

Perform Europe Insights: Sustainability through innovation

Perform Europe is funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union and co-managed by a Consortium of 5 organisations

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Contents

5	The narrative
6	1 Geographic disparities are too big to be untackled
9	2 The current system is unsustainable, hence the urge for change
9	Inequalities beyond national borders
10	Artistic value at the forefront
10	Environmental approaches, and their uneven spread
11	Well-being and ethics challenged by unsustainable practices
11	Building bridges of relevance: lack of time and skills
12	Money as a condition for continuity, not a goal in itself
12	3 Sustainable touring and presentation need sustainable cross-border support

Perform Europe Insights: Sustainability through innovation

Produced by the Perform Europe Consortium.

[Perform Europe](#) is an EU-funded project which aims to rethink cross-border performing arts presentation in a more inclusive, sustainable and balanced way, in the 40 countries of Creative Europe and the UK. The 18-month Perform Europe process includes research, developing a digital platform and piloting a support scheme for experimental practices to test new ways of touring and digital distribution of the performing arts (dance, theatre, circus, street art, performance). The Perform Europe Consortium is given a mandate to develop policy recommendations on how a new support scheme for sustainable and inclusive distribution of the performing arts can be integrated into the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027. The main values of Perform Europe are sustainability, inclusivity and balance. We understand sustainability as a system of interconnected dimensions: artistic, social, economic, human, and environmental.

THE NARRATIVE

Experiencing performing art works from other countries and cultures helps us to grasp the diversity and complexity of the world we live in. Getting in touch with performances produced in other contexts enhances our empathy and broadens our perspectives. Traveling across borders and hosting productions from abroad inspires new artistic approaches, contributes to renewing working practices and, ultimately, lets art blossom. Cross-border artistic exchanges also develop transnational synergies between peer professionals and have the potential to create impactful connections between art professionals and local communities.

Cross-border performing arts presentation is valuable both for the development of artistic communities and for shaping open and inclusive societies. However, there are some trends and features that prevent the European performing arts landscape from fulfilling these values. First of all, touring and distribution are not equally accessible to all players in the sector: there are disparities across geographies, levels of privilege, stages of career. Secondly, in the past years, in some countries, budgets for culture in some places have been decreasing and economic pressure has been growing, which resulted in a more accelerated system, with fragmented (co-)production budgets

and increased competition for limited resources. For those who are within the touring circuit, its benefits do not come without costs. Competition for limited resources leads to a system of mere survival which is at odds with their artistic interests and values. Human drain, unfair conditions, and the growing pressure of environmental awareness at the backdrop of a very scarce support for ecological mobility - these and many other factors clearly signal that the current touring and distribution systems are not sustainable. The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to aggravate the gaps and foster the survival logic.

There is a great need for more time, resources and space, in order to fulfill artistic values of art professionals, enhance social and economic potential of the performing arts. Time and resources are also needed to embed cross-border touring in a “bigger picture” – in the local social and cultural dynamics. This is necessary in order to inspire meaning and relevance in artists’ and presenters’ practices, allow those practices to be in place for a longer period of time and thus contribute to sustainability of the sector and the social fabric at large. Meaningful, thoughtful, sustainable touring and presentation entail learning about and from local people and places visited. Such mobility creates links with other projects and initiatives, builds ground for professional growth. It is also considerate of the environment. Many initiatives

have been arising all across the global performing arts sector with a view of innovating touring practices, introducing new methods, formats and ideas, and even rethinking completely what we mean by touring and distribution. Digitalisation, cross-border co-creation, various slow mobility practices, connecting touring to larger projects, moving ideas and concepts and not only people and sets - these and many other models sparkle in various corners of Europe and demonstrate both the thirst and the potential for innovation in the performing arts sector and the art form itself.

How to bridge the gap between the desired state of touring with the real state of affairs? Where do the root causes for current problems lie and how to tackle them and bring systemic change? How to connect the multiple positive practices arising across the globe, learn from them and turn them into a perpetual *modus operandi* in the sector? The Perform Europe process so far highlights the urgency to rethink the current support tools and schemes, in order to make the touring, distribution and presentation of performing arts in Europe more balanced, sustainable and inclusive. The research has revealed asymmetries in the current system of unequally distributed and unaligned support schemes. Thus, there is a need for a complementary, overarching, cross-border support system that acknowledges the diversity of the European landscape, as well as disparities between European countries and regions. Such a transnational programme should not only complement the existing schemes (cover what they currently do not tackle), but also create meaningful connections among the most innovative approaches and continuously support and showcase more sustainable and inclusive practices. Ultimately, this might shift to a more sustainable system, where the potential for artists, audiences, communities and society is fully unleashed.

This report brings together the main learning points we have drawn from the Perform Europe process, since its start in December 2020. In these six months, we completed the research part of the project: we explored and mapped the context in which performing art works have been presented across borders in the past few years. The research team identified and analysed the current issues and disparities in the European system of performing arts touring, taking account of the COVID-19 effects, and sketched some solutions for bringing change. Throughout the research and the broader Perform Europe process, we have been in conversation with many representatives of the performing arts sector - artists, cultural managers, venue and festival professionals, experts, funders, academics, peer network partners - from Europe and beyond. We tested a new method of analysing social media data, and we undertook a

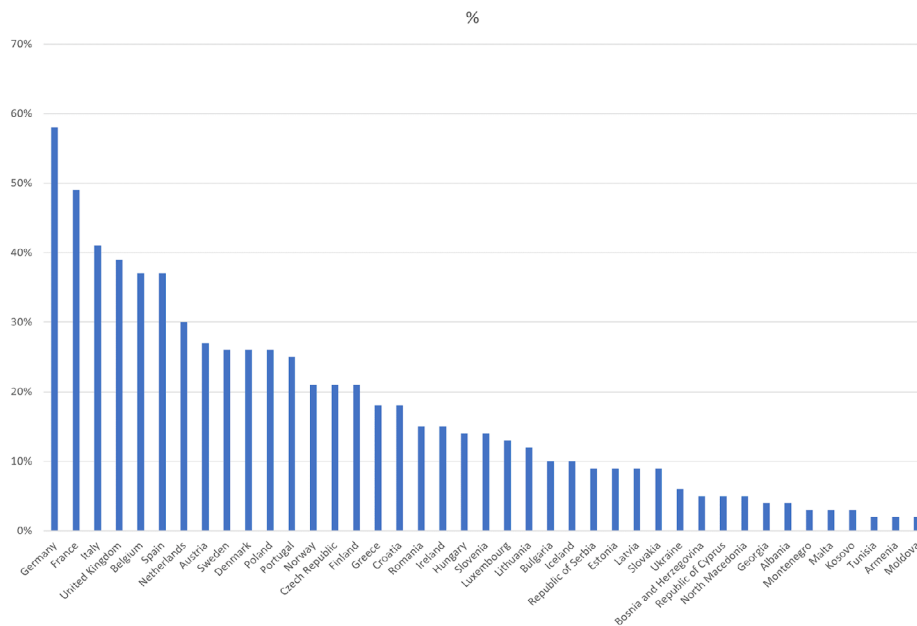
large-scale survey which collected insights from more than 2000 performing arts professionals: artists, freelancers and people employed by venues, festivals and companies. This helped us to unfold the status quo of the European landscape of performing arts presentation and to picture a better future for the performing arts ecosystem. We are now ready to test innovative models and game-changing experiments that will help us prove that a more sustainable future is possible and imagine collectively how such a better future can look like. In designing and implementing this next stage, we are guided by the following three takeaways we have drawn from the Perform Europe process so far.

1 GEOGRAPHIC DISPARITIES ARE TOO BIG TO BE UNTACKLED

When we talk about a “European landscape of performing arts touring and presentation”, it is essential to draw a clear picture of how it is organised, what are the trodden paths, what are the weaker routes, what links are inexistent. How well is the European performing arts field connected, and what are the strongest connection nodes?

As part of the research phase, we have pictured the main touring and presentation flows - from where and to where performing art works travel. With the help of 41 national experts, we have also mapped various support programmes and tools for touring and digital distribution of the performing arts and analysed how relevant and sustainable those instruments are. We divided the geographic area in focus (Creative Europe countries and the UK) into six macro-regions:

1. Balkans: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia
2. Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia
3. Eastern Partnership: Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, + Tunisia
4. Northern Europe: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden
5. Southern Europe: Cyprus, Malta, Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal
6. Western Europe: Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, France, the Netherlands, UK, Ireland



The graph above shows where more than 1100 European artists and companies that responded to the Perform Europe survey travel the most with their performances (it is made based on the survey responses on where respondents have presented their work at least once). As an example, of the more than 1100 producers responding to the survey, almost 3 out of 5 have performed their work in Germany. One out of 50 performed in Moldova or Armenia. In a nutshell: Western European artists and producers show foreign works the most, followed by their peers in the Northern region (which is still very much focused on the intra-regional artistic exchange), Southern Europe, and Eastern Europe.

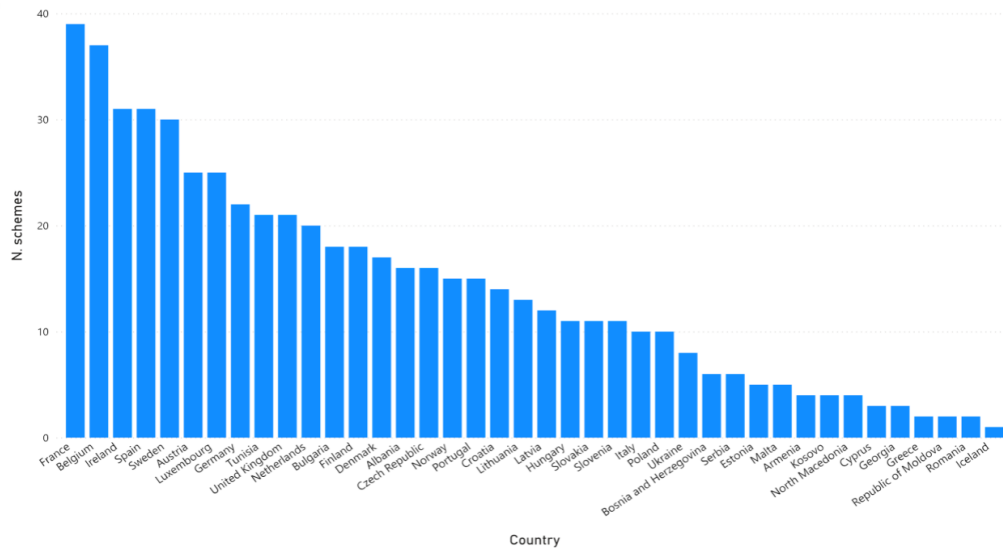
The research (survey and social media data scraping) showed that, in fact, the main presentation activity is happening within the borders of the same macro-regions, and even more so - within the same countries. Yet, there are exchanges among all regions, and it is possible to see (to some extent) artistic works in each region from all other regions. In fact, only Western and Southern European artists that responded to the survey are presenting their performing art works more outside their macro-regions than within their regional borders. It is mostly Western European works which are travelling outside the Creative Europe country group. Eastern European region is also exporting quite a lot, but predominantly within its own region. As for the Balkans, a considerable portion of performances shown in this region come from other countries. However, a very tiny slice of these performances come from outside the region. Balkan countries import performances from all other regions, but their traveling flows to Western

and Northern Europe are rather invisible on the touring traffic map. Eastern Partnership and Tunisia are in a similar situation.

Explanations for those flows are quite complex. The sizes of internal markets vary greatly from country to country, thus motivations to export and import performing arts works differ too. Historical, political, cultural links between countries and regions are also significant factors leaving marks on the touring and presentation flows. Moreover, when it comes to cross-border presentation, there is no level playing field, as there are gaps in national and regional situations in regard to performing arts education and training, funding for production and development of the performing arts, guiding priorities of cultural policies, availability of infrastructure, recognition of artistic disciplines, etc. Distribution and presentation are only the end of the value chain, which is characterised by inequalities along its entire length.

The asymmetrical picture described above can be complemented by the conclusions drawn from our mapping and analysis of the national and regional support schemes for touring of the performing arts. Our group of 41 national experts listed, all together, 565 support programmes in their countries:

The first analysis of the distribution of support programmes reveals that more than 50% of these funding schemes are concentrated in Western and Northern Europe. It is important to note, however, that the quantitative data should be contextualised in regard to the population of countries and sizes of their performing art sector.



Our qualitative analysis of the tools mapped allowed us to divide the 41 country pool into three groups: countries with strong, medium and weak support.

The category of countries with **strong support** encompasses all countries offering a comparatively big number of support instruments for cross-border touring and distribution, which are balanced in terms of type of support, beneficiaries addressed and disciplines covered. The countries under the 'strong support' category are: Belgium, France, Austria, Germany, Spain, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the UK. In addition to the individual countries, the Nordic Region also falls into the 'strong support' category. Thanks to the establishment of dedicated funds and platforms, the Nordic Council is one of the main providers of support to cross-border touring and distribution in Northern Europe.

The **medium support** group is quite diverse. There are countries, where, despite the existence of national cultural policies and cultural infrastructure, cross-border distribution of the performing arts is not considered as a funding priority and, therefore, is not structurally supported; there are also countries, where, despite the lack of sufficient public support, foreign or supra-national entities fill this gap. The countries within the medium support category are: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Tunisia.

The **low support** category includes all those countries that do not have or have only a few schemes supporting cross-border distribution of performing arts works. In most cases, the level of support to the performing arts sector (and, in general, to the cultural and creative sectors) in these countries is rather limited. The countries

The funding schemes:	Northern Europe	Western Europe	Southern Europe	Eastern Europe	Balkans	Eastern Partnership + Tunisia
Create enough international touring opportunities for artists from my country						
Present a wide range of international performing arts works in my country						
Legend	The schemes adequately contribute to the dimension				The schemes do not contribute to the dimension at all	

under this category are: Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Kosovo, Malta, North Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Ukraine.

The above is synthesised in a heat map based on the analysis done by 41 national experts.

The availability of various digital tools supporting distribution of the performing arts (serving for matchmaking, presentation to audiences, ticketing, sur- and subtitling, streaming, broadcasting, etc.) is also quite uneven across the 41 countries in focus. The quantitative research resulted in the graph above:

What conclusions can we draw from the mapping and analysis of the flows, support schemes and digital tools available? The geographic imbalance of the European landscape of performing arts presentation, which is in itself no news, is quite considerable. Artists from the West, North and South of Europe have better access to cross-border touring opportunities, than artists from Eastern Europe, Balkans, Eastern Partnership and Tunisia - in these countries, presenters (venues and festivals) tend to show works from places with a stronger support for export.

This state of affairs, already today and, likely, even more so in the post-pandemic future, is not beneficial to the cultural diversity of the European continent. Cultural diversity is not just about a scattered patchwork of cultures coexisting in the same geographic area. It is about celebrating the richness of those cultures, raising mutual awareness, nourishing respect for each other, and all this is only possible through knowing, comprehending and appreciating the differences

and common grounds. Therefore, addressing the gaps and making the European landscape of performing arts presentation more balanced is essential and urgent.

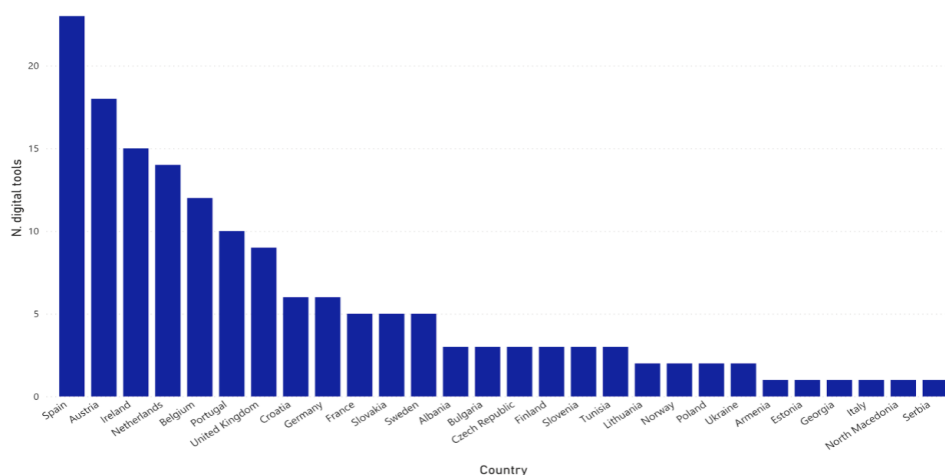
2 THE CURRENT SYSTEM IS UNSUSTAINABLE, HENCE THE URGE FOR CHANGE

Inequalities beyond national borders

It is not only the national borders that define who has access to the cross-border touring and who does not. Within the same countries, there are considerable barriers too - remoteness, rurality, disabilities, minority background, ethnicity, gender, and more.

There are no EU-wide statistics (let alone across the Creative Europe group of countries) on how the European performing arts sector is representative of the societies it operates within. Yet some national data reveals that fair access to working in the arts is an acute challenge facing the sector. According to a recent study by the Creative Industries' Policy and Evidence Centre, in the UK, only 16% of people taking creative jobs are from working-class backgrounds¹. Sadly, socio-economic position is often in connection with other factors: such as gender, ethnicity, physical ability, geographic origin, etc. Minority groups are either in more precarious positions within the sector, or they have limited access to artistic careers, as they are less likely to afford uncertainty, unpaid assignments, long-term periods of inactivity and unemployment.

According to the Europe Beyond Access, Creative Europe project, across Europe, disabled arts professionals, and artists all report significant barriers to developing artistic careers². Arts Council



1. Getting in and getting on Class, participation and job quality in the UK Creative Industries, August 2020, Nesta

England research shows that only 3.2% of artists working in the subsidised arts sector in England are disabled³. Disabled artists face a handful of extra challenges when touring: additional costs for assistance, mobility, sign-language interpretation, among many other factors.

As for gender, we need more precise statistics at the EU level too. As an example, in France, 52% of the students in education prepare for performing arts, only 11% of programmed artists are women; 18% of managerial positions are female professionals⁴.

It remains to be estimated whether and how the pandemic reinforced the existing imbalances within the performing arts sector, but it is already obvious it has hit the most vulnerable players the hardest. Scarce access to funding schemes, digitalisation (which created more access for some and reduced it for others), reopening strategies not considerate of disabled artists, and many more other factors make it harder for minority professionals to cope with the crisis.

Artistic value at the forefront

The respondents to the Perform Europe survey confirmed yet again that the artistic component of the entire touring and presentation experience remains vital and core. In order to grasp the social and economic potential for society, artists and company producers are convinced a cross-border experience needs to be driven by an artistic value, as well as it must bring artistic inspiration and enhance artistic development. Artistic quality of the work is the most essential guiding element for venue and festival professionals selecting performances from abroad (87% respondents to our survey indicated 'artistic quality' as the consideration for selecting foreign productions for programming). One of presenters' most important motivation to programme international productions is the aspiration to connect their local artistic community to the international performing arts scene.

It is important for the performing arts producers and presenters that the support mechanisms for touring and cross-border presentation, as well as digital distribution tools, do not limit artistic development. On the contrary, they should foster artistic values and aspirations and provide time and space for experiment, research and innovation. This is the necessary ground for the arts to truly benefit societies and reach every heart and mind in the

most impactful way possible. These entails slow tours and slow art: time and space are the necessary conditions allowing for building tight and enduring artistic bonds and partnerships, and sustainable relations with audiences and communities.

In reality, the insufficient budgets for the arts, and for cross-border exchanges in particular, augment the pressure on producers and presenters to adjust their projects to diverse funding priorities, to compete with each other, to accelerate production, presentation and mobility. Venues and festivals, facing financial scarcity, keep on programming artists from countries with better touring support, having little space to diversifying their artistic offer. Artists lack time to extend their work's lifespan, and presenters struggle to embed it in the local realities, as well as to show it to more diverse audiences.

Environmental approaches, and their uneven spread

In the last decades, environmental concerns have been affecting visions, artistic practices and organisational models in the performing arts sector. There have been many diverse initiatives, from greening practices to performances and works helping us to collectively imagine a different, more sustainable future. However, the pace and extent of this has been varying greatly from country to country. The possibility of greening production, presentation and mobility practices remains an expensive affair. Besides, it requires knowledge and skills, access to technologies, as well as the readiness to compromise on one's visibility, international fame, diverse artistic offer, and for those based in the most remote areas - on translational physical connections of all sorts. Needless to stress - ecological concerns in action are to be found in places where there are more resources, better geographical and infrastructural connectivity, longer history of structured cultural policies, and the overall social, political and economic preoccupation with the ecological matters. Our research shows that those are West- and North-European countries, as well as some countries in the Eastern Europe (compared to the Eastern Partnership and Tunisia).

The COVID-19 reality has created a space for a deeper reflection on how to adopt greener practices; it shed some light on how to reinvent mobility, adopt digital solutions, rethink scale and success. The sector has been experimenting with digital tools, but more artist-led research is needed,

2. Disabled artists in the mainstream: a new cultural agenda for Europe, Europe Beyond Access

3. Making a Shift Report, Arts Council England

4. Gender gaps in the Cultural and Creative Sectors (with the exception of the audio-visual sector), European Expert Network on Culture and Audiovisual (EENCA)

in order to realise the artistic and greening potential of digitalisation (taking into account the necessity to measure the digital carbon footprint). Moreover, by far not all parts of the sector have been effectively exploring the digital domain: many organisations and artists lack skills and resources to adopt digital solutions, and importantly - not all productions and artistic ideas are compatible with virtualisation. The pandemic has also turned on the survival mode in the entire performing arts community, which is likely to raise the importance of such priorities as earning a living and enhancing visibility, at the cost of greening strategies.

In addition, current funding and cultural policies do not stimulate and support the growing environmental awareness in the sector to be put in practice. Our analysis of the 565 support schemes in all the 41 countries demonstrates that their structured incentives for ecologically considerate touring and presentation are insufficient. Some positive examples of such funding instruments can be identified in a few countries (for example, in Sweden and Luxembourg), yet the majority of them remain scattered and limited in time and budget. Moreover, many other support programmes function even at odds with greening ambitions: they require producing and presenting new work instead of 'recycling' existing productions, overfocus on quantitative indicators, do not stimulate using green transport means, etc.

Well-being and ethics challenged by unsustainable practices

Our survey confirmed that thirst for professional development and seeking recognition are main incentives for artists and art professionals to show their work abroad. Cross-border presentation is a means to enrich and diversify their skills, as well as to gain inspiration for advancing their artistic processes. Professional growth is a human need, thus fulfilling artistic values is also deeply related to artists' well-being. Venues and festivals, in their turn, aspire to empower their local artists by enlarging their international perspective. For programmers and curators, international networking and artistic exploration is a process fostering personal growth and artistic development.

However, cross-border presentation needs to happen in livable conditions and to be organised so that each person involved in it has enough time and space to truly connect to artistic and social contexts.

Human dimension of cross-border exchanges also relates to how people treat each other and how

far they acknowledge each other's vulnerabilities and strengths. It is about minding each other's differences and frontiers. Empath, solidarity, respect, sharing, generosity, curiosity, openness - those values construct the desired ethical code of artistic exchanges across borders. Yet, in reality, it is not a norm adopted across the entire performing arts ecosystem.

Importantly, everyone needs time to slow down, simply rest and fulfill their other commitments - as a friend, parent, partner, etc. Sustainable personal life context is crucial for one's well-being, and it is also a crucial condition for a sustainable professional practice. As it has been described above, the current system, with its lack of resources and skills, as well as its specific perceptions of success, relevance and scale, does not provide enough space for a full-fledged human-oriented approach in cross-border touring and presentation. Competition for resources and visibility, hectic and short-term tours and overly busy presenting programmes, insufficient time for extending a touring journey to a learning experience - all these features exhaust human capacities, undermines one's well-being and sustainable and meaningful personal growth.

Building bridges of relevance: lack of time and skills

A sustainable artistic activity is the one that creates meaningful connections: between individuals, audiences, communities, ideas and projects. Therefore, presenting international artistic work must resonate with the artistic and social dynamics of the place it travels to. Presenters aspire to diversify the artistic offer for their local communities and stimulate intercultural dialogue. This is not only important for the development of local artistic ecosystems, it also adds new perspectives and stimulates reflection and debate, which is a vital component of democratic societies. In order this to happen, the work should reach diverse communities and engage them at different stages: sharing work in progress, co-programming, co-creation. This requires a continuous effort by venues and festivals, in order to create the right connections and contexts for international works to truly enrich their local socio-cultural realities.

Numerous performing arts projects and initiatives are happening across the continent, where local and international dimensions are being intertwined in new - more innovative and sustainable - ways. Yet, many art professionals, when touring, rarely have time to engage with local communities, to include local people in the artistic processes, to install a continuous dialogue and build

profound connections. Presenters also lack the time, skills and the feeling of urgency to meaningfully include communities and local artists in their international programmes. Even when there are resources available and the motivation is strong, very often art professionals are short of relevant skills and capacities to be truly inclusive, to work with diverse communities respecting their needs, and create integrations between their work processes and local social dynamics. Even if a lot of fresh and game-changing practices are arising in the performing arts sector throughout the whole space covered by Creative Europe, a large slice of it still needs to depart from the conventional way of showing artistic work towards making local communities part of a continuous process of creation, programming and exchange.

Money as a condition for continuity, not a goal in itself

According to the survey responses, economic incentive is almost the last one on the list of factors stimulating venues and festivals to host artistic work from abroad. However, the lack of financial resources is the main reason (87%) for them not to programme international productions. As for artists and companies, generating income is yet again not the most essential reason for touring (12%), but the lack of funding is the number one reason for not traveling with their work abroad.

Money is hugely important in the performing arts value chain - as an investment in the sustainable career development for art professionals, development of organisations, and a longer life-span of productions, but not as an end in itself. The performing arts system is not aligned with the market logic: because producing and presenting performing arts works is very labour-intensive, the costs for production and presentation will always be too high to be covered or surpassed by ticket sales, unless for commercial work with small casts and attracting large audiences (the so-called 'cost disease', which means that an external financial intervention will always be needed⁵). As we have said above, funding is also important for being able to take risks, advance artistic experimentation, deepen engagement with the local context, adopt ecological means and develop skills. Therefore, funding is not the major sake, but a vital fuel making the process endure - in a meaningful way that allows the artistic and social potential to be fully unleashed, in tune with human and ecological values. Cross-border and touring and presentation are the way for the sector to gain this fuel and make the performing arts ecosystem more sustainable, especially in niche disciplines and countries with smaller internal markets.

A sustainable ecosystem, obviously, requires each player and each stage of the value chain to be in a sustainable economic position. In this regard, the volume of funding is very important, but it is also essential how budgets are distributed and allocated, what models of co-production, sharing and solidarity exist, what activities are supported (touring, production, presentation, but also professional development, research, network development, etc).

However, in the last 15 years, economic pressure on the sector has only increased. When the financial crisis of 2008 unfolded and budgets for culture were shrunk, performing arts organisations preferred not to reduce the number of artists supported. Instead, they have been helping as many artists as possible to remain professionally active and visible, even if the overall financial pot has decreased. Co-production and presentation fees became lower, which led to the fragmentation of resources and increased competition among artists.

Shrinking and fragmented budgets and the accelerated reality of the performing arts and the pressure to produce and move from project to project, makes longer tours, which would bring more income, barely possible. Unfair collaboration practices and lack of sharing affect the position of the most vulnerable players in the sector and makes the entire ecosystem unsustainable. The pandemic reality demonstrated this state of affairs and exacerbated it.

3 SUSTAINABLE TOURING AND PRESENTATION NEED SUSTAINABLE CROSS-BORDER SUPPORT

As we have revealed above, a vision for a better future has been moulded in the performing arts. The COVID-19 period, with its blunt honesty about everyone's fragilities, might have enhanced this vision. There is a broadly shared motivation to practice solidarity and develop more fair attitudes and models, establish just relations between people and open up to those excluded from the art communities and those who are on the margins of societies. There is an urge to finally gain and create time and space to make production and distribution practices more meaningful for everyone involved. Many in the performing arts voice the need to work on stronger links - between people, places, projects, skills, cultures; links that would make our ecosystems more sustainable. Environmental awareness is growing, while triggering debates on privilege and inequalities. Artistic value remains at the core, and funding continues to be the vital nourishment to maintain the development of people, organisations, practices, art works. For all

this to be achieved and practiced, artists and other art professionals need the right skills and expertise, and not to forget - decent living and working conditions.

All the impediments to making this vision a reality are closely interlinked and create one complex tangle of issues. If we put our head into making one particular activity in the performing arts more sustainable, let's say in ecological terms, we quickly realise our efforts will be futile if we do not tackle social and economic aspects and if we do not take into account artistic dimensions and the limits of human capacities. Moreover, it becomes evident that one type of activity, for example touring, cannot be made sustainable if other related processes remain unsustainable: production, dissemination, education, research, network development, community work, etc.

Art professionals all across the world are taking up the challenge to unravel this complexity and rethink their practices - in more inclusive and sustainable terms. Courageously innovative models of showing work across borders emerge all over Europe - they apply slow art and slow travelling, go green, inspire fairness and solidarity, experiment with new ways of moving artistic concepts across borders and reinventing them in tune with the local context.

It remains to be evident, however, that a tangible paradigm shift requires a profound rethinking of cross-border presentation and touring and the way they are supported. In a transnational ecosystem, this rethinking can only be done at a cross-border level, by establishing a more systematic and coordinated support framework, which would enhance various viable innovative trends and practices, connect them to each other, mainstream and amplify. Such a framework should provide ground and space for the development of skills, capacities and networks, with a long-term perspective.

The Perform Europe research showed that the lack of continuity, unequal distribution and the fragmented nature of support schemes are detrimental to sustainability in the performing arts ecosystem. Therefore, there is a need for a comprehensive and continuous cross-border support instrument that would take into account the complexity of and disparities in the performing arts sector (including geographic gaps). Such a scheme should stimulate innovation through learning from the numerous best practices that are out there, supporting new experiments, and importantly - making them visible for professionals in diverse situations and funders at all levels. This way, these innovative practices can spill over to other parts of the landscape and ultimately lead to the desired systemic change. Such a support

framework should also connect various scattered initiatives, as well as find the way to create the right links between those support tools and programmes that aim at bringing sustainable change to the sector. The cross-border scale is essential for such a scheme, as sustainability of the entire cross-border touring and presentation landscape cannot be tackled in single corners of the continent, which are so different from each other.

At Perform Europe, we have just entered the testing phase - where we will support and learn from the experiments undertaken by producers and presenters aspiring to practice more inclusive and sustainable cross-border touring and digital distribution. Partnerships sub-contracted by Perform Europe will showcase innovative models and practices, analyse them and sharpen its vision for a more structured and continuous support for the performing art touring and distribution in Europe. Check out the [first open call](#) and stay tuned. ■

Consortium partners

Perform Europe is funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union and co-managed by a Consortium of 5 organisations:



IETM - International network for contemporary performing arts is one of the oldest and largest international cultural networks, representing the voice of over 500 professionals, organisations and institutions working in all the fields of the performing arts, including theatres and arts centres, festivals, performing companies, curators and programmers, producers, art councils and associations from more than 50 countries worldwide.



The European Festivals Association (EFA) is a community dedicated to the arts, the artists and the audiences. EFA's main role is to connect festival makers to inform, inspire and enrich the festival landscape in Europe and beyond. In this perspective, EFA is a festivals' service and a knowledge and training provider, developing a WE-story of people and organisations, bridging the distance between festivals and all kinds of stakeholders around festival making.



Circostrada is the European Network for Circus and Street Arts. It was created in 2003 and counts over 120 members coming from more than 35 countries. Its core mission is to further the development, empowerment and recognition of these fields at European and international level. Circostrada supports circus and street arts professionals by implementing a wide-range of capacity building initiatives, boosting professional exchange, gathering information and resources, fostering continuous training, innovation and knowledge-sharing.



EDN - European Dancehouse Network, established as a legal association in 2009, is a network for trust and cooperation between European dancehouses in sharing a common vision regarding the development of dance art across borders. In May 2020, EDN counted 45 members in 26 countries. Its key mission is to cooperate in securing a sustainable future for the dance sector and to improve relevance for diverse dance among society.



IDEA Consult provides independent advice to organisations and governments at all levels: local, intermediate, regional, federal and European. Their "Thinking Ahead" baseline reflects IDEA's unique value proposition: committed professionals involved in society and well connected with research institutions; evidence-based advice: applied research, based on validated techniques; sustainable solutions for actual social challenges.



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