, are rarely collected. In other sectors, not to mention private companies, no one would think of collecting data just for the sake of it.

Your Ally, Not your Foe: A Necessary Mind-Shift

Whether it is to understand spatial inequalities, promote access and engage-ment or assess economic impacts, there is a tremendous need to unlock existing data sources and build new research partnerships so as to support strategic cultural planning.

Big cities are of course finding their way, testing new data and methodologies to put cultural data "at work". But smaller ones, who are more and more confronted with the need of measuring and monitoring their cultural ecosystem (just think of the monitoring requirements set up by the European Capital of Culture action), often do not even know where to start. 'Top-down' indicators are often much irrelevant to the local context, but proposing valid alternatives is far from being a trivial exercise. In the end, cities collect strictly what they are requested to collect. Otherwise, they simply avoid applying any sort of measurement and evaluation exercise.

Why is it so?

- Maths is rarely one's cup of tea (not to talk about statistics)
- There is an increasingly generalised lack of trust in numbers
- The data that you get are rarely what you expect
- The indicators that you have is not what you want to measure but you cannot afford more
- You need more than just economic indicators but you have no clue on where to start from
- You are overwhelmed by your daily business - no time / money for it
- You do not know where to find the right competent people
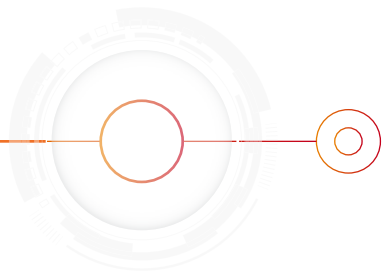
**Why should people dealing with culture care about data then?**

- Believe it or not, you will be asked to do so, to prove how accountable or impactful you are and you won't probably like what you are asked to produce
- Establishing your own indicators will help show what is valuable to you and guide your policies.
- Data may help understand how to conquer all those people that otherwise someone else will capture - YouTube has done what a museum has not done in decades in terms of culture democratisation

Use data as an ally - to understand, bring change and improve.

An Open Space for Reflection and Guidance

This space is mainly designed for actors operating in the field of culture - from cities to cultural organisations to funding bodies at all levels - that are faced with the need to measure and analyse data – either on their initiative or because they are asked to do so in the framework of bigger initiatives they are involved in - but lack the capacity and resources to do it.

In this space, we want to break down this problem into small and manageable pieces, so that even smaller entities can have some reference points to start with when confronted with culture-related measurement goals. Most importantly, the objective is to provide inspirational thoughts, expert views, guides and case studies (also from other sectors) that can help put data 'at use' beyond 'mere' advocacy purposes. Understanding how culture is distributed and accessed in a city, as a basis for improvement, may prove to be much more rewarding than simply showing how culturally vibrant a city is. We also want to warn cities and public officials against traditionally used advocacy indicators – either because ill-designed, badly analysed or wrongly communicated – as more often than one would think they actually bring no value or support to the cultural cause.
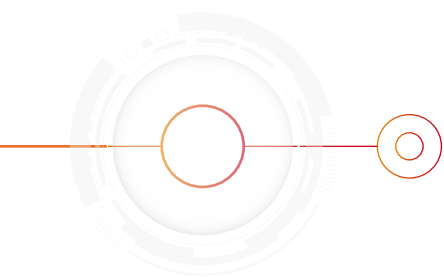
The Eight Common Mistakes You Want To Avoid

#1: Missing the 'why' you want to measure

#2: Assuming that available data will never fit the purpose

#3: Approaching (big) data as the solution, not as a mean

#4: Considering data as a source of 'absolute truth' (or total fiction)

#5: Reading indicators in 'silos' or the 'contextualisation failure'

#6: Using 'imposed' metrics

#7: Not linking measurement to action

#8: Look for the "big" numbers, whatever it takes

#1: Missing the 'why' you want to measure

It is very common to start a discussion about culture measurement without addressing one fundamental question: why do I want to measure? Only then we can start addressing the what and the how. To put it (very) simple, if the objective is understanding (ie. culture in your city), setting up a descriptive baseline could suffice. If the objective is to improve people's engagement with culture, people's behavioral habits and preferences are going to be needed. Instead, if you want to assess impact, then multiple dimensions (cultural, social, economic, environmental) and data sources certainly need to be mobilised.

#2: Assuming that available data will never fit the purpose

Data collection is costly. Therefore, using what is available is often the most immediate and available option you have. However, available data are often very poor and simply do not fit the purpose. There are several ways through which this dilemma could be faced, without necessarily engaging into new data collection processes. For instance, you may want to read across available data, which are not necessarily culture-related. As an example, if you want to understand whether culture contributes to happiness or life satisfaction in your city, looking simultaneously (and with appropriate statistical techniques) at the cultural offer data and life satisfaction data (when available) could do the trick. Or, you may want to engage your community for the interpretation of available data.

#3: Approaching (big) data as the solution, not as a mean

I have often been asked: how do you think the world of culture can make the most of big data or artificial intelligence? I would approach this topic from the opposite perspective: how can big data or AI support cities address old and new challenges? In order words, how can we make the most of what is out there to revamp cultural organisations, cities and policies? Making them more effective and cost-efficient, for instance. Such an approach is certainly very obvious for major corporations, but it is not for small organisations that simply have no time to think strategically. The world of culture has a range of unsolved issues - from spatial inequality to audience engagement - that (big) data and AI can help address, adding new perspectives, if we start with considering data and technology as a means and not as a solution per se.

#4: Considering data as a source of 'absolute truth' (or total fiction)

People looking at data may be artificially divided in two main categories: those that would never trust them and those who believe data are the truth. Of course, none of these two opposing views is really helpful. The 'truth' stays in the middle. Take data for what they are: 'just' numbers that tell us something, often a 'tiny something', of the immense reality we are immersed in. Their major power does not lie in unveiling an untold truth (although it may happen), but rather in engaging people in a discussion. Data are 'just' numbers, but with a great engagement potential.

#5: Reading indicators in 'silos' or the 'contextualisation failure'

A common error in interpreting cultural data is the tendency to view indicators in isolation, often overlooking the broader context. For instance, declaring "Public budget is the most important indicator for culture" or assuming that a surge in museum visitors indicates the success of free entrance policies oversimplifies the evaluation process. To enhance our understanding of cultural policies, it is essential to move beyond single indicators and adopt a more nuanced, contextualised approach. Reference points, such as averages or time trends, can provide valuable insights into how cultural support evolves over time. This approach allows us to discern whether increased cultural engagement signifies the adoption of new behaviours or merely reflects a temporary impact of recent policy changes. Of course, obtaining
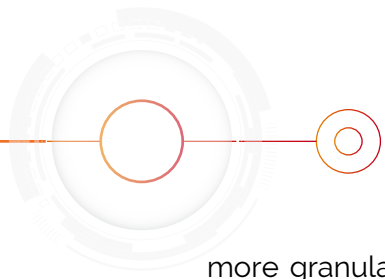
more granular data becomes imperative in deciphering the underlying dynamics. For instance, an uptick in visitor numbers may warrant investigation into whether it signifies a broadening and diversification of the audience or is merely a result of repeated visits by the same 'old folks'.

#6: Using 'imposed' metrics

Just because you deal with culture measurement, it does not mean that the same performance measures can be applied all over the place or across very different sectors. The starting point is to understand culture in YOUR city. By asking people what they consider culture, you will be able to identify what can be compared and what is unique to you, which attributes matter the most to people and what needs to be improved to retain specific groups of people or improve their satisfaction with the city, for instance. When it come to comparing economic sectors, culture may look less competitive if we use standard measures not only because the value of culture lies (also) somewhere else but also for very technical reasons (ie. the informal economy plays a huge role). Metrics adaptation and, most importantly, results' contextualisation is crucial to make sense of available data.

#7: Not linking measurement to action

Numbers alone are not sufficient to change people's minds, perceptions and actions (think of the discrepancy between numbers of immigrants and perceived numbers of immigrants), certainly not in the short term. Our actions often follow sentiment or intuition. The old view according to which human beings make entirely rational choices is a story of the past. Yet, having data upon which politicians can act and people debate is extremely important as it can help integrate new voices and perspectives in public policies, as a basis for long term changes in our actions.

#8: Look for the "big" numbers, whatever it takes

Certainly, politicians often seek impressive figures, which is why the (misleading) visitor number indicator remains the most commonly collected and utilized metric in political and communication campaigns. However, the efforts of a small organization dedicated to working with marginalized communities cannot reasonably be compared to those of the Louvre, which primarily caters to tourists. While a tourist may contribute significantly to the economic prosperity of Paris, their visit
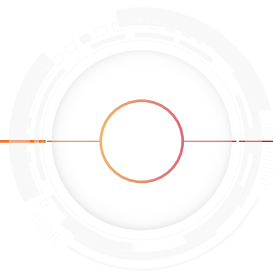
may yield limited cultural benefits for the local community. Conversely, the integration of individuals from marginalized backgrounds may not result in an immediate and substantial economic impact. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize that the integration of these individuals is imperative for addressing the growing social discontent. Acquiring storytelling skills is just as vital as gathering reliable data, as it enables us to convey the nuanced impact of cultural initiatives beyond mere numerical metrics.

AUTHOR

Valentina Montalto counting on a 15-year experience in international working environments, Valentina Montalto has just joined KEDGE Business School in Paris as Associate Professor of Cultural Economics & Policies. From 2016 to April 2022, she led the 'Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor' project at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. Before that, she was a CCS project manager at the Brussels-based policy design firm, KEA. Firmly believing in the operational value of data and research, she has consistently worked to build bridges between academia, cultural enterprises, and policy-making.

Recommendations from the conference "Innovation and Integrity: Museums paving the way in an AI-driven society"

Hosted by the Network of European Museum Organisations and partners FARO, ICOM Wallonie-Brussels, ICOM Flanders and the House of European History.

Network of European Museum Organisations, NEMO

At the international conference "Innovation and Integrity: Museums paving the way in an AI-driven society", the Network of European Museum Organisations facilitated discussions with the sector and policy makers on the role, challenges, and the potential of museums in an increasingly AI-driven society. The panels addressed a range of topics crucial to the use of AI in museums to ensure that the sector is proactively shaping and leading its implementation rather than being shaped from the outside. The conference was co-organised by NEMO - the Network of European Museum Organisations, FARO, ICOM Wallonie-Brussels, ICOM Flanders and the House of European History. It took place at The House of European History in Brussels, where the partners, participants, and policy makers met to discuss the way forward in a quickly changing landscape.

Throughout the day, participants and panelists emphasised the need for a political vision to guide the sector forward and collaboration at the highest levels, as exemplified by the EU AI Act, was highlighted as crucial for addressing AI's impact. Navigating public-private partnerships was deemed crucial, as they are challenging due to the power dynamics involved. The idea of an innovation hub for museums to interact with AI technology garnered interest: participants envisioned such a hub facilitating collaboration, innovation, responsible data collection and

CULTURAL POLICY **TRACKER**
Recommendations from the conference
"Innovation and Integrity: Museums paving the way in an AI-driven society"

use, and knowledge sharing at a European level. Connecting the future results of various European projects and initiatives, ensuring sustainability, and respecting the different speeds of organisations were also noted as crucial considerations for the sector's future. The conference organisers also asked whether museums can co-create strategies to engage AI technologies, focusing on transparency and trust, and basing decisions on shared values and human-centred ethics.

As a result of the intense day of discussions, the organisers presented three recommendations directed to policy makers, which aim to support the sector and address the new challenges and opportunities presented by AI. The recommendations were discussed and presented to invited policymakers from communal, national and European level at the conference on 20 March 2024 in Brussels, Belgium.

The three recommendations urge policymakers to develop a political vision and regulatory framework for museums in the context of AI progress. The potential of museums as partners in the development of ethical practices related to emerging technologies should be recognised. Financial resources and long-term funding must be allocated for infrastructure, equipment, and training. Furthermore, they point to a

European competency hub which should be established to bring together expertise and practices, knowledge and resources from experts and practitioners for the sector.

The three recommendations to policy makers regarding AI and museums in full read:

01 A Political Vision for Museums and Cultural Heritage in an AI driven Society

Recognising the unique position of museums and cultural heritage as pillars of trust within society, it is imperative to integrate them into a regulatory framework. Artificial intelligence in museums needs to be addressed and shaped so that technological developments do not simply reshape museums from the outside. Collaborative efforts between governments, regulatory bodies, and museum

CULTURAL POLICY **TRACKER**
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"Innovation and Integrity: Museums paving the way in an AI-driven society"
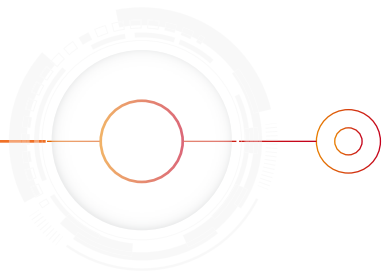
professionals can ensure that museums play a pivotal role in the development of ethical practices related to emerging technologies.

02 Financial Investments to apply AI successfully in the Public Cultural Domain

Financial resources must be allocated for infrastructure, equipment and highly qualified human resources, enhancing museums' professional capacities. AI needs to source highquality, interoperable data and properly described metadata. Copyright issues must be resolved. Museum professionals need adequate skills to perform these tasks, to keep pace with rapidly evolving AI capabilities and to address sector-specific concerns. Furthermore, standing commitments to support the cultural heritage sector should be expanded to ensure the quality and quantity of digitalisation required by Cultural Heritage Data Spaces and the European Collaborative Cultural Heritage Cloud.

03 Establishment of a European AI Innovation Hub for Cultural Heritage

To foster creativity, innovation and collaboration, to centralise expertise and knowledge and to face challenges for the sector associated with AI, there is a need for a dedicated competency centre in Europe. This space would serve as a hub to bring together expertise and practices, knowledge and resources in a network of and for professionals, ensuring digital innovation and development across the diverse European Cultural heritage sector - in alignment with the values of human-centred design, privacy, and open-source practices.

Access here the summary of the presentations that were given on 20 March 2024 at the House of European History in Brussels, where invited participants got to investigate museums' use of AI. They explored how museums and cultural heritage at large can help counter fake reality and disinformation, how to address new challenges and take on new opportunities while retaining trust and expanding capacities.

CULTURAL POLICY **TRACKER**
Recommendations from the conference
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AUTHOR

The *Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO)* was founded in 1992 as an independent network of national museum organisations representing the museum community of the member states of the Council of Europe. Together, NEMO's members speak for more than 30,000 museums in 40 countries across Europe. NEMO connects European museums and their national organisations to help ensure their place in the cultural development of Europe, and promotes European policies that help museums in their role as keepers of cultural heritage by promoting their importance to European policy makers. It supports European museums in their aim to learn through networking and co-operation and provides them with a channel to participate in existing European cultural policies.

Notes from the field: a cultural perspective on the aftermath of the European Elections

Dimitra Kizlari

Abstract

The present article contains factual information on the results of the European elections which took place between 6-9 June 2024 across the EU bloc and follows political developments in the rest of the European institutions at the aftermath of the elections. The author conducted desktop research to gather insights and relevant data and has analysed all collected material using an institutional theory lens. The narrative has been built to emulate a newspaper report, therefore, the format is summative, almost telegraphic. The main body of the article is divided in four chapters, each describing and commenting on developments in the major European Institutions, namely the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of the European Union and the European Council. The analysis concludes with personal commentary on the state of cultural policy in the EU and Europe.

Introduction

Every five years, and for a very brief period, the EU mechanism comes to a halt as voters turn up to polling stations across the European continent to elect their representatives. It is the moment when European citizens come the closest to a world whose inner workings most do not have the opportunity to get acquainted with and whose political importance has grown since the EU's founding years.

This article aims to provide an update to the Policy Tracker's readers on the most recent political developments in the European Institutions after the 2024 elections. Whilst its details may become outdated in the long run, the content captures accurately the heat of the moment as these lines are penned in the summer of 2024. Admittedly, the cultural policy field does not boast many commentators or observers outside the academic realm. It is in this context that accounts such as this one, reporting in a news-style format on the current status quo and commenting briefly on the direction of travel, acquire gravitas. It is my hope that this piece will, firstly, inform readers, and secondly, by presenting the key decision-making mechanisms, offer a safe space for reflection on how lobbying for culture may operate.

European Parliament

Between 16-19 July 2024, the new European Parliament (EP) convened for the first time in Strasbourg. Mrs Roberta Metsola was elected for a second term of 2,5 years as the President of the European Parliament. A 720-seat strong Parliament has welcomed members across the Union's 27 member-states distributed across 7 political groups. Whilst the European People's Party, to which Metsola belongs, is the party with the highest count of members (also called MEPs in Euro-language) and the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats is second in line, much like in the previous legislative cycle, there has been an undeniable shift towards the far right-wing in overall headcount terms. The Patriots for Europe, an alliance of extreme right-wing parties, including the 'Identity and Democracy Party', 'European Conservatives and Reformists Party' and 'European Christian Political Movement', came up third in the order of seats. This is not surprising as in the past decade there has been a retraction of voters from centrist, moderate, pro-European parties towards the extremes, either right or left, in national elections. Nowhere is the polarisation so stark as in France where, in its recent elections, voters chose the left-wing alliance over President Macron's centrist forces leaving in the third spot the far-right National Rally and its allies.

Back to the procedural level, the European Parliament constitutive session concluded with the appointment of the MEPs in the 20 Parliamentary Committees. For observers and legislators interested in the cultural domain, the Committee that
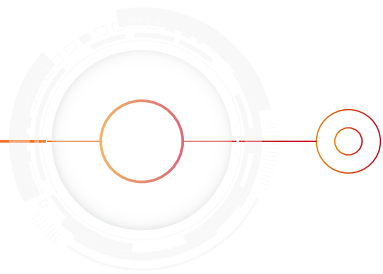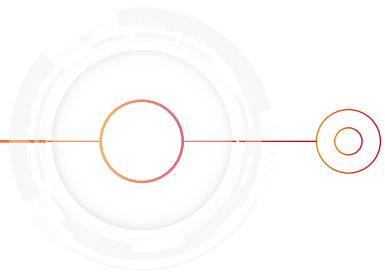
typically garners attention is the Cultural Affairs Committee (CULT Committee). This deals with a range of portfolios in which the European Institutions do not have legislative powers above those of the member-states, the so-called competences[1], such as education, culture, youth and sport. This 'soft' portfolio is usually one that attracts connoisseurs, people who have either prior experience in these fields or a deep appreciation and understanding of the sensitivities that envelope these files. The list of the CULT Committee members is available on the website of the European Parliament[2]. The Committee has 30 regular members and 30 substitutes - 60 in total. It is only the regular members that have the right to vote, however, regular members and substitutes have the right to become *rapporteurs*, a very important function for any parliamentarian. Rapporteurs play a crucial role in shaping EU legislation. They are responsible for drafting reports on proposed laws, amendments, and policy recommendations. This allows them to significantly influence the content and direction of legislative proposals.

On 23 July, CULT Committee members also elected their Chair. Mrs Nela Riehl[3] (Greens, Germany) was elected in a secret ballot gathering 18 votes out of a total of 30. The only other candidate competing for the Chair was Mrs Malika Sorel (France), proposed by the Patriots for Europe, who gathered 11 votes. Mrs Riehl was the only candidate proposed by the pro-European forces of the Parliament in a tactic that aimed to garner support across political factions against her far-right opponent, Mrs Sorel. This came after it was reported that the Patriots for Europe would claim the Chair of the Cultural Affairs Committee putting civil society in a precarious position. It was a short-lived crisis, which erupted after rumours emerged that none of the mainstream political parties claimed the chairmanship of the CULT committee. Therefore, as a leftover, it was claimed by the Patriot forces, a scenario that many in the cultural world hoped to see averted.

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[1] Article 2 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union describes the competences of the European Institutions per policy domain. A well-written summary is presented here: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/division-of-competences-within-the-european-union.html

[2] Regular and substitute members are published on the European Parliament website alongside their CV and parliamentary assistants, and can be accessed here: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/cult/home/members

[3] You can visit the profile of Mrs Nela Riehl: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/256964/NELA_RIEHL/home#detailedcardmep - Similarly, you can search the profile of any MEP using their name on this website: Home | MEPs | European Parliament (europa.eu)
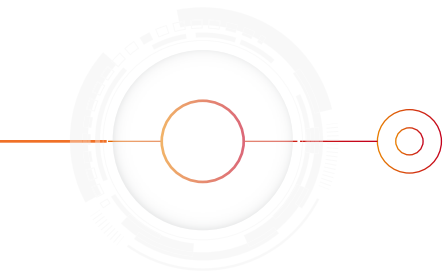
A 'cordon sanitaire'[4] was eventually implemented, thus, blocking the Patriots from claiming positions of power in the Parliament. Mrs Riehl's nomination, and subsequent appointment, was largely greeted with enthusiasm by the cultural ecosystem.

As Chair, Mrs Riehl is replacing Mrs Sabine Verheyen, also from Germany, who has now moved on to become first Vice-President of the European Parliament. Mrs Riehl entered politics just a year ago, in 2023, when she joined Volt and became one of the three MEPs that the party was able to send to the European Parliament. Possibly the first Chair of the CULT Committee of mixed ethnicity, Mrs Riehl was born to a German mother and Ghanaian father. She has worked as a teacher for over twelve years and is said to be passionate about human rights. She has stated that the right to freedom of expression is high on her agenda. Apart from the CULT Committee, she is a regular member of two other parliamentary committees, the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL).

It is important to make note of the committees that MEPs are members of as several policies are cross-cutting, which means that they fall in the grey zone between jurisdictions. For instance, if one thinks of wellbeing and the place of cultural institutions in contributing to better health outcomes, then an alliance between the CULT Committee and SANTE Committee (the parliamentary body responsible for health matters) should be struck to explore what this policy synergy can achieve. For the cultural world, other parliamentary Committees will be equally important to the CULT Committee and lobbying will need to take place across Committees. Most notably, the Employment and Social Affairs Committee, together with the Cultural Affairs Committee and the Legal Affairs Committee, will be central in promulgating an EU Framework on the status of the artist and cultural workers. Similarly, funds to support the adaptation of cultural heritage sites against the devastating effects of climate change may need to be negotiated by the Environment Committee in collaboration with the Cultural Affairs Committee. Working through the cross-cutting priorities requires deep knowledge of the EU legislative landscape and an understanding of policy continuity.

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[4] The term "cordon sanitaire" in the context of the European Parliament refers to a political strategy where mainstream political groups form an agreement to isolate and exclude certain extremist or populist parties from influence and decision-making roles within the Parliament. This tactic aims to prevent these parties from gaining positions of power or legitimacy.

The Chair of the Committee is not the only position to monitor and lobby. The Bureau of the Committee is comprised of four Vice Chairs representing the main political groups, again excluding the far right 'Patriots for Europe'. These are Bogdan Zdrojewski (EPP, Poland), Emma Rafowicz (S&D, France), Diana Riba i Giner (Greens, Spain), and Hristo Petrov (Renew, Bulgaria). Despite the Chair's affiliation to education, all four Vice-Chairs have a strong background in culture. Most interestingly, they represent different age groups, therefore differing demographics and, given their background, appear to have distinct but complementary interests in the cultural domain. These range from cultural heritage to books and publishing, the audio-visual sector and the music industry. Of the four, Mr Zdrojewski carries significant political experience. From 2007 to 2014, he served as Poland's Minister of Culture and National Heritage under Prime Minister Donald Tusk. In this role, he was responsible for cultural policy, heritage conservation, and the promotion of Polish culture abroad. Zdrojewski was elected as a Member of the European Parliament in the 2014 and 2019 elections. During his tenure, he has been involved in various committees, including the Committee on Culture and Education and the Committee on Budgetary Control.

Some statistics about the Cultural Affairs Committee are below (chart colours are random).
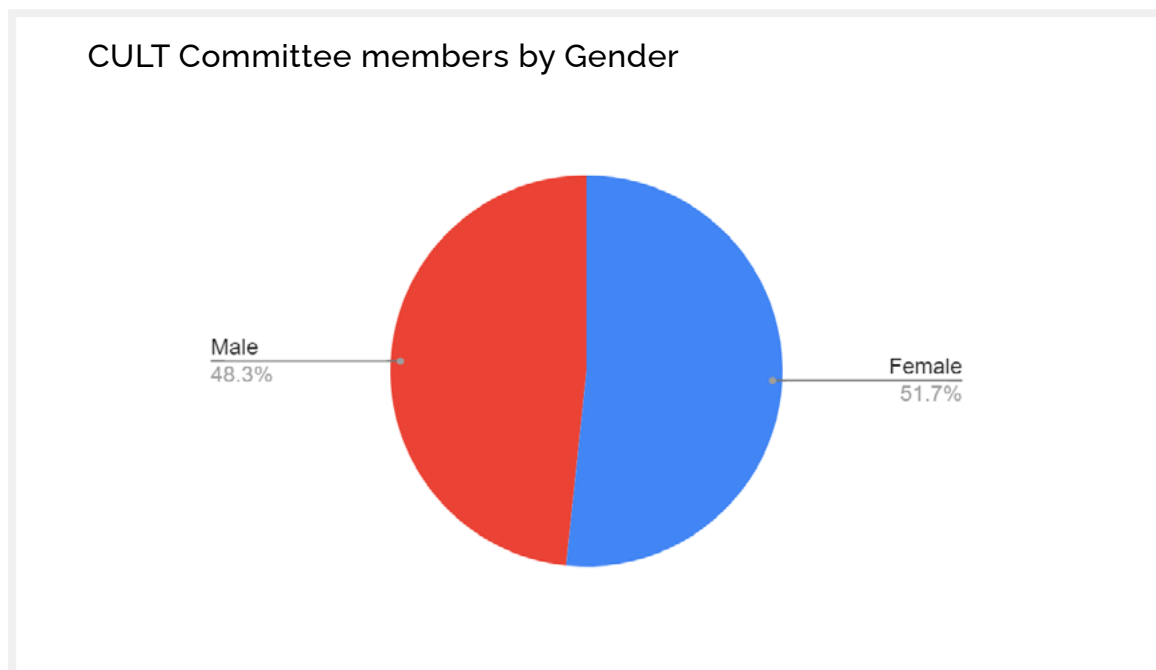
Figure 1. An almost even split in terms of gender representation in the CULT Committee as per the Parliament's guidelines. Source: Europa Nostra.
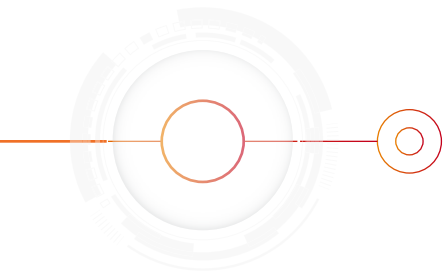
CULT Committee members by Age
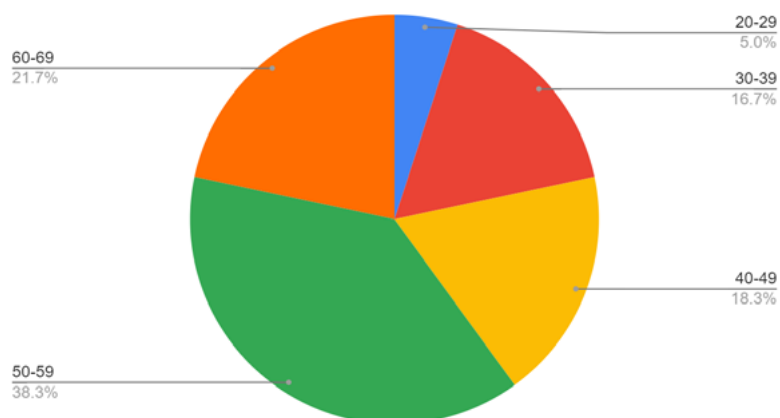
Figure 2. Committee members are more likely to be in their 50s and 60s than any other age group combined. Source: Europa Nostra.

CULT Committee members by Political Group
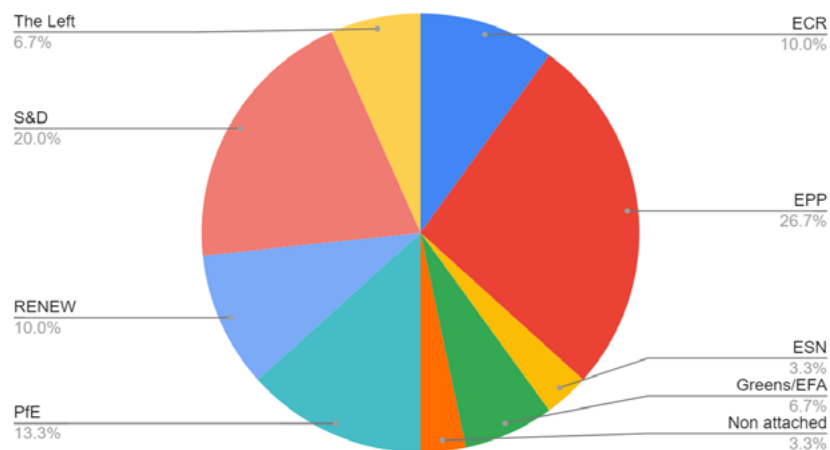
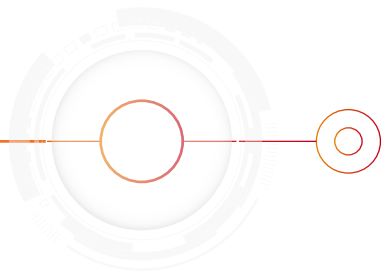*Figure 3. Committee seats are split across the MEPs in a proportionate manner as the seats in the plenary session.*

European Commission

At the constitutive session of the European Parliament, Mrs Ursula von der Leyen was elected for a second term as the President of the European Commission. Dubbed by many as a 'make-or-break' vote, the standing President received 401 votes, a higher count this time than in 2019 when she secured 383 which had given her a majority of just nine votes. In a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape, the re-election of the President is welcoming news since in any other scenario the member-states may have had to enter challenging negotiations with political parties that are situated on the far end of the two spectrums. From a policy perspective, an administration that wins a second term in office has the opportunity to deepen work undertaken during its first term, therefore, it is a unique opportunity to make corrections, where necessary, and push for change with long-lasting impacts.

Ahead of her election, Mrs von Leyen gave a forceful speech[5] presenting the political priorities of the next European Commission. Titled 'Europe's Choice', Von der Leyen's formal address to the Parliament was seen positively as socialists, liberals and the greens rallied to her support. Among other initiatives, she announced new portfolios for members of the next European Commission. These are Commissioner for Housing; Commissioner for the Mediterranean; and Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness. Last but not least, she announced that one member of the European Commission will be responsible for Defence. Among the new portfolios, the Commissioner for Mediterranean is probably the most interesting development as it splits the enlargement portfolio in countries that are close to accession, such as those in the Western Balkans, plus Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, and those considered 'near neighbourhood', such as those in North Africa and the Middle East. The EU Commissioner for the Mediterranean will be tasked to revamp border management, strengthen Frontex and Europol, and put forward a new approach for the return of migrants.

A strong point of her speech was the emphasis on 'sticking to the targets of the Green Deal with pragmatism, technology-neutrality and innovation'. She

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[5] You can read more in von der Leyen's speech here: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/statement-european-parliament-plenary-president-ursula-von-der-leyen-candidate-second-mandate-2024-2024-07-18_en

has vowed to put forward a new Clean Industrial Deal in the first 100 days of her mandate, however, from a policy perspective this is not new. It is an initiative that has been on the cards since at least 2023 when the Green Deal Industrial Plan was unveiled. In her speech, von der Leyen explicitly linked rural interests to the impacts of climate change and committed to including farmers in consultations towards the creation of her long-promised 'Climate Adaptation Plan'. In recent years, European industry has come to see climate action as being in their best interest. With this speech, she is looking to start a similar shift within the agriculture sector, which has firmly stood against the EU's climate agenda.

On the theme of foreign policy, Von der Leyen consistently emphasised the importance of defending the EU's core values, such as democracy and the rule of law, against autocratic regimes and demagogues. She proposed to create a 'European Democracy Shield', a dedicated structure to counter foreign information manipulation and interference to better protect European democracies. She also tied the concept of democracy to social cohesion noting that: *'European democracy must be more participative, more vibrant. Civil society must be better supported and defended.'* The importance of culture as a cornerstone of European identity and resilience has been referenced several times in the past during her administration. She has highlighted repeatedly that culture is essential not only for its intrinsic value but also for fostering social cohesion, democracy, and the European way of life.

In a positive development for the cultural sector, cultural heritage received a special mention in the President's guidelines for the period 2024-29[6]. There is a commitment to *'focus on the things that make up our European way of life: our culture and history.'* The President further commits to *'make it easier for people – especially younger generations – to benefit from our rich and diverse cultural heritage.'* This reference makes explicit the links between youth and culture and the relevance of cultural institutions in general to younger generations in an ageing Europe where population demographics are closely monitored. Developments within the European Commission in autumn will indicate the level of attention that will be afforded to the cultural policy sector when the appointment of the respective Commissioner will take place and the publication of the relevant Mission Letter, which will include specific policy instructions by the President, is expected.

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[6] You can access the Political Guidelines here.
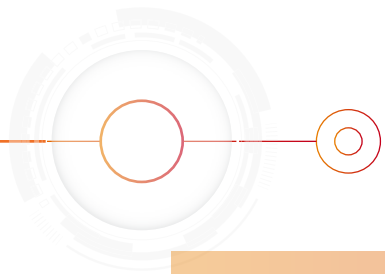
The Council of the European Union

Unlike in the other EU institutions, the presidency of the Council is not assigned to a specific individual, but to a member state. The Council is headed by a six-month rotating presidency. Between 1 July 2024 and 31 December 2024, Hungary will hold the presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The country, whose Government is headed by Viktor Orban since 2010, has repeatedly caused controversies in EU circles over its stance on the rule of law and its approach to foreign policy. Orban's most recent visit to Moscow caused a high-level EU foreign affairs summit scheduled for August to be moved from Hungary to Brussels. Almost unanimously the EU Member States and the Presidents of the EP and EC, have condemned Orban's tactics. Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico is the only head of state to express support for his Hungarian counterpart.

Aside from politics, the Hungarian Presidency has presented an interesting programme[7] for its six months with cultural heritage featuring prominently in the cultural agenda. Emphasis will be given to the securitisation of heritage in case of armed conflict, cultural heritage protection against natural and man-made disasters as well as digital access to heritage. There are also references to exploring how the European Bauhaus can support the restoration of historic buildings. Fewer references to the cultural and creative industries are made, of which the most important one on media literacy education. The Presidency plans to improve media skills and critical awareness, especially among children, at both national and EU levels.

The rotating programme of the Council is presented below. In this legislative cycle, 2024-2029, the Presidency will be held by: Hungary, Poland, Denmark, Cyprus, Ireland, Lithuania, Greece, Italy, Latvia and Luxembourg.

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[7] If you want to learn more about the priorities of the Hungarian presidency, you can access the programme: https://hungarian-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/media/32nhoe0p/programme-and-priorities-of-the-hungarian-presidency.pdf .

Figure 4. The rotating programme of the Presidency of the European Council. Source: Consilium

European Council

The European Council is an institution that brings together the Heads of State or Government of all 27 EU member-states to decide on the most pressing issues in high-level meetings, commonly known as the EU Summits. Portugal's former prime minister António Costa has been named the next President of the European Council. Costa, 62, stepped down as Portugal's prime minister last November over an investigation in his government's handling of several large investment projects, however, he has denied allegations over mismanagement and has successfully won the bid to chair the European Council. In this position, he has succeeded Belgium's Charles Michel as chair of European Summits.

Recently, the EU leaders adopted the European Council's strategic agenda 2024-2029[8], a policy plan that establishes the EU's directions and goals. In the face of a new geopolitical reality, the strategic agenda is said to make Europe

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[8] The European Council's strategic agenda for 2024-2029 is available through the following hyperlink: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/4aldqfl2/2024_557_new-strategic-agenda.pdf
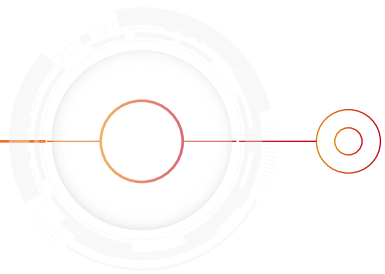
more sovereign and better equipped to deal with future challenges. It is based on three pillars:

1. a free and democratic Europe

2. a strong and secure Europe

3. a prosperous and competitive Europe

Heritage features under the first pillar, in the context of European values, although without an appropriate narrative to accompany the mention. The document reads: '[...] *We will strengthen democratic discourse and ensure that tech giants take their responsibility for safeguarding democratic dialogue online. We will promote our cultural diversity and heritage.'*

It is true that, at present, the European Council is not designed to play any meaningful role in the cultural domain; it is, however, a strategic player and partnering with this institution has the ability to raise the profile of the sector manifold. That is why any mention of culture in the policy documents of the Council is a reason to rejoice.

Discussion

The narrative presented above may have laid bare the fact that most strategic documents do not address culture and heritage directly, and when they do, this is not always done comprehensively. Over the years, this lack of attention has been seen as blocking the sector from making gains on a legislative and funding basis. Rested upon the fact that the EU does not have clear competence in this area, legislators do not always view the strategic importance of this policy area. From an institutional point of view, in the EU sphere, it is generally acknowledged that change is incremental and, more often than not, it comes as a result of pressure enforced by external factors than internal political initiative. Thus, it could be said that the cultural advocacy ecosystem may be fighting a losing battle. Nevertheless, the picture is far more nuanced thanks to horizontal synergies and networks.

One of the defining cultural moments of the past legislative period (2019-2024) was the emergence of a partnership on the European scene that united the

world of the arts, culture and heritage in terms of advocacy activities. It originally emerged in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which severely impacted the cultural sector, and highlighted the need for a more robust cultural policy at the European level. Something that had not been done previously. The initiative was launched by a coalition of cultural organisations, including Europa Nostra, Culture Action Europe and The European Cultural Foundation. The 'Cultural Deal for Europe'[9] campaign aimed at promoting and integrating culture more deeply within the European Union's policy frameworks and advocated for the inclusion of culture in the National Recovery and Resilience Plans. It was the first time that a partnership with such wide-ranging basis, representing a breadth of sectors, surfaced in a domain characterised by ultra-small organisations and associations (ultra-small in this context is defined as an organisation having fewer than 5 people). Among others, the campaign emphasised the importance of culture for sustainable development, social cohesion, and economic growth. In this legislative cycle (2024-2029), the work of the coalition continues and grows stronger.

The key proposals of the 'Cultural Deal for Europe' campaign can be summarised as follows.

- Increased Investment: Calls for a significant increase in investment in the cultural and creative sectors, particularly through programs like Creative Europe, as well as national and regional funding, and other EU funding mechanisms.

- Development of an EU cultural policy framework: Advocates for a new strategic plan for the EU's cultural policy following the 2018 New European Agenda for Culture.

- Support for Ukrainian cultural sectors and heritage: Calls for a genuine & comprehensive European Cultural Deal for Ukraine.

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[9] Visit the website of the partnership to learn more about the campaign's priorities: https://culturaldeal.eu

● Green Deal Alignment: Align cultural policies with the European Green Deal, recognising the role of culture in promoting environmental sustainability and raising awareness about climate change.

In another first for the cultural sector, the coalition attended the constitutive session of the European Parliament, which was described in detail above, and met with several parliamentarians. The visit of senior figures from Europa Nostra, Culture Action Europe and The European Cultural Foundation to Strasbourg came after weeks of intensive work campaigning for the 'Cultural Deal for Europe'. Among the advocacy activities, the partnership co-authored an opinion article[10], which was published on Euronews in the aftermath of the elections, and issued a public statement[11] urging the MEPs of the CULT Committee to vote for a competent, pro-European Chair.

These developments show that despite the challenges, the European cultural sector has stood united. The initiative has succeeded in engaging the public, raising awareness about the importance of culture and encouraging citizen participation in cultural activities and policy discussions. A major event is going to be held in autumn, in what is called 'La Rentree', inviting legislators, civil society, artists and cultural professionals, and citizens to participate and shape the future of the cultural sector. It is hoped that these encounters will become more frequent over the years and that representation from the highest ranks of the EU institutions will become permanent features of the programme. For now, the cultural sector can be reassured that its interests and needs are represented in the most efficient manner and that it is well understood that collectively we can achieve more.

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[10] The article penned by the partnership was published on the website of Euronews the day after the elections. You can access it here: https://www.euronews.com/culture/2024/06/11/what-we-need-is-a-cultural-deal-for-europe

[11] A joint statement by the partnership was made days before the election of the CULT Committee Chair. The text can be accessed via the following link: https://cultureactioneurope.org/wp-content/uplo-ads/2024/07/Statement-on-the-Election-of-the-EP-CULT-Committee-Chair.pdf

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ENCATC holds the status of an NGO in official partnership with UNESCO, of observer to the Steering Committee for Culture of the Council of Europe, and is co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union.

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