

ON
THE
MOVE

CULTURAL MOBILITY FLOWS

The International Mobility of Disabled
Artists and Culture Professionals

REPORT AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



Co-funded by
the European Union

On the Move is the international information network dedicated to artistic and cultural mobility, gathering 73 members from 27 countries. Since 2002, On the Move provides regular, up-to-date and free information on mobility opportunities, conditions and funding, and advocates for the value of cross-border cultural mobility. Co-funded by the European Union and the French Ministry of Culture, On the Move is implementing an ambitious multi-annual programme to build the capacities of local, regional, national, European and international stakeholders for the sustainable development of our cultural ecosystems.

On the Move regularly commissions researchers to investigate different themes closely related to the network's activities and the work carried out by its members. Reflecting on transversal concerns and key areas of artistic and cultural mobility, the network tries to establish a clearer picture of the current movements and trends while formulating policy recommendations.

<https://on-the-move.org>

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Acknowledgments Maria Vlachou, Executive Director, Acesso Cultura (Portugal); Onn Sokny, Country Director, Epic Arts (Cambodia); Lisette Reuter, Executive Director, Un-Label (Germany); Marc Brew, Dancer and Choreographer (UK, Australia); Marie Denninghaus, Senior Policy Coordinator, European Disability Forum (Belgium); Lynn Fu, Curator, Consultant, Producer, Arts Access Shanghai (China); Nadine McKenzie, Artistic Director, Unmute Dance Company (South Africa); Tone Pernille Østern, Professor in Arts Education with a focus on Dance, NTNU Norwegian University of Science and Technology - Founder of Danselaboratoriet (Norway); Elen Øyen, Producer, Dance Artist, Danselaboratoriet (Norway); Magali Saby, Dancer, Actress, Founder of Be Together Académie and of All Moov (France); Irene van Zeeland, Head of Education and Outreach Department, Holland Dance Festival (The Netherlands)



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Suggested citation format: Baltà Portolés, J.; Dowden, S.; and Ellingsworth, J. (June 2024), *Cultural Mobility Flows – The International Mobility of Disabled Artists and Culture Professionals. Report and Policy Recommendations*. On the Move, available at on-the-move.org/resources.

This publication uses the font Luciole – a typeface developed explicitly for visually impaired people. <http://luciole-vision.com/luciole-en.html>

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Foreword

This publication follows On the Move's Cultural Mobility Webinar on the 'International Mobility of Disabled Artists and Culture Professionals'¹ and builds upon the two large-scale studies it carried out for the British Council, as part of the EU funded project Europe Beyond Access, *Time to Act: How lack of knowledge in the cultural sector creates barriers for disabled artists and audiences* (2021) and *Time to Act: Two Years On, Data-led Insights on Performing Arts and Disability in Europe* (2023)². The publication also draws on recent online and in-person initiatives led by On the Move members to raise awareness of the various specific conditions and needs of disabled artists and arts workers.

Today, there is an extensive body of literature, including commitments, reports, case studies, and toolkits, available to guide culture professionals in providing greater access – but these are not widely circulated, partly because they are often focused on a single country, or available in only one language. Moreover, they mostly focus on increasing access to disabled audiences but rarely address issues related to providing greater support to disabled arts workers.

Unsurprisingly, gaps remain in providing structured guidance and training to support the international trajectories of disabled artists and culture professionals. Equal access to cross-border mobility and its numerous opportunities to explore, create, learn, or connect has yet to be achieved. Across various art forms, the cultural field needs to take concrete steps to enable disabled individuals to access creative research in different contexts, artistic production at macro-regional, European, or international levels, new knowledge and skills outside their home country, and connections with international peers.

The first chapter presents an analysis of calls for cultural mobility opportunities posted on the On the Move website since January 2020. The data thus concentrates on funded programmes, generally one-off calls or related to temporary or shifting programmes, rather than permanent ones, which are listed separately in our mobility funding guides.

The second chapter builds on contributions from key experts during the webinar and additional interviews. It aims to better identify the challenges faced by disabled artists and culture professionals in accessing international opportunities, while discussing practical solutions and local initiatives.

The third chapter summarises evidence from recent literature addressing opportunities for professional development among disabled artists and culture professionals, with particular attention to factors that may enable or hinder engagement in international mobility.

Ultimately, the publication provides recommendations to all cultural stakeholders, European Union institutions, and local, regional, and national authorities. These recommendations are derived from the analysed sources, including policy documents, research reports, and other contributions related to the circumstances in which disabled artists and culture professionals operate. Examples of toolkits, programmes, and other initiatives that illustrate the issues being addressed have also been considered.

We wish you an inspiring read!

Yohann Floch,
Director of Operations

¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_ubtZvrpCY&t=1374s

² <https://on-the-move.org/resources/library/time-act-how-lack-knowledge-cultural-sector-creates-barriers-disabled-artists-0>
<https://on-the-move.org/resources/library/time-act-two-years-data-led-insights-performing-arts-and-disability-europe>

Table of contents

Foreword	3
Data analysis: disability inclusion in open calls for participation	5
Needs and desires	
Exclusive or inclusive	
Going further	
Challenges and needs of disabled artists and culture professionals	8
The fundamental challenge: lack of knowledge and awareness	
Challenges in accessing the profession	
Challenges in Practising the Profession	
Policy frameworks and funding challenges	
Facing the challenges: projects and practices	
Desk research: analysis of recent literature	24
Information, knowledge and the transformation of mindsets	
Access to the profession	
Making arts organisations more inclusive	
Practices and opportunities in international mobility	
Policies and funding	
Policy recommendations	38
References	
Biographies	
About the authors	

Note on Terminology

When talking about disabilities, there are differing views on what is the right language to use and individuals should have their preferences respected. Some prefer person-first language, such as "a person with a disability", which emphasises someone's personhood before their disability. Others prefer identity-first language, such as "a disabled person", because their disability is intrinsic to who they are and they want to prioritise this.

In this report, we have made the choice to use identity-first language, but we recognise and respect that this is not the choice that all disabled people would make. We also use the term "D/deaf" to include the different preferences and reflect the different experiences of D/deaf people.

Data analysis: disability inclusion in open calls for participation

by John Ellingsworth

This document presents an analysis of calls for cultural mobility opportunities posted to the On the Move website during a period of more than 4 years from 1 January 2020 to 31 May 2024. The data therefore reflects our website's editorial policy and focus. In short, this policy means that we concentrate on funded programmes that cover at least some of the costs of travel (or that offer remuneration in the case of online/remote programmes). The calls that are posted to the website are also generally one-off calls or relate to temporary or shifting programmes rather than permanent ones (which are separately listed in our mobility funding guides).

During this period, 65 out of 2,714 calls (2.4%) were labelled as offering 'access costs' among their expense coverage – i.e. that provided extra funding, on top of any baseline grant, to support access to an opportunity. Usually this focused on disability support costs, though there were also cases that provided access funding for those with care responsibilities, those facing financial difficulties, or covering various other circumstances that could present an obstacle to participation.

Calls in this subset of 65 were more likely to be entirely online/remote, with 14.1% taking that format versus 10.9% of all calls. This divergence

is also more noted in the years following the pandemic, with calls offering access costs since 2022 more than twice as likely to be online/remote. The share of hybrid mobility opportunities – those mixing online and in-person activities – has been similar to the general share, however: 9.4% for calls with access funding, versus 9.9% for all calls, since January 2020. In a small number of cases, the opportunity of online participation can be tied explicitly to access needs (for instance, with the Kone Foundation's Saari Residence, where home residencies are possible for those who 'cannot travel on-site [...] due to accessibility reasons').³

Calls with access funding were also more likely to be focused on individuals (81.5% versus 64.3% for all calls), with only 1 call in our dataset targeted specifically at organisations/collectives (a residency for small contemporary circus groups at Motion Chapel in Ireland),⁴ and the rest open to both individuals and groups. In terms of sectors, cross-disciplinary calls are the norm, making up around 40% of opportunities providing access funding – though this matches a general trend towards projects/opportunities that cross multiple fields. We do find however that for calls with access funding performing arts is the largest individual sector (19.5% share), and with a particular focus on dance – thanks

³ Saari residence: <https://on-the-move.org/news/kone-foundation-saari-residence-finland-remote>

⁴ Motion Chapel: <http://on-the-move.org/news/motion-chapel-contemporary-circus-residency-small-groups-ireland>

to programmes such as the CROWD International Dance Exchange, or the ongoing choreographers residency programme of K3 | Tanzplan Hamburg.⁵

Regionally, calls with access funding are concentrated in Europe – with 89.2% of calls in the subset involving at least one organisation in Europe. The most common countries for organisers are United Kingdom, present in a third of all calls (33.8%), followed by Germany (23.1%) and Denmark (9.2%). EU funding plays a significant role in these opportunities – with 43.1% of all those providing access support co-funded by Creative Europe or Horizon programmes.

Looking more closely at who organises opportunities with support for access costs, a notable trend is the presence of large funding bodies – British Council, Pro Helvetia, and the various institutions behind the CROWD project (Arts Council England,

Goethe-Institut, NRW KULTURsekretariat, Nordisk Kulturfond, and Creative Scotland), among others. Universities also feature prominently as organisers, perhaps thanks to having higher awareness and capacity around access needs due to their work with large student bodies. Among these, we find Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, FEINART, Berlin University of the Arts, and Michigan State University. Smaller organisers are somewhat rarer, and often are represented via project-based initiatives where access costs have been written into a grant agreement, and perhaps required or suggested by the funder. As in other areas, project funding is both an opportunity and a challenge for the sector: new funding can offer the resources for a broader and more inclusive approach, but in a limited window. Ongoing systems and programmes often prove harder to overhaul – though money is not the only factor in an inclusive offer.

Needs and desires

The term ‘access costs’ is intentionally broad and somewhat vague, designed to encompass a wide range of needs that can vary significantly between applicants, in terms of both content and expense. Indeed, calls in our dataset usually put no ceiling on their access budget, and often they were very explicit that support would be allocated on a case by case basis: for example, an opportunity from Salamanca Arts Centre / Checkpoint Theatre for digital collaboration workshops, where ‘additional support needs including any accessibility support, interpreting and childcare will be provided on a case-by-case basis’, or the Keychange Talent Development Programme, where ‘the exact amount covered by the bursary varies based on needs’.⁶

Generally, there is a trade-off between wanting to preserve a flexible and open approach, and needing to be clear with applicants about where the resources for support begin and end (which is usually clear to

organisers themselves, even if they don’t disclose it). One programme that does define budget limits is the mobility funding scheme Culture Moves Europe, which under both its individual mobility and residency actions offers the possibility of funding for disability support for artists and cultural professionals.⁷ This is adjusted to individual needs but has a ceiling: up to 100% of the core mobility grant. Alongside this financial support, the scheme also offers applicants flexibility: it is demand-led, allowing artists and cultural professionals to design their own mobility projects and choose their own international partners, and also offers flexibility around dates of travel (applicants can arrive up to 15 days before they implement a project in their destination country, or stay up to 15 days after it’s finished).

This is an important dimension of access: it is not solely about financial support, but also rests on flexibility and adaptability. Ideally, it is based not only

⁵ CROWD: <https://crowd.dance/> - K3 choreographers residency: <https://k3-hamburg.de/en/professionals/residencies>

⁶ Salamanca Arts Centre: <https://on-the-move.org/news/salamanca-arts-centre-checkpoint-theatre-all-things-we-couldnt-say-collaboration-between> - Keychange: <https://on-the-move.org/news/keychange-talent-development-programme-women-and-gender-minorities>

⁷ Culture Moves Europe: <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/creative-europe-culture-strand/culture-moves-europe>

on needs but also desires, allowing the beneficiary to decide their own schedule and modality of participation. An exceptional example here might be a call in April 2022 from Culture for All in Finland for the project 'Making space for artistry - equality for disabled artists and artists who are Sign Language users', supported by Kone Foundation.⁸ The project organised artist residencies for disabled artists and

sign language users from July to December 2022, with the opportunity to produce exhibitions in Tornio and Haparanda: 'The intent is to have the residencies be as accessible and flexible as possible, respecting individual needs, so that artists can focus on what is essential – that is, artistic work. A maximum of four artists will be selected for the residencies, and it is also possible to apply as a working pair.'

Exclusive or inclusive

Another notable aspect of calls within our dataset that offer access costs is that while they often invite and encourage applications from disabled artists, they are rarely exclusively targeted at them. As such, disability is also rarely the focus of the artistic/cultural project the opportunity relates to (though there are exceptions such as a February 2020 call for the 'Different Bodies' Lab organised under the PUSH+ project).⁹

Opportunities open to all have benefits in fostering diversity, but also mean that disabled artists are competing within a broader pool of applicants. One example that goes against the trend was a call in March 2024 under the second iteration of the Europe Beyond Access programme, open for

European Deaf and/or disabled artists seeking co-producers for new artistic works based in dance practice, choreography or movement.¹⁰ Applicants had to self-define as Deaf or disabled to be eligible, with EBA co-productions needing to be led by one or more Deaf and/or disabled artists. The call was also unusual in adapting the application process itself, with artists able to apply in writing, by recording audio, or via video in sign language on the Accessible Surveys website.

While few and far between, such opportunities speak to the benefits of considering the needs of disabled artists and professionals from the outset – as well as the importance of involving these artists and professionals in programme design.

Going further

Despite some good examples and promising trends in providing access costs, there remains a significant gap between policy and practice in the cultural mobility sector. It is still common to see calls that say they are open to diverse applicants, but don't provide additional resources or flexibility to ensure greater access.

Another issue we can highlight is the lack of detailed information about the accessibility of facilities for residencies and other hosting sites.

When such information is provided, it is often to disclaim the lack of access rather than to detail available accommodations. This lack of transparency can deter potential applicants who require specific facilities to participate fully.

Allocating a separate budget for access needs can be a crucial first step towards bridging gaps in access – but is part of a much longer journey that should move the sector towards embedding inclusivity into the fabric of cultural mobility opportunities.

⁸ Culture for All: <https://www.kulttuuriakaikille.fi/en.php?k=18549>

⁹ PUSH+: <https://www.pushproject.eu/different-bodies/different-bodies-lab/>

¹⁰ Europe Beyond Access: <https://www.disabilityartsinternational.org/resources/open-call-for-europe-beyond-access-co-productions/>

Challenges and needs of disabled artists and culture professionals

by Sophie Dowden

This report is built on the contributions that have been kindly provided by the panellists in On the Move's Cultural Mobility Webinar on the international mobility of disabled artists and culture professionals, as well as additional interviews with eight experts in the field with the aim of allowing us to take stock of the situation after the latest initiatives at national, European and international levels and continue to propose steps to foster change.

The challenges faced by disabled artists and culture professionals are numerous and they compound each other. There are direct challenges to international cultural mobility and also indirect challenges. For a disabled artist or culture professional to reach the point in their career that they have the opportunity to participate in international cultural mobility, this means that they must already have navigated a host of challenges to enter the profession at all, with arts educational institutions often having a strict view of what constitutes quality. There are many challenges existing at all levels – from the interpersonal to the national to the international – that are all interrelated. Attitudes to people with disabilities, for example, are simultaneously personal, cultural and of international relevance.

Furthermore, barriers to international cultural mobility may be best addressed at different levels. The accessibility of venues across the world is relevant to the international cultural mobility of disabled artists and culture professionals, but the solution for this might lie in policy and funding from national or regional governments. It is important to recognise the systemic and connected nature of all the challenges faced by disabled artists and culture professionals and that means understanding the wide range of direct and indirect challenges to their international cultural mobility.

The fundamental challenge: lack of knowledge and awareness

The first and fundamental challenge is a lack of knowledge of the specific needs of disabled artists, says Maria Vlachou, Executive Director of the Portuguese association Acesso Cultura¹¹. People do not know what constitutes a barrier or how solutions and adaptations can be found in order to create access conditions for disabled artists, she says, and worse still, without understanding certain issues, some interpret disabled artists as being difficult or spoiled.

Marc Brew is a dancer and choreographer¹² and in his experience, there is a lot of variability in the level of accessibility in different countries. He is willing to go to places with a lower level of accessibility if it is clear that the people inviting him are making an effort to do their best. However, in some situations, he has found that people do not think or ask questions and just expect the disabled artist to adapt to their environment.

‘It’s really assuming people with disabilities don’t work, first of all, or they cannot travel, they don’t want to travel, that they just stay at home. This is really the image that many people have.’

Marie Denninghaus, Senior Policy Coordinator,
European Disability Forum (Belgium)

Lack of knowledge can also lead to lack of action. Irene van Zeeland, Head of Education and Outreach Department at the Holland Dance Festival,¹³ recalls how for the second generation of Europe Beyond Access¹⁴ they tried to find a French partner, but there was either no organisation ready enough to invest

in a change in their structure to include disabled people or the organisations with disabled artists were too small to take part in this kind of project. She sees this as being reflective of a wider fragility in France at the level of the public authorities, funders, partners, with a resulting imbalance. Action on disability in the arts is regarded positively, in her experience, but the administration and cultural organisations do not know how to support it.

Strategies of cultural institutions also show a lack of knowledge and awareness about including disabled artists and culture professionals, says Tone Pernille Østern, Professor in Arts Education with a focus on Dance, at NTNU Norwegian University of Science and Technology and founder of Danselaboratoriet (The Dance Laboratory). She has worked closely with producer and dance artist Elen Øyen at the Dance Laboratory and since then they have collaborated together in academic contexts. Looking at cultural institutions as part of the study *Artist – an accessible profession?*,¹⁵ she reflects that seeing how cultural institutions were writing about disability (if at all) and whether they had any ambitions and visions for diversity, including disability, was revealing of how systemic and structural the barriers to disabled artists are.

The lack of knowledge of audiences and the resultant mindset people have about disabled people and artists is a major issue according to Onn Sokny, Country Director of Epic Arts¹⁶ in Cambodia. Disability awareness is quite low in Cambodia, she says, not through a lack of willingness to understand, but rather because the education and awareness-raising efforts are so limited, which also

¹¹ <https://accessculture-portugal.org/>

¹² <http://www.marcbrew.com>

¹³ <https://holland-dance.com/>

¹⁴ <https://www.disabilityartsinternational.org/europe-beyond-access/>

¹⁵ *Artist – an accessible profession?*, Tone Pernille Østern, Terje Olsen, Elen Øyen, Lise Lien og Lene Christin Holum
<https://www.kulturdirektoratet.no/vis-publikasjon/-/tilgjengelige-kunstnerskap->

¹⁶ <https://epicarts.org.uk/>

puts the burden of shifting mindset onto disabled artists themselves.

Lynn Fu, founder of Arts Access Shanghai,¹⁷ says that in China most of the general public are not aware of arts with disabled performers because they have not seen much of it. There is an attitude among certain people that they do not see the reason to pay to see a show that they perceive as “not as good”, she says, which then has an effect on income, as it is difficult to guarantee ticket sales.

Some people do not want to see disabled people on stage, Marc Brew confirms. They are not looking for a production that faces reality, that shows that there are disabled people out in the world, that they are people that have voices and have stories to tell and unique perspectives.

However, large-scale events like the Paralympic Games can make a difference. In Beijing in 2008, Lynn Fu remembers a series of campaigns about disability rights at the time and how suddenly it seemed that disabled people became more visible in the media during that time. Magali Saby, a dancer, actress and founder of Be Together Académie¹⁸ (an inclusive arts teaching establishment) and All Moov¹⁹ (an inclusive arts company), has similar hopes for the impact of Paris 2024.

‘We need to use the Paralympic and Olympic Games, even if it’s sport, but we need to use this opportunity ... to serve the cause of disabled artists. It’s now or never, I’d like to say. I have the impression that there is an artistic era, in the service of artistic inclusion, that is changing a little in France. Over the last year and a half, two years, I get the impression that there are more conferences, more initiatives. In the space of two or three months, there have been at least two or three events, which is really rare in France.’

Magali Saby, Dancer, Actress, Founder of Be Together Académie and of All Moov (France)

Cultural organisations need to invest in training in order to address the lack of knowledge and awareness, says Maria Vlachou. Lisette Reuter, Executive Director of Un-label,²⁰ agrees, saying that there is a lot of knowledge out there, but people need to know where to find it and they need to invest in being trained and educated.

Leaders definitely have responsibility, says Tone Pernille Østern, but workers at every level should believe that they have agency, whether they are a teacher or an artist. She sees that each person can always do something and it is important to recognise that and act upon it.

Challenges in accessing the profession

Barriers to accessing the profession form part of the systemic issues that block disabled artists and culture professionals from practising internationally. A large part of the responsibility and potential for

change lies within the cultural sector, whether arts educational institutions, school outreach or visibility of (international) disabled artists.

¹⁷ <https://www.artsaccess.cn/>

¹⁸ <https://be-together.eu/>

¹⁹ <https://all-moov.eu/>

²⁰ <https://un-label.eu/>

Recognising the possibility of becoming an artist

‘The most important barrier for education at all levels – for arts education for children, young people and then higher education – is the traditional and inherent quality criteria that the arts have built into themselves and which influences everything that is done.

I think aspiring artists, like young children, they’re already in school, they’re being met with a patronising attitude and disbelief that they could ever become an artist. So, it’s taken away from them by teachers – obviously most of them with no bad intentions – but they just don’t see it as a possibility.’

Tone Pernille Østern, Professor in Arts Education with a focus on Dance, NTNU Norwegian University of Science and Technology; Founder of Danselaboratoriet (Norway)

The first barrier a disabled emerging artist faces is being aware that it is possible to become an artist at all. Much depends on what adults in the life of a young disabled person regard as possible, including family and teachers.

Nadine McKenzie is Artistic Director of Unmute Dance Company and an integrated dance teacher, dancer, producer and choreographer in South Africa. When she was young, she had not considered dance as something she was able to do. Her teacher selected her to go to a dance class and at first she resisted, not understanding how it would even work as a wheelchair user. Going just to please her teacher, she recalls the movements they were doing and how strange it felt, because she had never been exposed to something like it before, nor thought that it was an available opportunity.

Society has been designed in such a way that it excludes certain people and this societal barrier becomes an internalised psychological barrier, says

Nadine McKenzie. Today she is passionate about addressing lack of representation and awareness via Unmute’s work in schools.²¹ It is her hope that by planting the seeds of what is possible from a young age, then more disabled students may become dancers in the future.

‘It’s also the infrastructure, the society around and their views, because disability hasn’t been a priority for people. Years ago, disabled people were hidden away in institutions or hospitals... And that’s also why I think I moved to the UK because there were a lot more disabled people visible and a lot more disabled artists. The same in America.

I was amazed when I first went to America. I was like, look at all these disabled people. I’m not the only one. I felt very isolated in Australia back then, so it is good to have those other role models, to see people similar to you. That makes a difference.’

Marc Brew, Dancer and Choreographer (UK, Australia)

Re-entering the profession

Some people are artists before acquiring a disability and navigate a different experience. Marc Brew is a dance artist who is a wheelchair user. As an able-bodied classical ballet and contemporary dancer, he trained professionally in Australia. In 1997 he was involved in a car crash that left him with a spinal cord injury and massive internal injuries that almost took his life. After the car crash, he was told that he needed to retrain to do something else. Despite this, and still feeling the urge to dance, he began to reassess what dance was, exploring the possibilities of his new body. It took time for him to find his way in the disability world. A chance encounter between friends of his and Kitty Lunn, who uses a wheelchair and who was taking a ballet class with them at American Ballet Theatre, made for Marc Brew’s first contact with another disabled dancer.

²¹ <https://www.instagram.com/unmutedance/?hl=en>

Back in Australia for his rehabilitation between 1997 and 1999, Marc Brew found that there were not any dance companies including disabled people at that time, but two years after the car crash, he was back dancing again in New York City, retraining and learning to adapt and translate existing techniques. Kitty Lunn has her own company called Infinity Dance Theater,²² and retraining with her exposed him to other integrated or inclusive dance companies, such as AXIS Dance Company²³ in California and Candoco Dance Company²⁴ in London. After 26 years of working as a disabled artist, Marc Brew says that there is definitely more opportunity than before, but that it is still very limited.

Access to education

Education at all levels is a further barrier. For example, access to education for people with disabilities in Cambodia is quite low, says Onn Sokny. Many of the artists that she works with do not know how to read or write. Some artists with hearing impairments do not know how to use sign language.

State training opportunities and educational programmes from art universities have hardly any access for disabled artists in Germany, says Lisette Reuter. There are a lot of private initiatives, like acting schools, where training is available, she says, but the state educational system is not accessible. Then, in her experience, a lot of state and city theatres only work with professionally trained artists from state university programmes. They say that they would like to have disabled artists in their ensembles, but that there is nobody out there. Educational systems everywhere need attention, she emphasises.

Marc Brew notes that mainstream institutions need to work on ways to train and assess disabled artists. The disabled people he works with really want to learn different dance techniques and can only access them through summer intensives, apprenticeships and training on the job.

‘Especially in dance, they haven’t thought about disabled people when building up these education [programmes], and they don’t assume that people with disabilities want to come in. So they are very much adjusted to non-disabled people. That’s one thing. And the physical barriers are also there: big buildings that are difficult to get into.’

Elen Øyen, Producer, Dance Artist, Danselaboratoriet (Norway)

Educational institutions at all levels need to take responsibility for better supporting disabled children and young people to enter the arts, says Tone Pernille Østern. Waiting for lower or higher levels to make the first move will not bring the needed change. In her view, change can start at any level, including in the middle, and once a change is made, small or big, then it will start spreading out.

Applying for work opportunities

If someone has faced a lack of accessibility earlier on, they simply will not be invited to audition at an educational institution, because there is an expectation of having an extensive CV already, says Tone Pernille Østern. Their research shows that even if a disabled artist is invited, they are given an audition task that is impossible for them to achieve. If the artist is fortunate enough to get into the educational institution, there is then very little help available to carry out their education.

There is not just one problem for professional auditions either, says Magali Saby. How do you get to the audition and is it accessible when you get there? How do you find out about auditions if you have not been through formal arts education? How do you go about training, where do you want to be a professional, how do you go about achieving that? There are many obstacles to negotiate to be able to practise the profession freely.

²² <https://www.infinitydance.com/>

²³ <https://axisdance.org/>

²⁴ <https://candoco.co.uk/>

Challenges in Practising the Profession

Making and presenting work

While more disabled artists are being programmed, Marc Brew notes, it is still the case that if some venues or festivals programme one disabled artist or one integrated company, they feel like they have ticked the box, but obviously not every dance company is the same.

‘People seem to put like this integrated dance, inclusive dance, disabled artists into this one box of disability rather than exploring the variety of the artists and companies that are working.’

Marc Brew, Dancer and Choreographer (UK, Australia)

For Lynn Fu, partners who embrace the idea of performances by disabled artists are very valuable because there are not many of them. Much of the time, approaching a potential partner results in her receiving the response (explicitly or not) that while this is a good project, it is not their priority. Some might avoid programming disabled artists because their building is not very accessible and they are afraid of criticism, she thinks. Others, in her experience, only know about visually dazzling performances like the *Thousand-hand Bodhisattva*,²⁵ which means that they think all performances by disabled artists are of a “carnival” nature and that there is no artistic quality, when many independent artists are doing performances about their lives.

Diversity and inclusion should not be addressed on a project basis, it must be a constant, says Tone Pernille Østern. Change is made in every micro-situation. ‘We have to want this change – not just because it is in the rules and regulations – but because we see the value of more diversity and

equality in art.’ In her view, it needs to be an attitude and also a practice, and that practice means that we each have to make a change, whether it be in terms of routines, understanding quality, the way to build houses or the way of arranging a seminar or a tour.

Mobility in practice

Transportation can be difficult and poorly adapted to meet the needs of disabled people, says Maria Vlachou. It is therefore of utmost importance that bookings of disabled artists are not left for the last moment, because travel takes time to prepare.

Marie Denninghaus is Senior Policy Coordinator at the European Disability Forum,²⁶ an organisation that advocates for the rights of disabled people at European level. While there is an EU regulation on rail accessibility and legislation on passengers’ rights, for instance entitling disabled people to free assistance at airports and train stations, she says, the interface between them is often overlooked. The result is, a train station and a train might be individually accessible, but many persons who are wheelchair users still cannot enter the train from the platform.

Furthermore, Marie Denninghaus cites the example of taking a flight, where a person who uses a wheelchair has a long form to fill in about the transportation of the wheelchair, they arrange their assistance in advance and then are denied boarding because it is up to the staff at the gate to decide if they can travel or not. This kind of experience, she says, is degrading and discriminatory.

Justifications for this in terms of “safety” are misleading, she says. Airline staff might say that a person using a wheelchair does not look like they

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ID7SBgLvjqY>

²⁶ <https://www.edf-fehp.org/>

would be able to evacuate safely, but this is not possible to judge from simply looking at someone. They might say it is because a D/deaf person cannot follow emergency communication, but then the question arises as to why the airline cannot provide information in an accessible format.

Travelling is one of the hardest parts of Marc Brew's work and it comes with a lot of uncertainty. For example, having booked an assistance team at one airport, he was stuck on the aeroplane for an hour because the team did not turn up. Even with a paid service like this, support is too often not reliable.

Post-pandemic, there are fewer flights than before, and the prices of travel have also increased substantially, says Lynn Fu. It is a challenge to stretch budgets to cover these increased travel costs, she says, especially considering the additional needs a disabled artist may have, which may require them to travel business class.

For long haul flights, Lynn Fu says that it is important to consider how to make the experience as comfortable as possible. A disabled artist may not be able to take a 10-hour flight with a layover and a connecting flight for a further 2 hours. The inviting organisation should therefore expect to pay for them to travel business class or for a hotel in the city of the connection or other solutions agreed with the artist.

A disabled artist may also need personal assistance. If someone is D/deaf and uses a wheelchair, says Irene van Zeeland, there may be a team around that person to get them around. Hiring someone for two hours for an event in the suburbs of Paris and taking a taxi is one thing, but it is quite another when the team needs to travel abroad, she says.

'Some productions don't have the financial means to pay for a carer, and that makes things difficult for the disabled artist, who is trying to fight fatigue and do their job as well as possible. So, there are also a lot of productions in France where I'm obliged to go on my own and that adds to the fatigue of the artistic practice. I'm a person who doesn't like to complain because I want to be with other artists, so there are times when even on the night of the show, I don't shower, and I sleep dressed so that I'm ready to catch the train the next day. And I find that really not fair, it's not possible.'

Magali Saby, Dancer, Actress, Founder of Be Together Académie and of All Moov (France)

Maria Vlachou recalls the visit of a colleague from Latvia and how extremely difficult it was to find an accessible hotel. Even choosing a restaurant to go out for dinner was a stressful experience, finding a suitable restaurant, and then also making sure it has an adapted bathroom.

'Many hotels will confirm that they are accessible when they are not. This might be because they do not understand what accessibility means or because they assume that all disabled people have the same needs. It is the assumption that two wheelchair users must automatically move in the same way and have exactly the same needs, when they do not. Even the definition of what it means to be accessible needs to be understood better.'

Maria Vlachou, Executive Director, Acesso Cultura (Portugal)

Accessing workspaces

The accessibility of venues is a global issue. The arts spaces are often very inaccessible in Cambodia, says Onn Sokny. They have a lot of initiative and are good at making things work with the resources that they have, but this is not always the case when it comes to accessibility.

Funding to make cultural venues more accessible is also often not available. There is no such funding stream in China, says Lynn Fu, and while the Federation of Persons with Disability receives a lot of state funding, they focus mostly on poverty-reduction and economic welfare, so the arts are a very low priority for them.

It is also the case, says Marie Denninghaus, that accessibility information for a venue is often considered only from the point of view of the audience, and not from the point of view of artists or culture professionals. This means inadequate information is provided about the accessibility of areas backstage.

When considering the accessibility of venues, says Maria Vlachou, often an organiser thinks only about the main venue of their event, without giving consideration to accessibility of the experience as a whole, such as the hotel, public transport in the city, restaurants and so on.

It needs to be an obligation for venues to become more accessible, says Marie Denninghaus. Without an obligation to make changes, accessibility will always be the last priority on the list. Public funding must be made available to do this.

On a policy level, having standards for accessibility for the built environment and for vehicles, as well as the interface between them, would avoid costly mistakes, she adds. Even people with motivation and good intentions can end up installing, for example, an access ramp at an angle that is too steep and not accessible.

At a literary festival Maria Vlachou attended, one colleague invited was a writer who has brittle bone disease, meaning that her limbs are shorter and her bones are quite fragile. On stage, the chairs for speakers were made of plexiglass and nobody had thought that she might slip because of the material of the chair. She could not hold herself on it, and so in front of an audience full of young people, her assistant picked her up, something that was totally avoidable and not respectful.

For example, Maria Vlachou recalls, at another event one of the speakers was of small stature. The organisers had put a low stool in front of the chair so that she could sit herself independently and had some support for her legs while she was participating in the debate. More thoughtfulness and awareness can remove some challenges completely.

(Self-)employment, pay and benefits

Pay is an issue for artists in general in Cambodia, says Onn Sokny, but when it comes to disabled artists, the pay is even lower. Artists who work with her organisation, Epic Arts,²⁷ often cannot work anywhere else because there is so little opportunity, understanding or accessibility in other places.

Most of the artists that Tone Pernille Østern and Elen Øyen interviewed as part of their research project had to be on disability benefits because of problems getting a permanent job and being able to earn enough. This leads to a trap, because, when someone is on benefits, they are not allowed to earn over a certain amount or earn any more at all, or else their benefits will be reduced. Disabled people are then stuck at a low level of income, she says.

In addition to the risk of being cut off, says Irene van Zeeland, there is a question of legal status. In France, the actors at the Compagnie de l'Oiseau-Mouche,²⁸ for example, work in an artistic structure but the structure is identified as an ESAT, namely an establishment that supports disabled people into

²⁷ <https://epicarts.org.uk/>

²⁸ <https://www.oiseau-mouche.org/>

work. Under this label, they are classified as workers with disabilities and not as artists with legal status.

This is also the case of another music group, says Magali Saby, which is made up of autistic people. They cannot be paid under the system for artists because they have the status of disabled workers. There needs to be awareness-raising and changes at ministry level, she says, as it is not fair and it blocks the professionalisation of disabled artists.

In addition to that, Magali Saby continues, there is the burden of administration, which is greater for artists, as they do not have one employer and one regular journey. They must declare every employer and every journey made, among much more bureaucracy. Many artists give up, as too many obstacles can make someone too discouraged to continue.

The access to work programme in the UK is an example of good practice, says Lisette Reuter, as it provides financial support to individuals, not only employees. This means that disabled people are supported to be freelancing artists or independent workers in the UK, but this is not the case elsewhere. It includes support for specialised equipment, but also for travel expenses and support workers.

Adapting practices, roles and responsibilities

Schedules need to accommodate for the risk of exhaustion and the time a disabled artist might need in order to keep their body in a good condition, says Maria Vlachou. The time it takes to do certain things – some artists call it “crip time” – is not always the same as for an able-bodied person. Planning residencies and shows must take into careful consideration the specific needs of disabled artists, she says.

According to Magali Saby and Irene van Zeeland, it is still very difficult to make the performing arts or audiovisual sector aware of the very specific needs of an artist with a disability. Do not overpack the schedule, Lynn Fu recommends. It is natural to want

to put everything possible in the schedule, but we need to change our mindsets on this. It is important to leave some space and some time to rest.

A lack of good communication can be particularly stressful for a disabled artist, says Maria Vlachou, because many things need to be considered and arranged in advance of travelling. A lack of answers to emails, contracts and payments not being made on time all contribute to more difficulties.

A shift in expectations about the speed of communications may also be needed. Lynn Fu recalls inviting one artist to perform and receiving an autoreply stating that because the artist works with a chronic disease, it may take her some time to reply and this is normal. The artist went on to say that she wants to use what she calls her “crip practice” to challenge the idea of immediacy.

With D/deaf artists who need a sign language translator, says Irene van Zeeland, the international context adds complications. Translating from French to French sign language is one thing, but that person is not necessarily able to translate from English to French sign language, so two people are probably needed.

The burden of accessibility is usually on the artist, says Onn Sokny. When disabled artists work with public or private arts spaces in Cambodia, they have to advocate for accessibility in order to be able to go and perform. They have to advocate for the right place for the sign translator to sign for D/deaf dancers, for example. There needs to be more preparation and work put in to make disabled artists feel like their needs have been thought about. Epic Arts therefore works a lot on emotional support and on accessibility support for them.

This is also the case in Europe, says Irene van Zeeland. A lot of pressure is put on disabled artists to explain, to ask and to organise. This needs to change if we want to promote mobility for disabled artists, she says. Organisers need to be asking themselves: what can we do? How can we improve the situation?

Let disabled artists work on their art, says Maria Vlachou, they are not consultants and are not there to do an accessibility evaluation of a venue, but there are consultants out there who specialise in access who can be hired for this purpose.

Furthermore, Maria Vlachou recommends always evaluating what has been done in terms of accessibility. Asking for feedback after the event and seeing what went well and what can be improved will create a better environment for disabled artists and culture professionals in the future, she says.

Policy frameworks and funding challenges

Freedom of movement in the EU

'We all think now within the EU there are no borders anymore, so moving around is very easy. It is one of the fundamental four freedoms: freedom of movement to live, to work or to study, with some conditions attached. Any EU citizen has that right, except if you look in more detail, actually persons with disabilities in practice are excluded from this right in many, many instances.'

Marie Denninghaus, Senior Policy Coordinator, European Disability Forum (Belgium)

Marie Denninghaus outlines how although inclusion and disability rights were mentioned for the first time in an EU treaty in 1997, many of the same obstacles persist over 20 years later. At the moment, if you have a recognised disability in your Member State, you have to undergo a disability assessment procedure, she explains, which can be very lengthy and very complicated, involving medical checks and so on. This assessment is not EU-wide, however, so as soon as you envisage moving to another country, you risk losing your disability status.

In her experience, she has seen that this can mean:

- Completely losing recognition of your disability, as not every disability is recognised in every country. As a result, you may have access to support for your disability in one country, but not in another.
- You have to undergo the entire assessment procedure again, with a different result. For instance, a disability recognised at 100% in one country may be recognised only at 80% in another.
- The level of benefits are different. For example, you may receive 1,000 EUR a month in one country and only 500 EUR in another for the same disability.

To improve mobility of workers, EU citizens receiving unemployment benefits have the right to move to another EU country for three months to look for a new job with continued access to these benefits. However, this does not apply to disability benefits, nor many other social assistance benefits, says Marie Denninghaus.

This leads to people refusing even permanent job offers in other Member States in her experience because they are afraid of losing their national benefits or because they know that it will take a long time to get reassessed. For a year-long contract, many would not risk it, she says, because the assessment process can take as long as the duration of the contract, and in the meantime they have to cover all their costs themselves. This includes personal assistance, assistive devices, accessible housing and so on.

Even for very short travel, healthcare is a factor, she underlines, as the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) offers the right only to emergency medical treatment.

‘So what if you have a health condition, related to a disability or not? And you need dialysis or something every week and you need to go to a different hospital? That is still so much administration, and it’s always on you, the person, to find that information, to research, to make sure you have all the information in which format they require it, in which language. It’s a huge burden on the individual.’

Marie Denninghaus, Senior Policy Coordinator,
European Disability Forum (Belgium)

Changes needed in policy

Policy is a challenge, acknowledges Onn Sokny. The Cambodian Ministry of Fine Arts and Culture is very supportive and wants to promote art in Cambodia. The current cultural policy started in 2014, but a lot of aspects are missing in terms of inclusivity, she says, and inclusion of disabled people in the arts was not mentioned that well in the policy.

Public administrations need to educate themselves, says Irene van Zeeland. At all levels, from local to the European Union, they need to learn about the situation and needs of disabled artists. The

European Union is making progress after some years of lobbying to think about how to make this profession, these opportunities, more accessible for disabled artists, but there is still work to be done in her view.

For Marc Brew, the effect of policy is self-evident. Where there is a law, like the *Americans with Disability Act*, disabled people are empowered to have access. Similarly, in China a barrier-free environment law has been introduced for the first time, Lynn Fu recounts. With this in place, all the public institutions, including cultural institutions, have to make sure their space is accessible. In reality, there is still a long way to go, but the law being there means at least something must be done to meet the criteria.

The proposal for a European Disability Card²⁹ is due to be adopted in the autumn of 2024. Marie Denninghaus explains that this card shows a person has a disability and entitles them to access to the same advantages as a national with a disability (excluding access to social security). For persons who are touring, for example, this can reduce the stress of repeated explanations and proving their disability, as well as reducing the difficulties imposed by language barriers.

However, there are remaining issues, she says, such as having to research what the systems of each country offer as advantages. As she sees it, the burden is still very much on the individual, both knowing where to find the information they need and where to find it in a language they understand.

There has to be change at the top of the system, says Elen Øyen. The problems that exist are systemic, she says, and so changes made at the highest levels are essential, and have the capacity to permeate across the whole system.

Coming together from different countries, listening to and understanding each other, sharing skills, best practices and challenges, will benefit everyone, says Onn Sokny. There needs to be better policy for disabled artists, for example, especially concerning

²⁹ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1139>

accessibility costs, and to her it is a priority to join forces and advocate for this as a global view.

As a sector and with policymakers, create spaces where we can get in dialogue, learn from each other and build up trust, says Lisette Reuter. Trust is essential and the scale of the change we need to make means that we must go on this learning journey together, she says.

As a minimum, there should be common guidelines in the EU on the barriers posed by disability assessments in different countries, Marie Denninghaus says. As with culture, social policy is also not a 100% EU competence and the EU therefore cannot legislate in this area. However, by proposing guidelines, she explains, more harmonisation can be encouraged, reducing the burden on individuals to understand several different national systems.

Adequate funding and budgets

Finding funding for the arts is always a challenge, and specific funding for disabled artists is rare. Onn Sokny cites an art partnership that they work with that provides funding, but it is not specifically for disabled people, so mentoring is often needed for disabled artists to be able to access that funding.

In France, says Magali Saby, the healing power of art is well understood and cultural projects in hospitals and care centres and so on get funded regularly. However, the level of professional recognition for disabled artists, the awareness that you can be a disabled artist and a professional at the same time is still too limited, she says, and this narrows the diversity of projects funded.

For Nadine McKenzie it can be a challenge to find funding to bring in international artists to the Unmute ArtsAbility Festival.³⁰ They cover flights, accommodation, stipends, and then there are artist fees. For this, the exchange rate can pose a challenge,

because it is quite costly for South Africa to pay a European artist, whose rate could be twice as much as a local artist in addition to the exchange rate.

The lack of budget for accessibility in traditional cultural funding programmes, at EU and other levels, is a problem, says Lisette Reuter. These are usually taken from the production budget. Any company working with mixed ability artists is put in a disadvantaged position next to companies who do not work inclusively because of this, she says. Slowly this is beginning to change in Germany, she continues. In North Rhine Westphalia, an additional 5,000 EUR is available for accessibility costs. However, this is not proportionate. Working with D/deaf artists in a production, for example, sign language translators across a six-week production time can cost 30,000 EUR.

The current allocation of funding for people with disabilities in the arts is unbalanced, says Magali Saby. The funds are often there, but in her view they need to be better allocated, supporting artistic projects by disabled artists and not only projects for disabled people in care centres.

Access to funding for artists with disabilities should not be restricted by the country that they are based in, says Onn Sokny. If the country that an artist is resident in puts up this barrier, then both the country and the artist is left behind internationally.

Accessibility costs should have their own budget in cultural funding programmes, says Lisette Reuter. A company working inclusively should not be in a disadvantaged position compared to companies that do not, all because they have to take the budget from the normal production costs.

Irene van Zeeland agrees and recommends that departments in all EU Member States have dedicated accessibility budgets, as it is so often financial aspects that block mobility and opportunities for disabled artists.

³⁰ <https://artsability.com/>

Facing the challenges: projects and practices

Epic Arts (Cambodia)

At **Epic Arts**,³¹ they believe that art is the way to transform as well as to spread the message about the issues that disabled artists have. Of the 54 staff in Epic Arts, 70% of them have a disability. They run three programmes.

The **Education Programme**³² is an inclusive art course providing education for youth with disabilities (18 to 35). Running since 2009, it is a full-time residential two-year course in which they learn different skills in dance, drama and so on. Epic Arts offers a lot of support, relating to family, access and budget, as well as emotional support. Being inclusive is not just about providing skills, but also making a space to explore what they want to be, develop their potential and build their confidence.

Five generations of the programme have run to date and each generation has evolved. Originally, the focus was purely on dance, but now it includes dance, the arts and hospitality skills. Not everyone wants to be a dancer after their experience in the programme and Onn Sokny says it is not their job to force them to be. Their job is rather to explore and to be a bridge for the youth to explore what they want to be.

The **Epic Arts Dance Company** comprises professional dancers who completed the inclusive art course. There are different teachers and choreographers, including one choreographer from the UK. They come and work with the company, sharing a range of different approaches and skills to allow the artists to explore and perform in new and different ways.

There are six people in the team of the company, representing the diversity of Cambodia and making performances relating to different issues in Cambodia. When they perform, nationally and internationally, they advocate for disability inclusion through the arts. They also work with international schools within the country, exploring the theme of social inclusion.

Finally, there is the **Epic Art Café**,³³ which is not artistic, but rather for hospitality, and creates jobs for disabled people who do not wish to be artists.

Un-Label (Germany)

As a performing arts company touring on national and international level, Un-Label³⁴ frequently encountered inexperience and lack of knowledge among theatre staff, especially among the leaders of big cultural organisations, but also willingness to learn. Every time and in all countries, they always got the same feedback: the staff of the organisations had learned so much from the work with artists of mixed ability and the diversity that they brought on stage and into the working environment was very enriching for both audience and staff.

This experience led to the project **Access Maker**,³⁵ in which Un-Label supported three large city theatres (Düsseldorf Schauspielhaus, Theater Dortmund and Comedia Theater Köln) on inclusive opening processes, with workshops, seminars, training programmes, production supervising and more.

They also offered every interested cultural actor in Germany free advice online and by phone and

³¹ <https://epicarts.org.uk/>

³² The programmes of Epic Arts are listed under 'our programmes': <https://epicarts.org.uk/>

³³ <https://epicarts.org.uk/pages/epic-arts-cafe>

³⁴ <https://un-label.eu/en/>

³⁵ <https://un-label.eu/en/project/access-maker/>

ran creative labs (four days of intensive training with international experts). With more than 20 international experts, they reached out to over 140 participants. Beyond this, smaller groups received more intensive training. They focused on all areas, including programmes, audience, staff etc. Having all these different areas in mind, they tried to make all processes more accessible and inclusive.

Across the three-year project, the three theatres created 20+ accessible performances. This was new to them and involved working completely differently artistically. Through these productions, they reached out to over 35,000 audience members. They also trained more than 1,400 employees from the theatres and other cultural actors in Germany.

Training was carried out either by a team of disabled cultural workers or a tandem team of disabled and non-disabled cultural workers. 80% of the trainers were cultural workers with disabilities. The next step for Un-Label is to set up a training programme for cultural workers with disabilities so that they are in a position to give advice to cultural organisations.

Now the demand for training is greater than the available resources. However, the federal state and regional administration are both offering greater support in order to scale up their work, as well as support given by other sponsors. The level of interest also gave them the possibility to run another business model as a performing arts company. The income goes back into their artistic programmes and allows them to offer jobs for disabled cultural workers.

Policymakers are starting to support this kind of project, seeing that they need to promote sustainable capacity-building projects to train people. Cultural organisations are also more prepared to invest time, money and resources to initiate a transformation

process. The same shift is happening in many European countries. Often disabled people would come last in culture sector discussions on diversity, but this too is changing. The willingness to take action is now there.

During the pandemic, Un-label set up a project called **United Inclusion**,³⁶ building on the report *Disabled Artists in the Mainstream: A New Cultural Agenda for Europe*.³⁷ They created online seminars with funders from federal, state level, regional, the community level, as well as private foundations and private sponsors, putting them together with disabled cultural workers and artists. They were then trained by the cultural workers and artists, learning about their needs and about accessibility for artists and also for the audience.

This was the first time that many policymakers and decision makers from big foundations had entered into dialogue with disabled people. By creating a safe space and a good atmosphere, the decision makers could ask all the questions they wanted and it became apparent that they did not have a good understanding of accessibility costs. For example, most of them didn't know how much the costs for a sign language translator would be by the hour.

The result of this project is guidelines (in German),³⁸ which Un-label created together with the funders. The guidelines concern how to change the funding system so that it becomes more accessible for disabled artists, but also for all cultural organisations to become more accessible both for artists and audiences.

Since this programme, there has been a noticeable change in the design of a lot of funding programmes in Germany, with many more now thinking about accessibility costs.

³⁶ <https://un-label.eu/en/project/united-inclusion/>

³⁷ https://www.disabilityartsinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Report_A-new-cultural-agenda-for-Europe-FINAL-050320.pdf

³⁸ https://un-label.eu/wp-content/uploads/United-Inclusion_Guideline-gerechte-Kulturfoerderung.pdf

Acesso Cultura (Portugal)

Acesso Cultura³⁹ is an association of cultural professionals and cultural organisations that has always had training on accessibility as its core business. They work with a core group of cultural professionals and organisations in Portugal that are investing in access. Among those involved in running the training programmes and consultancy are people with disabilities.

The most recent project of Acesso Cultura is called **AAA: All Areas Access**,⁴⁰ which is co-funded by Creative Europe. It brings together Portuguese, Italian and Belgian partners to work on making live concerts more accessible to D/deaf audiences and performers. The project aims to investigate, together with the D/deaf people who frequent music clubs, the most frequent problems created by our way of organising events: communication, the box office, the bar, the shows, to study possible solutions together.

Some years ago, Acesso Cultura invited a British colleague from an organisation called Attitude is Everything,⁴¹ which also works on making live concerts accessible to disabled people, who sent them her access rider. Acesso Cultura have since produced access riders,⁴² which an artist can send to an organisation they are going to work with or an organisation can send the access rider to the artist, so that the artist can give them feedback.

‘If we use access riders, if we have the curiosity and the openness to treat each person as a person, find out what their specific needs are and adapt to those needs, we can do better. There is basic knowledge we should all have and we should look for it.’

Maria Vlachou, Executive Director, Acesso Cultura (Portugal)

Unmute (South Africa)

Unmute⁴³ was founded in 2013 by Nadine McKenzie and three of her colleagues. They all worked for another organisation doing similar work, but in 2012 this organisation had to close down due to lack of funding among other issues. Many disabled artists that were working in the organisation were then left without work and with few opportunities, as not many organisations cater for persons with disabilities.

Together they started a production also called Unmute, that dealt with raising awareness on disability and inclusion and integration within the arts community and society as a whole in South Africa. The production did extremely well and it worked for well over a year.

Surprised by the positive reception, it sparked the idea to start a project whereby they would travel around to both mainstream and special needs schools and do performances and awareness campaigns, while also performing the work on various platforms around the country. This was hard, but it also did well and they decided to start the organisation in 2013-2014.

A large part of the work that they do focuses on education. By bringing mainstream and special needs school pupils together, they create more awareness on inclusion, such as how we can be together in one space, coexist together and learn from each other, both in our society and in the arts.

Many of the able-bodied learners do not know anyone of their own age with a disability. Through their practice, they get them to know one another, their life experiences and where they come from. Whereas in the beginning they stay separate on the two sides of the room with their existing school friends, closer to the end, they all mix up together, exchanging numbers and trying to stay in contact

³⁹ <https://accessculture-portugal.org/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.allareasaccess.eu/>

⁴¹ <https://attitudeiseverything.org.uk/>

⁴² <https://accessculture-portugal.org/services/resources-and-publications/>

⁴³ <https://linktr.ee/unmutedance>

with one another. It goes beyond the art, it is about these young people getting to know one another.

Unmute also has an annual festival called the **Artsability Festival**,⁴⁴ which is an inclusive festival to which they invite different works, artists' organisations both locally and internationally to perform, as well as offering residencies.

One part takes place at Artscape Theatre, and another part they take to the communities, in art centres or community halls, transforming the space. Getting to the theatre is quite easy for an able-

bodied person (there are buses and trains that stop nearby), but the public transport is not accessible for people with disabilities. Taking the performances to the communities is part of addressing this disparity.

They also collaborate with an artist in Cape Town that does theatre in the backyard, which a lot of people have been interested in and people have turned up in huge numbers. There is none of the reservation and etiquette of the theatre; in the community space, people are very expressive. The level of engagement between the artists and the people is much greater.

⁴⁴ <https://artsability.com/>

Desk research: analysis of recent literature

by Jordi Baltà Portolés

This section summarises evidence from recent literature addressing opportunities for professional development among disabled artists and culture professionals, with particular attention to the factors that may enable or hinder engagement in international mobility. In practice, opportunities to learn, work and network across borders are significantly influenced by factors at national level – e.g. opportunities to access education and training, take part in auditions and develop a professional career, information and knowledge on accessibility and disability existing within the cultural and creative ecosystem, funding schemes, etc.

There are other ways in which developments at the national and the international level intersect – for instance, in countries where limited professional opportunities for disabled artists exist, international engagement may open alternative routes, and it can also contribute to raising awareness about needs at the domestic level, as shall be seen. Furthermore, several of the factors that will be examined, such as the availability of information and knowledge, are relevant both nationally and internationally. As a result, the text collects evidence addressing both the national and the international dimensions, while being particularly concerned with the latter. Most of the resources analysed relate to the European context, although some of the issues addressed could have parallels in other world regions.

The section builds on On the Move's previous initiatives in this field, including the *Time to Act* report series, conducted in the context of the EU-funded project Europe Beyond Access project, which examined the current state of the sector across Europe, with particular emphasis on the availability of information and knowledge to facilitate access for disabled audiences and artists.⁴⁵ Some findings from those reports, commissioned by the British Council, have been integrated in this literature review, where relevant. Examples and evidence presented in the previous chapters of this publication have also been considered.

⁴⁵ Baltà Portolés, J.; Ellingsworth, J.; and Floch, Y. (2021), *Time to Act. How lack of knowledge in the cultural sector creates barriers for disabled artists and audiences*. On the Move / British Council, available at <http://on-the-move.org/resources/library/time-act-how-lack-knowledge-cultural-sector-creates-barriers-disabled-artists-0>; and Baltà Portolés, J.; and Ellingsworth, J. (2023), *Time to Act: Two Years On. Data-led insights on Performing Arts & Disability in Europe*. On the Move / British Council, available at <http://on-the-move.org/resources/library/time-act-two-years-data-led-insights-performing-arts-and-disability-europe>

Information, knowledge and the transformation of mindsets

Previous research has shown how performing arts professionals and organisations, including programmers and funders, frequently have limited knowledge about how to make their programmes more inclusive and accessible for disabled audiences and artists, as well as about work done by disabled artists. This is despite the availability of many reports, checklists, and toolkits providing guidance in these areas, partly because these resources are not always widely circulated, or may be available only in one language. In this context, disabled artists and culture professionals are often seen as critical sources of information to understand the challenges and provide advice on inclusion and accessibility.⁴⁶

Relevant information and knowledge in this field relates to a diverse range of areas. Firstly, it concerns technical information on how to make practices, venues and events accessible, in physical, sensory, cognitive or communication terms. Secondly, it relates to knowledge about existing work by disabled artists, including that which may be done in collaboration with non-disabled artists. Finally, it is also important to address the stereotypes and misconceptions existing about disability, and consider the change in mindsets necessary to ensure full accessibility and inclusion and the exercise of rights, including those recognised in the UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006). Information, knowledge and the transformation of mindsets are cross-cutting elements, which affect, and in turn may be addressed by, practices and opportunities in other

relevant areas, including access to education and training, professional development opportunities, policy, funding, and international engagement.

Toolkits and other practical resources

For more than a decade, a set of guides, manuals and similar resources providing guidance to increase accessibility in the arts have been published in several European countries. While priority has generally been given to disabled audiences, rather than disabled artists, some of the guidance may be applicable to both (for instance, more accessible buildings, events or communication, if addressed comprehensively, should benefit both audiences and artists), and some publications have also addressed the needs of disabled artists in particular.⁴⁷ Previous research has warned, however, that further efforts are needed to make these resources better known, since arts professionals frequently indicate that they lack knowledge on how to make the field more accessible.⁴⁸

One of the ways in which knowledge can be increased, and for events and venues to become more accessible, is through direct consultation with disabled artists – thus reflecting the well-known slogan of disability activism, “Nothing about us without us”.⁴⁹ A good example of this is the ‘Access rider’ designed by Acceso cultura, with a view to enabling arts organisations to ask disabled artists about their needs and requirements – in a range of areas including travel, accommodation,

⁴⁶ Baltà Portolés, J.; Ellingsworth, J.; and Floch, Y. (2021) and Baltà Portolés, J.; and Ellingsworth, J. (2023).

⁴⁷ See e.g. Quinten, S.; Reuter, L.; and Almpanis, A. (eds.) (2020), *Creability Practical Guide: Creative and Artistic Tools for Inclusive Cultural Work*. Un-Label, available at <https://un-label.eu/en/the-new-creability-practical-guide-creative-and-artistic-tools-for-inclusive-cultural-work-is-published/>; and Festival.org (2020), *Outdoor Arts Festivals and Events: Access Guide. To support festivals and events in finding inclusive practices when working with D/deaf and disabled audiences and artists*. Without Walls, available at <https://www.withoutwalls.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Without-Walls-Outdoor-Arts-Festivals-and-Events-Access-Guide-2020.pdf>. For additional references, see Baltà Portolés, J.; Ellingsworth, J.; and Floch, Y. (2021).

⁴⁸ Baltà Portolés, J.; Ellingsworth, J.; and Floch, Y. (2021).

⁴⁹ For example in relation to digital experiences, ENCC states that “(...) disabled, deaf and neurodivergent artists are experts in their own needs, and demand to be listened to. They also asked for an aesthetics of access to be at the heart of all cultural work and processes, and for support in fighting against systemic ableism in all sectors of the arts and culture.” in Perineau, L.; Huyghebaert, P. (March 2023), *On Digital Ethics for Cultural Organisations*. European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC), available at <https://encc.eu/articles/on-digital-ethics-for-cultural-organisations>

spaces, contracting, etc.⁵⁰ The rider was inspired by the work of other organisations, including Attitude is Everything.⁵¹ Consulting beneficiaries, including disabled artists, is of course relevant in all circumstances, both in national and international engagement.

While consultation with disabled artists and culture professionals to increase accessibility is to be commended, some potential downsides need to be considered as well. One of them concerns the risk that disabled artists may be asked to provide expertise about disability and then not compensated or credited.⁵² In this respect, it is worth recalling that disabled artists and culture professionals have frequently been identified as the main source consulted by arts organisations when they have a question or a need in relation to supporting or programming work by disabled artists.⁵³ A potential downside of this is the tendency to rely on a few disabled artists identified as 'experts', who are then in turn prevented from devoting sufficient time to artistic work, which is their original motivation.⁵⁴ Ultimately, the goal should be to strengthen information and knowledge across the entire arts ecosystem, thus making such overreliance on a limited number of people unnecessary and contributing to a more inclusive and accessible arts sector altogether.

Recent publications have suggested that cultural and creative sectors are increasingly knowledgeable and have expertise to enhance accessibility to venues and events.⁵⁵ A report produced by international performing arts network IETM following a debate held in 2022 illustrated this with a number of examples in areas including relaxed performances or inclusive and equitable production models.⁵⁶ Others have warned, however, that while knowledge exists, this is not often put into practice or its implementation may remain fragmented, rather than systematic.⁵⁷ Participants in the Cultural Mobility Webinar on "The International Mobility of Disabled Artists and Culture Professionals" also warned of the difficulties encountered in international travel and accommodation, in areas such as accessibility to transport and limited understanding of disabled artists' needs when booking tours or seeking accommodation.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic may have had a detrimental impact on progress in this field, including by preventing disabled artists from being more engaged in professional and organisational development and support, as well as by diverting public attention from the specific needs of disabled people.⁵⁸ Other authors have argued, however, that, at least in some contexts, creative work and activism by disabled artists, culture professionals and activists has contributed to a greater awareness

⁵⁰ Acesso cultura (2023a), *Access rider for culture professionals – a template*.

Acesso cultura, available at https://accessculture-portugal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/access-rider_template_en.docx and Acesso Cultura (2023), *How (and when) to talk about disability? A guide for cultural communication professionals and journalists*.

Acesso Cultura, available at <https://accessculture-portugal.org/2023/10/11/when-and-how-to-talk-about-disability/>

⁵¹ See e.g. Attitude is Everything (2022), *Just Ask. How to ask about and meet the accessibility requirements of artists + crew*.

Attitude Is Everything, available at <https://attitudeiseverything.org.uk/industry/working-with-disabled-artists/just-ask-guide/>; or Flanders Arts Institute (27 June 2024), *Anti-validity work in the arts: tools and advice*, available at

<https://www.kunsten.be/en/advice-orientation/anti-validistisch-werken-in-de-kunsten/>; and Musicians' Union & Ivors Academy (2023), *Access Rider for disabled musicians, performers, artists, composers and technical staff in venues*. Musicians' Union & Ivors Academy, available at <https://musiciansunion.org.uk/legal-money/workplace-rights-and-legislation/equality-rights/disabled-musicians-rights-and-support-at-work/access-riders-for-musicians>

⁵² Amidei, A.; and Flys, E.S.V. (2022), 'Improving Accessibility and Inclusion in the Performing Arts for People with Disabilities: Moving Beyond a "Checking-the-Boxes" Approach', in Jung, Y.; Vakharia, N.; and Vecchio, M. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Arts and Cultural Management*. Oxford University Press.

⁵³ 49% and 56% of arts professionals surveyed in the *Time to Act* reports of 2021 and 2023 respectively mentioned disabled artists and disabled culture professionals as the main source of information in this case. The figure was significantly higher than any other source. Baltà Portolés, J.; Ellingsworth, J.; and Floch, Y. (2021) and Baltà Portolés, J.; and Ellingsworth, J. (2023).

⁵⁴ Baltà Portolés, J.; and Ellingsworth, J. (2023).

⁵⁵ Martin, F. (2022), *Work & disability in the arts (from the IETM Belgrade Plenary Meeting)*.

IETM, available at <https://www.ietm.org/en/resources/reports/work-disability-in-the-arts>

⁵⁶ Martin (2022).

⁵⁷ Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy (2023), *Empowering Creativity: Implementing the UNESCO 1980 Recommendation Concerning the Status of the Artist. 5th Global Consultation*. UNESCO, available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387452>

⁵⁸ Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy (2023); Baltà Portolés, J.; Ellingsworth, J.; and Floch, Y. (2021).

of the issues raised, and that the pandemic did actually help to raise awareness of the challenges experienced by disabled people and the need to address them.⁵⁹

Addressing stereotypes and changing mindsets

The availability of information and knowledge on disability and accessibility should, in the long term, contribute to transforming the perception of disability. Indeed, it has been argued that '[artists] with disabilities are stigmatised within their own industry. This stems from the misconception that art created by persons with disabilities is only a part of their exploration and self-expression. It is not regarded as professional work and should be exhibited in mainstream galleries and events, instead of being considered 'too niche'. It is crucial to start viewing artists with disabilities as high-level professionals, able to bring innovation and game-changing ideas.'⁶⁰ Of course, these misconceptions can be related to prevailing mindsets about disability in contemporary society.

Presenting work by disabled artists can be a way to transform existing perceptions and contribute to a more complex, multidimensional understanding of disability, recognising the agency of disabled people: 'Inclusive artistic activities raise awareness of disability issues and have had very positive results... More attention needs to be given to funding artistic projects in which persons with disabilities are displayed as fully determined, multi-faceted human beings with virtues like everybody else, to avoid approaches to disabilities which are unrealistic and based on compassion or exaggeration.'⁶¹ This should be made visible both in the media, which

have a potential to help transform mindsets and present role models for younger disabled people,⁶² and in the arts, where unique aesthetics in artistic production should be celebrated, challenging the more 'normative' forms.⁶³

Designing inclusive methodologies which enable encounters between disabled and non-disabled artists and culture professionals may also be a way to generate new understandings on disability and develop more inclusive, cohesive practices. An example of this is ShareMusic & Performing Arts' methodological development work with inclusive ensembles, focused on the methods of composer Karen Power, addressing the development of a common language, the generation of an open approach to creation, the acknowledgement of the need to try, explore and fail, in-depth listening, the sharing of time and space, and inclusive leadership, among other things. Inclusive methodologies can help to challenge traditional ways of doing things and enable everyone to identify with the perspective of others: '*What happens in an ensemble/group where everyone gets to experience leading and being led?*' Karen highlights that if leadership is allowed to move around within an ensemble, it offers an opportunity for ensemble members to see each other in different roles. In this way, each individual can gain a deeper understanding of how fellow musicians in the ensemble communicate and create under different conditions. It also gives the musicians a chance to take a closer look at their own role.'⁶⁴

A closer understanding of disability, its implications and potential, should go hand-in-hand with a more complex appreciation of the diversity of disability conditions and circumstances. This also implies the development of a broader intersectional lens, that

⁵⁹ Wolfbrown & Patternmakers (2023), "How the pandemic has changed audience accessibility", *Audience Outlook Monitor*, Australia Council for the Arts, available at <https://www.thepatternmakers.com.au/blog/2023/audience-outlook-monitor-access>

⁶⁰ Cassani, I. (2020), *The Art of Inclusion. Disability and Diversity in Arts and Culture. Conference report*. European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) and European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC), available at <https://cloud.encc.eu/s/3qpSb7FzWRtxBZK>, p. 3.

⁶¹ Cassani (2020), pp. 11-13.

⁶² Cassani (2020). See also Alexandre, D.; and Vlachou, M. (2023), *How (and when) to talk about disability? A guide for cultural communication professionals and journalists*. Acesso cultura, available at <https://accessculture-portugal.org/how-and-when-to-talk-about-disability/>

⁶³ Cassani (2020).

⁶⁴ Åsenlöf, Z. (2022), *The Inclusive Co-creative Ensemble*. ShareMusic & Performing Arts, available at <https://www.sharemusic.se/resources-and-inspiration/book-available>, p. 42. Emphasis in the original.

is how the experience of disability may be further affected by other forms of difference, disadvantage or inequality, such as those generated by age, race,

origin, gender, or sexual orientation, and what this entails in policy responses and other types of projects and activities.⁶⁵

Access to the profession

Research conducted in some countries has shown that members of minorities and disadvantaged groups, including disabled people, are underrepresented in cultural and creative sectors, both in general terms and, even more acutely, in senior positions: in the UK, for instance, '[women], racially minoritised people, those with a working-class background, people with a disability, and those living outside of London and the South East, are all significantly underrepresented in the creative and cultural industries, particularly in senior decision-making roles and key creative professions...'⁶⁶ As noted earlier, overlapping, intersectional factors of disadvantage place some groups at further disadvantage: 'Someone with a disability from a working-class background is three times less likely to work in a creative occupation than someone who is privileged and able-bodied.'⁶⁷

Furthermore, it has also been suggested that, for certain groups and cultural professionals, including in particular women, young people and disabled people, there is a higher likelihood of precarious working conditions.⁶⁸ The lack of equitable pay can be one of several obstacles to the participation of disabled artists, particularly where public support systems to enable access to employment for disabled people are absent or experience budgetary cuts.⁶⁹

Several other obstacles render access to work difficult for disabled artists. Research has identified the important role played by "gatekeepers", including educational institutions, programmers, curators and producers, suggesting that more attention should be paid to their practices, as well as to ensuring that they become more diverse internally, ultimately resembling more the overall make-up of the population.⁷⁰ The place of higher education institutions in areas like theatre and dance has been identified as critical, as young disabled people frequently feel excluded from them. As a result, disabled artists have often had to follow alternative routes into professionalisation. While an increasing openness has been identified in some countries and institutions, this remains a challenging issue.⁷¹

Neither the difficulties encountered by disabled artists in accessing higher education nor those that relate to access and working conditions in cultural and creative sectors are isolated. Indeed, they are interdependent with other factors existing in society and in the cultural sector which are analysed elsewhere in this section – e.g. the lack of suitable legal and policy frameworks, lack of knowledge, or lack of role models. In this respect, and despite increasing awareness and new initiatives to foster accessibility and inclusion, access to, and continuity in, the profession remain difficult, as research conducted in Norway has suggested: '... the barriers to working as an artist with a disability in Norway

⁶⁵ Snijders, J.; Clarke, M.; van der Graaf, A.; De Stefano, V.; Kimenai, F.; and Tajtáková, M. (2020), *The status and working conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals*. European Expert Network on Culture and Audiovisual (EENCA), available at <https://eenc.eu/uploads/eenc-eu/2021/04/21/07b74a1edf6f782478c55bd85899219c.pdf>

⁶⁶ Wreyford, N.; O'Brien, D.; and Dent, T. (2021), *Creative Majority: An APPG for Creative Diversity report on 'What Works' to support, encourage and improve diversity, equity and inclusion in the creative sector. A report for the All Party Parliamentary Group for Creative Diversity*. Available at <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/cultural/projects/creative-majority>, p. 35.

⁶⁷ Wreyford et al. (2021), p. 35.

⁶⁸ Snijders et al. (2020).

⁶⁹ Amidei and Flys (2022).

⁷⁰ Baltà Portolés, J.; Ellingsworth, J.; and Floch, Y. (2021).

⁷¹ Baltà Portolés, J.; and Ellingsworth, J. (2023).

are greater than the enablers, and ... the barriers are systemic and normalised in the arts and culture field as well as on a societal level.⁷²

This set of interconnected obstacles means that, very often, young disabled people may not see education, training and professional development in the arts and culture as a feasible option: '... the main barriers that usually prevent persons with disabilities from attending drama classes are the lack of accessible theatre groups in accessible locations and the confidence of persons with disabilities who believe they cannot try it.'⁷³ In

order to address this, the role of educators and others who can encourage young people to see this as an option is very important: 'Although there are now more accessible training opportunities, young disabled persons must be empowered to believe they can pursue a career in the arts. The role of teachers and mentors is fundamental. They must be properly trained to be able to support and inspire disabled art students and emerging artists, a job that is often gladly carried out by professional artists with disabilities. More funding opportunities are needed for schools and professionals.'⁷⁴

Making arts organisations more inclusive

Changing paradigms and practices

Educational and training organisations are only one of several types of bodies that should experience changes towards accessibility and inclusion. The transformation of mindsets, paradigms and practices at all levels is a precondition to enable disabled artists and culture professionals to fully engage in the sector.

In terms of mindsets and paradigms, several disabled artists, activists and researchers have emphasised the need to move 'away from a medicalised way of thinking about disability, which is essentially a deficit model that is about what disabled people can't do. It's about making assumptions about what disabled people can do and how well, or not... So a really thorough grounding in the social mobility model of disability gives people working in theatres a vocabulary, the confidence and actually the

mandate to engage in some really creative problem solving. And it puts the responsibility where it belongs. Disabled people are not disadvantaged or vulnerable; we are made disadvantaged and vulnerable.'⁷⁵

Adopting a social model of disability, which understands that disability is not a personal, independent condition, but rather one which is relational and dependent on how society prevents some people from fully participating, or 'disables' them, implies therefore considering how organisations need to revise their own practices. This should go hand-in-hand with challenging 'ableist' paradigms or approaches – that is, the prejudice and/or discrimination against disabled people.⁷⁶ As *Time to Act: Two Years On* suggested, a cultural change or mindset shift is needed that operates at multiple levels: 'revising the canons or narratives which determine which bodies are allowed on

⁷² Østern, T. P.; Olsen, T.; Øyen, E.; Lien, L.; and Holum, L. C. (2023), *Artist – an accessible profession? A research project about artists with disabilities in Norway. English summary*. Kulturdirektoratet, available at <https://www.kulturdirektoratet.no/web/guest/vis-publikasjon/-/tilgjengelige-kunstnerskap->, p. 3.

⁷³ Cassani (2020), p. 5.

⁷⁴ Cassani (2020), p. 8.

⁷⁵ Michèle Taylor, Director for Change, Ramps on the Moon, and Disability Equality Consultant, quoted in Wreyford et al. (2021), p. 78.

⁷⁶ For example, read the discussion with Charlotte Puiseux in Moulin, M. (coord.) (2024). *Cultivating and Safeguarding Inclusive Cultural Havens: Diversify, Embrace, and Heighten Awareness*. Reset! Atlas of Independent Culture and Media vol. 6. Lyon: Reset! Network, available at <https://reset-network.eu/atlas-independent-culture-media/>

stage, involving disabled people in decision-making, ensuring that higher education institutions in the arts are open to disabled people, allowing young disabled people to have disabled artists as role models, ... etc.⁷⁷

Increasing awareness and knowledge about disability issues in the arts and in broader society, activism and networking by organisations representing or advocating for disabled artists, and initiatives in legislation and policy have meant that, at least in some countries, some progress in the transformation of organisations and system is being seen. Drawing on examples from Canada, Sweden, Latvia and Scotland, an IETM conference report from 2022 argued that '[change] is palpable. Panellists shared signs of structural change around them: funding frameworks, production models and touring practices that raise the bar by enhancing the visibility of disabled artists and audiences and centering their needs.⁷⁸ The report also suggested that, in terms of (performing) arts production, three dimensions should be reconsidered: representation (who's involved?), content (what is the work about, and are those directly concerned involved in the process, and duly recognised?) and process (how is the work made, who's taking decisions, what are the working conditions?).⁷⁹

Several authors have identified time organisation and management as an area which has historically been determined by 'ableist' approaches and needs revising for the benefit of disabled artists. 'As an example, building flexibility into a rehearsal schedule would allow more time to make accommodations for disabled performers or technicians, thus providing more space for them to do their work...'⁸⁰ As part of the Europe Beyond Access project, for instance, Sweden's Skånes Dansteater recruited a disabled dancer and choreographer – in addition to contributing to a more diverse representation on stage, a 'ripple effect' was visible behind the stage,

since this led to revising the scheduling of daily training practices, the notion of 'warming up' and the guidance provided to guest trainers. In the case of the latter, an information sheet on working with disabled artists and diverse bodies was produced, which would allow trainers to take that knowledge to other organisations, thus multiplying its effect.⁸¹

As it often happens when measures towards increased accessibility are adopted, steps in this area could benefit a broader cross-section of people: 'Moreover, rethinking long workdays has intersectional benefits that would increase equity for many involved in the performing arts. Flexibility in rehearsal could help performers who are caregivers, are parents, or have second jobs... Just by implementing a more "humane" rehearsal schedule, an organization would put inclusion into practice. Relatedly, the pandemic has shown the potential of remote work and flexible hours. Therefore, why not consider possibilities like this that will positively impact people with diverse requirements and needs?'⁸²

How to facilitate change

Several drivers or enablers for transforming organisations can be identified. The engagement of disabled people as consultants or staff members has frequently been identified as a determining factor.⁸³ Despite this, it is important to underline that responsibility for change should not lie in the hands of individuals, including those directly affected, but should rather encompass organisations as a whole, thus contributing to the continuity of policies and measures.

Organisational change can also be enabled through the establishment of specific policies or funding programmes that are meant to support transformation. The Access Maker project

⁷⁷ Baltà Portolés, J.; and Ellingsworth, J. (2023), p. 54.

⁷⁸ Martin (2022), p. 3.

⁷⁹ Martin (2022).

⁸⁰ Amidei and Flys (2022), page number not available in digital version of text.

⁸¹ Baltà Portolés, J.; and Ellingsworth, J. (2023).

⁸² Amidei and Flys (2022), page number not available in digital version of text.

⁸³ See e.g. Amidei and Flys (2022)

implemented in Germany by Un-Label, initially in Nord Rhein-Westphalia and later at federal level, is supporting several cultural organisations in their transition towards inclusion and accessibility, providing training and advice covering many areas of their operations, and generating a safe space where to raise questions on disability.⁸⁴

Striving to ensure full accessibility to organisations, including physical, sensory, cognitive and communication accessibility remains a critical enabler. Whereas international standards such as CRPD and legislation in many countries have emphasised accessibility, and particularly physical accessibility, as a basic right, many challenges in this area remain – including non-accessible backstage, stage or front-of-house facilities, communication tools, etc. The *Time to Act: Two Years On* report, which conducted a survey of performing arts professionals across Europe in late 2022 and early 2023, found that only 47% of the organisations surveyed provided step-free access from street to auditorium, offices, dressing room and backstage spaces, and only 26% had questionnaires for incoming artists about their access needs, among other measures. The only accessibility measure for disabled artists that existed in over half of the organisations surveyed was the availability of accessible toilets in offices, dressing rooms or backstage areas (52%).⁸⁵

As in other survey questions, visible differences were found between regions: step-free access from street to auditorium, offices, dressing rooms and backstage spaces was available in 59% of venues and organisations in Northern Europe, but only 45% in Western Europe, 42% in Southern Europe and 34% in Eastern Europe. Whether or not organisations had dedicated budgets for accessibility made a difference: step-free access was available in 56% of the organisations which had dedicated budgets,

but only 37% of those that did not have one.⁸⁶ This points to the central role played both by public policies, which can facilitate the availability of such dedicated budgets (e.g. by establishing specific funding schemes aligned with legal requirements towards accessibility, and/or making accessibility a funding prerequisite or assessment criterion), as well as awareness and sensitivity among arts professionals.

While the *Time to Act* report did not enquire about the accessibility of facilities surrounding arts venues and events, it is clear that accessible transport and accommodation facilities are also key enablers to both full participation in cultural life and opportunities for international mobility, as some participants in the Cultural Mobility Webinar held in March 2024 also highlighted. Other dimensions of accessibility may be less apparent, such as accessible communication, but are by no means less important: in Germany, for instance, disabled artists have warned about the lack of accessible communication by the Artists' Social Insurance Fund (KSK), which prevents, among others, artists with a visual impairment from consulting the KSK homepage or filling out forms without help.⁸⁷

Indeed, accessibility is a critical precondition, not least because of how it can enable the exercise of other rights, as the European Commission has highlighted: 'Accessibility is an enabler of rights and a prerequisite for the full participation of persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others. In line with the [European Commission's Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-30], a relevant goal for culture would be to target the accessibility of cultural events and cultural products and promote artwork by persons with disabilities.'⁸⁸

The existence of and knowledge about organisations that have successfully increased accessibility and

⁸⁴ See <https://un-label.eu/en/project/access-maker/>

⁸⁵ Baltà Portolés, J.; and Ellingsworth, J. (2023).

⁸⁶ Baltà Portolés, J.; and Ellingsworth, J. (2023).

⁸⁷ Speicher, H. (2023), "Barrieren beim Zugang zu sozialer Sicherung in den freien darstellenden Künsten", in Several Authors, *Am äussersten Rand? Marginalisierte Akteur*innen in den darstellenden Künsten und Barrieren im Zugang zu sozialen Sicherungssystemen*, Bundesverbands Freie Darstellende Künste, available at https://darstellende-kuenste.de/sites/default/files/2023-11/231122_TD_Am_aeussersten_Rand_Systemcheck.pdf

⁸⁸ European Commission (2022), Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the cultural dimension of sustainable development in EU actions, COM(2022), 709 final, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0709>, p. 12. Part of the quote appears in bold in the original.

participation for disabled artists and, in so doing, have contributed to changing perceptions about disability in the arts can also act as a source of inspiration and contribute to change: such examples 'show how inclusive work should be considered professional and not just tagged as a therapeutic or social service venture based on a paternalistic, condescending approach. Rather, let us redefine what meaningful inclusion entails by "learning, inviting, copying, and adapting the mechanisms of these companies that have been in business for years... We don't have to 'invent' anything."⁸⁹

In addition to arts companies and organisations that have successfully integrated inclusion and accessibility in their practices, specialist service providers (e.g. information centres, dedicated agencies on arts and disability, etc.) have frequently been mentioned as critical sources of information, awareness and inspiration: very often, progress in some European countries has been closely connected to the existence of such dedicated organisations, that play a role both in service provision and in advocacy.⁹⁰ Although some evidence suggests that progress has been made in making knowledge and experience more widely available across arts sectors, in what seems to be a positive move, this remains a slow process: there is still the perception that a relatively limited number of stakeholders hold the knowledge and continue to have a critical role in fostering change.⁹¹

In some countries, it has been suggested that it tends to be smaller organisations, and those on the fringe of mainstream arts and culture, education and media, that provide most opportunities to develop qualifications and experience as an artist for disabled people – this is commendable but does not contribute to full inclusion: in Norway, recent research has argued that '[even] though these individuals and organisations are positive enablers, it is a serious problem that the wider public arts,

cultural and educational institutions have not encouraged and facilitated for the development of artists with disabilities – in fact, rather the opposite.⁹²

In summary, making knowledge available, involving disabled artists and culture professionals, integrating the full spectrum of accessibility measures and drawing inspiration from successful or specialised organisations are critical steps towards transforming organisations. This can be a long, complex process, that should go beyond box-ticking and, in line with the revision of ableist approaches, should lead to deep, structural change.⁹³

Ultimately, this should also be seen in curatorial practices and choices, where questions on ethics and the criteria of artistic decision-making are being raised, as suggested by dancer, choreographer and author Diana Niepce: 'I believe that institutions need curatorial support to understand the implications of their choices: whether a piece is ableist, condescending, or paternalistic... It is not enough to programme works by artists who want to include marginalised bodies. It is very dangerous to bring communities that have been vulnerable for decades into the realm of creation. Either way, they are being exposed, with working conditions equal to those of a normative artist, without assessing their specific characteristics and without a critical perspective on what still needs to be done. I believe that the role of training and critical analysis of performances will be essential in changing the landscape of contemporary art in relation to disability.'⁹⁴ Spaces for reflection and learning, which allow to critically consider the relationship between implicit and explicit values and practices, and transform everyday practices at all levels accordingly, should therefore remain part of this equation. This also serves to reemphasise the important role of the arts and culture in helping to transform perceptions across society.

⁸⁹ Taken from Amidei and Flys (2022), including a quote from one of their anonymous interviewees. Page number not available in digital version of text.

⁹⁰ Baltà Portolés, J.; Ellingsworth, J.; and Floch, Y. (2021).

⁹¹ Baltà Portolés, J.; and Ellingsworth, J. (2023).

⁹² Østern et al. (2023), p. 5.

⁹³ Amidei and Flys (2022).

⁹⁴ Interview with Diana Niepce, in Aceso Cultura (2023b), *10+1: Access, participation and cultural democracy: visions and experiences*. Aceso Cultura, available at <https://accessculture-portugal.org/access-participation-and-cultural-democracy/>, pp. 32-33.

Practices and opportunities in international mobility

As noted earlier, practices and opportunities in international mobility for disabled artists and culture professionals are closely connected to developments that typically operate at the national or domestic level, including those that have been explored in previous sections or will be addressed later: the availability of information and knowledge, the transformation of mindsets, the full integration of inclusion and accessibility in organisations, attention to disability in public policies and funding, etc. At the same time, international mobility in this field has specific implications and challenges, which will be analysed hereafter.

The context of international mobility for disabled artists and culture professionals

Opportunities to engage internationally have traditionally been limited for disabled artists and culture professionals. In addition to the challenging contexts at the local and national levels, the cost of international travel, which frequently becomes higher in the case of disabled people, is one of several factors preventing mobility for disabled artists: 'Mobility is also a challenge for disabled artists and creative professionals. Disabled artists may find it difficult to travel independently. This means that additional persons may be required to accompany disabled artists who are travelling, which increases travel costs.'⁹⁵

Some of the obstacles that have historically limited opportunities for artistic mobility, such as lack

of information and ill-adapted taxation or social security regimes,⁹⁶ can also pose difficulties to disabled artists and culture professionals: for instance, legislation may not recognise specific categories of artists, such as disabled artists, and the implications that this may have in terms of social security, or relevant information to access opportunities or benefits may not be available in foreign languages.⁹⁷ More generally, it is worth recalling that lack of legal recognition of the specific circumstances of disabled artists, who may have a right both to access disability benefits and to be recognised as artists, has frequently arisen as an impediment to professional development, as the section on policies and funding further below will discuss.⁹⁸

Against this challenging backdrop, it is important to stress that international mobility plays an important role in broadening opportunities for disabled artists and culture professionals, and that some encouraging developments have been observed in this field in recent years. First of all, cross-border mobility provides inspiration and opportunities to learn, something which is particularly important in a context where significant inequalities in the treatment of disabled artists across countries exist, and where the good-practice examples existing in some countries can inspire change elsewhere.⁹⁹

In addition, just as in any other form of international mobility in the arts and culture, cross-border exchange can be the basis of mutual enrichment, co-creation and co-production among disabled artists and companies, or between them and

⁹⁵ Snijders et al. (2020), p. 30. Part of the quote appears in bold in the original.

⁹⁶ For more on this, see the work of the Mobility Information Points (MIPs) established as part of the On the Move network: <http://on-the-move.org/mobility-information-points>

⁹⁷ Sodemann, F.; and Hoffmann, S. (2023), "Internationalität als Barriere in den darstellenden Künsten", in Several Authors, *Am äussersten Rand? Marginalisierte Akteur*innen in den darstellenden Künsten und Barrieren im Zugang zu sozialen Sicherungssystemen*, Bundesverbands Freie Darstellende Künste, available at https://darstellende-kuenste.de/sites/default/files/2023-11/231122_TD_Am_aeussersten_Rand_Systemcheck.pdf

⁹⁸ "(...) poverty is often a further barrier for creatives with disabilities, as is the lack of social protection, security, and support. Both disabilities and mental health issues are often accompanied by stigma. It is paramount to raise awareness and demonstrate the vital contribution of artists with disabilities (...)" in Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy (2023), p. 58.

⁹⁹ Østern et al. (2023).

mainstream or integrated companies, collectives and organisations. In this respect, programmes and schemes to support international cultural mobility should aim to generate a level playing field, which considers existing imbalances and obstacles, such as those encountered by disabled artists and culture professionals, and adopts measures to redress or control them, thus facilitating multi-directional opportunities for engagement. One positive step in this direction is the specific consideration of disabled artists and culture professionals in the European Commission's Culture Moves Europe scheme, which includes additional financial support (up to 100% of travel and daily allowance per person, which does not apply to non-disabled artists and professionals) as well as a case-by-case analysis of needs and budgetary implications.¹⁰⁰

International mobility has also expanded in recent years thanks to the engagement of networks and organisations active in this field, and the existence of some EU-funded projects which have contributed to exchange, learning and advocacy and, by doing so, to placing the arts and disability within the agenda of EU, national, regional and local authorities. In November 2019, representatives of 9 Creative Europe and Culture Programme projects, 3 Erasmus+ projects and 4 transnational projects for disabled artists met in The Hague, in the first meeting of the European Arts & Disability Cluster. The event served to visualise the increasing attention paid to this field by many local, national and European professionals, organisations and networks, contributed to increasing networking and formulated policy and programme recommendations. They included the need for equal access to cultural mobility for disabled artists and culture professionals, in line with the CRPD's recognition of equal access to every aspect of social and cultural life, and of

equal working opportunities and environments. The Cluster also formulated proposals for EU cultural initiatives and funding programmes.¹⁰¹ In addition to the rights outlined above, article 20 of the CRPD also recognises the right to personal mobility with the greatest possible independence for persons with disabilities.

Recommendations emerging from the first Cluster meeting held in 2019 have informed subsequent work, including that of projects like Europe Beyond Access (in the context of which both *Time to Act* reports were produced) and its successor Europe Beyond Access II. As the *Time to Act* reports showed, this context has contributed to making the work of several disabled artists and disabled or integrated companies more visible across borders, raising their profile and generating an increasing awareness about the need to improve conditions for disabled artists and culture professionals, as illustrated by an increasing number of initiatives, conferences, festivals and publications. This remains, however, a very unequal context, where significant regional imbalances exist – in general, countries in Western and Northern Europe provide more opportunities for disabled artists than those in Southern and Eastern Europe.¹⁰²

Developments in this area are also informed by broader initiatives in the field of disability, and the knowledge they generate. For instance, a practical guide for European mobility projects involving young disabled people elaborated in the context of Erasmus+ provides tips that could be relevant for disabled artists and culture professionals as well: conducting an advanced planning visit to check accessibility and support services, planning logistics early, being aware of time management, etc.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ See <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/creative-europe-culture-strand/culture-moves-europe>

¹⁰¹ Panagiotara, B.; Evans, B.; and Pawlak, F. (2019), *Disabled artists in the mainstream: a new cultural agenda for Europe – from the first European Arts & Disability Cluster Meeting*. Europe Beyond Access, available at https://www.disabilityartsinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Report_A-new-cultural-agenda-for-Europe-FINAL-050320.pdf

¹⁰² Baltà Portolés, J.; Ellingsworth, J.; and Floch, Y. (2021) and Baltà Portolés, J.; and Ellingsworth, J. (2023).

¹⁰³ Agence Erasmus+ France Jeunesse & Sport and Bureau International Jeunesse (2017), *Beyond disabilities – European mobility for all*, available at https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3652/Guide_Erasmusplus_Mobility_Disability_EN.pdf

Remaining challenges and questions

Despite the progress made, much remains to be done to guarantee equal access to cross-border mobility for disabled artists and culture professionals, in terms of recognition of mobility as a right, accessibility, funding, adaptation of support services, etc. Furthermore, the current context raises some important underlying questions.

One of them concerns the fact that, since legislation, practices and opportunities for disabled artists are highly unequal across countries, international mobility may be, for some, the only way to access opportunities to learn or engage in work, rather than a truly free choice. Related to this is the risk that international mobility in this field tend to reproduce colonial frames, reinforcing a small set of hubs and limiting other types of exchange. Participants in an IETM event held in 2022 summarised it as follows: 'Working across borders is a priority to combat isolation and distribute resources – but which strategies are truly applicable between territories with vast discrepancies in resources and societal contexts? What can be learnt from the margins, instead of using colonial centres of power as the yardstick?'. Considering this, '[participants] envisioned dedicated international training schools for disability arts, new distribution of resources and support for increased transnational collaborations amongst an international community of disabled artists.'¹⁰⁴

Another unintended consequence of fostering international exchange may be the neglect of conditions at home. The *Time to Act* report series

has made regional imbalances across Europe evident and has also pointed to the emergence of a relatively small number of artists and companies which have frequently been cited as representatives of the arts and disability scene. Some authors have warned of the risk that, by programming these artists, venues and festivals may assume that their duty towards disabled artists is fulfilled, without needing to address the lack of opportunities for disabled artists at the national level. In the words of Europe Beyond Access' Project Director, Ben Evans, 'it is concerning that for some arts organisations the invitation to one of the artists or companies I mention completes their commitment to the work of disabled artists. This invitation, often to an overseas artist, somehow removes from them the responsibility to actively work in the local sector to remove barriers to career progression, to develop artistic opportunities, and to give early and much-needed opportunities to aspiring and early-career Deaf and disabled artists... But it seems to me that in these cases the responsibility on the host organisation is even greater to be involved with artists further down the professional chain, rather than to admit defeat and simply host a one-off performance from another country.'¹⁰⁵

Finally, at present international mobility for disabled artists and culture professionals tends to be, more often than not, closely bound by reflections on legal aspects, support policies, logistical issues and other elements surrounding artistic practice. While this is inevitable in the current context, it may reduce the attention on artistic and cultural exchange, which should have a more prominent place in the future.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Martin (2022), p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Ben Evans, in Acesso Cultura (2023b), *10+1: Access, participation and cultural democracy: visions and experiences*. Acesso Cultura, available at <https://accessculture-portugal.org/access-participation-and-cultural-democracy/>, pp. 138-139.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Diana Niepce, in Acesso Cultura (2023b).

Policies and funding

The central role played by policies and funding has been mentioned at several points in previous sections, as per their impact on the availability of information and knowledge, access to education and training, the transformation of organisations or opportunities to engage internationally. This section focuses particularly on the cross-cutting elements related to policies, support programmes and other funding schemes aimed at broadening opportunities for disabled artists and culture professionals.

Firstly, it is important to recall that, at present, 191 countries and regional organisations (including the EU in particular) have ratified the CRPD, which establishes a commitment towards the rights of disabled people. Among them is Article 30, related to participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport, which includes an engagement to 'take appropriate measures to enable persons with disabilities to have the opportunity to develop and utilize their creative, artistic and intellectual potential, not only for their own benefit, but also for the enrichment of society.'¹⁰⁷ In this respect, governments should implement the CPRD principles, by adopting measures to remove existing barriers, in areas such as cultural participation, accessibility, mobility and education.¹⁰⁸ The European Commission has also called EU Member States to promote and encourage culture and creative activity as well as arts for persons with disabilities, and to raise awareness in this area.¹⁰⁹

Secondly, and also part of the implementation of CRPD, is the need to adapt mainstream legislation and policy to the specific needs of disabled artists and culture professionals. One typical example of this concerns the difficulties encountered by people

receiving disability benefits who are at risk of losing them when engaging temporarily in paid arts work. In practice, this acts as a deterrent to pursuing a career in the arts, as a result both of the instability, short-term nature of much employment in this field, and of the circumstances of disabled people, whose physical condition is frequently variable and may impede their long-term, regular participation.¹¹⁰ Similarly, entry requirements to access social security (e.g. in terms of the minimum weekly working hours for artists) may not be adapted to the reality of disabled artists.¹¹¹ As a result, the need to adapt legislation and policy, to raise awareness among decision-makers and to foster dialogue between policy departments in charge of culture, labour, welfare and health has been noted in several countries and in international reports.¹¹²

Thirdly, evidence collected in recent years has shown that progress towards accessibility and professional participation gathers speed and depth when it is reinforced by policy priorities and adequate resources.¹¹³ Existing imbalances in opportunities for disabled artists and culture professionals are to a large extent determined by governments' and other funders' identification of the rights of disabled audiences and artists as a priority, and the related adoption of policies and measures in this field. In this respect, a combination of support mechanisms, incentives to change and, where relevant, conditional funding could lead to progress elsewhere. In particular, public venues and events, and regularly funded organisations should be expected to take action, where this has not happened yet. In the field of international mobility, support should provide additional funding to cover accessibility costs and other costs related to the

¹⁰⁷ Article 30.2. The full text of CRPD is available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>

¹⁰⁸ Cassani (2020).

¹⁰⁹ European Commission (2022).

¹¹⁰ Reuter, L.; and Rosenberg, I. (2023), "Das Gegenteil von Inklusion", in Several Authors, *Am äussersten Rand? Marginalisierte Akteur*innen in den darstellenden Künsten und Barrieren im Zugang zu sozialen Sicherungssystemen*, Bundesverbands Freie Darstellende Künste, available at https://darstellende-kuenste.de/sites/default/files/2023-11/231122_TD_Am_aeussersten_Rand_Systemcheck.pdf

¹¹¹ Speicher (2023).

¹¹² See e.g. Cassani (2020); Østern et al. (2023); Reuter and Rosenberg (2023); and Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy (2023).

¹¹³ Baltà Portolés, J.; Ellingsworth, J.; and Floch, Y. (2021) and Baltà Portolés, J.; and Ellingsworth, J. (2023).

specific requirements of disabled artists and culture professionals, as recently illustrated by Culture Moves Europe. In all these areas, suitable training and information services should be available to accompany organisations in their path to increased accessibility and support.

Finally, consultation and active engagement of disabled people in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes arises as a critical step, so as to adapt support mechanisms, increase legitimacy and foster internal change. Whenever possible, such participatory mechanisms should be permanent rather than occasional, thus contributing both to continued reflection and to organisational transformation, including by making knowledge and information more widespread and internalised.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Wreyford et al. (2021); Diana Niepce in Acesso Cultura (2023b).

Policy recommendations

The following recommendations have been derived from the above data analysis, combined with insights from mobility stakeholders and desk research. We formulate here a set of observations and recommendations for public authorities at different levels, as well as for stakeholders in the culture field. These recommendations aim to offer a better and fairer system of support for those accessing artistic and cultural mobility opportunities.

Broadening opportunities for the international mobility of disabled artists and culture professionals requires action in several areas. As the previous sections have shown, an enabling environment at the national level can be very important to enhance international mobility, as this final set of recommendations illustrates.

International and European institutions, national and local governments as well as funders should:

- Increase their commitment to full accessibility and participation of disabled people in cultural life.
- Collect existing information and/or produce and disseminate information tools and related services to facilitate awareness, understanding and knowledge on the intersections between the arts, culture and disability, including on the participation of disabled artists and culture professionals and by adopting an intersectional lens.
- Guarantee equal opportunities to access arts education and training for disabled people, including by making basic, advanced and higher education in the arts fully accessible.
- Take measures to transform ableist approaches in arts training and identify and promote relevant examples of disabled artists as role models for younger disabled people.
- Revise legislation and programmes that limit the participation of disabled artists and culture professionals because their specific needs are not properly considered (e.g. in accessing social or health benefits), including those that may impede engagement in international mobility for national or foreign disabled artists and culture professionals.
- Foster the recognition of diverse forms of expression as a value in cultural policy, which should lead, among other things, to more diverse representations on stage, in galleries and museums, and in other types of cultural venues, spaces and events.

- Provide support, in the form of funding, training, information, advice and / or other mechanisms, to foster the transformation of arts and cultural organisations, including public bodies and organisations receiving regular public funding, so as to make them more accessible, inclusive and diverse.
- Identify relevant good practices available at international level on the participation of disabled artists and culture professionals and use it in the design of cultural policies and programmes.
- Consider the specific needs of disabled artists and culture professionals in the design and implementation of international mobility schemes, through accessible communication and dedicated funding lines, which provide additional resources to cover accessibility and related needs.
- Consult disabled artists and culture professionals in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes related to accessibility and inclusion, establishing permanent participatory spaces when possible and ensuring that the information obtained effectively informs decision-making.

Civil society organisations, networks and other bodies active in the field of arts, culture and disability should:

- Assess their practices to improve accessibility, inclusion and participation for disabled artists and culture professionals, by using available information and knowledge in this field and identifying priority actions as a result.
- Identify opportunities to engage internationally in areas related to the arts, culture and disability, broadening opportunities for disabled artists and culture professionals in their respective areas of action.
- Contribute to or initiate advocacy and awareness-raising activities, at local, national or international level, to foster increased opportunities for disabled artists and culture professionals and more diversity in the arts and culture, as part of their own activities or by lobbying for more inclusive policies and funding schemes.
- Take measures to ensure that information tools, training services and other activities related to international mobility are fully accessible for disabled artists and culture professionals.
- Adopt other measures related to the arts, culture and disability that may be relevant in their own area of activity.

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Internet references are correct as of 27 June 2024.

Biographies

Webinar Panellists

Maria Vlachou is a founding member and the executive director of Acesso Cultura (Access Culture). Author of the books *What have we got to do with it? The political role of cultural organisations* (2022, in Portuguese) and *Musing on Culture: Management, Communication and our Relationship with People* (2013, in English). She is the author of the bilingual (PT/EN) blog *Musing on Culture*. In the past, she was communications director of São Luiz Municipal Theatre and head of communication of Pavilion of Knowledge – Ciência Viva (Lisbon). Board member of ICOM Portugal (2005-2014) and editor of its bulletin. She has collaborated with different programmes of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Fellow of ISPA– International Society for the Performing Arts (2018, 2020); Alumna of the DeVos Institute of Arts Management at the Kennedy Center in Washington (2011-2013); she has a M.A. in Museum Studies (University College London, 1994).

Lisette Reuter works since 2006 as project manager, trainer, curator and consultant in the international, inclusive art and cultural sector. She is founder and executive director of the social enterprise Un-Label based in Cologne, Germany. As an expert on inclusion, she advises and accompanies cultural stakeholders and organizations throughout Europe in the field of accessibility and equal participation. She is a bridge builder and border crosser. She is a coach, project developer and master of networks. Her approach is always border-crossing, in every aspect. She sees inclusion not as a social project, but as a matter of course and as a normal part of art.

Sokny Onn, the country director for Epic Arts and Obama leader, leverages 14+ years of experience to advocate for Cambodians with disabilities. She pioneers inclusion in the arts, empowering marginalized individuals through creative experiences. Sokny serves as an advisor to the Cambodian Ministry of Fine Arts and Culture, where she utilizes arts inclusive education, community work, and social enterprise to drive positive change. She actively engages with policymakers, promoting inclusive policies that underscore the critical role of culture and arts in Cambodia's equitable development. Sokny's passion lies in cultivating leaders committed to serving people with disabilities and advancing social inclusion in their communities.

Interviewees

Marc Brew is an acclaimed international dancer and choreographer, who trained as a professional dancer at the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School and The Australian Ballet School. He has been working in the UK and Internationally for over 25 years as a director, choreographer, dancer, teacher and speaker; with the Australian Ballet Company, State Theatre Ballet Company of South Africa, Infinity Dance Theatre, Candoco Dance Company and AXIS Dance Company. Marc was Associate Director with Scottish Dance Theatre, Associate Artistic Director with Ballet Cymru in Wales and was associate artist at Tramway Theatre in Glasgow and artistic director of AXIS Dance Company from 2017-2021.

Marie Denninghaus is responsible for the coordination of European Disability Forum-EDF's annual work programme and 4-year strategy, as well as monitoring their implementation. She is an expert on the EU's policy on freedom of movement including the Disability Card, accessibility of transport, the built environment, and products and services. She also coordinates EDF's advocacy towards the Council of the EU and its Presidencies. Marie has worked for EDF since 2013.

Lynn Fu is a Shanghai and New York based independent curator, consultant and producer. Her career focuses on international collaboration between China, Asia and the rest of the world and her interest lies in exploring new possibilities of connecting people through the performing arts. In 2021, she co-founded Arts Access Shanghai, a platform to increase access to Shanghai's cultural institutions for the local disability community through connection, education and advocacy.

Nadine Mckenzie is the artistic director of the UNMUTE Dance Company based in Cape Town. Her artistic roles include being an integrated dance teacher, dancer, producer and choreographer. She has previously received training Inclusive teaching by Alito Alessi in Vienna in 2010. In 2006 until 2012 she joined Remix Dance Company. She has then produced exceptional work as a performer/teacher in a wheelchair and has established herself as a well-recognized figure within the performing arts community both nationally and internationally. She is one of the co-founders of the Unmute Dance Company (UNMUTE), and has performed in the company works namely, *Unmute*, *Trapped*, *SOLD*, *Breaking Borders*, *Ashed*, and *Access Me to name a few*. Nadine is also the co-curator of Unmutes annual ArtsAbility Festival, the first Inclusive Arts festival in South Africa founded in 2014. In the company, Nadine is also a performer, facilitator, and aspiring choreographer. Apart from being a member at UNMUTE, she is also a freelance performer who has been featured in a Swiss production called *One At A Time* by Alessandro Schiatarrella that premiered in Switzerland and has been performed in Berlin, Croatia, and South Africa. She recently graduated from BASA's Cultural Producers Program as a Cultural Producer, presented by Business and Arts South Africa, Common Purpose and the Manchester International Festival.

Tone Pernille Østern, with a Dr. of Arts in Dance from the Theatre Academy at the University of the Arts Helsinki, is professor in Arts Education with a focus on Dance at Department for Teacher Education, NTNU Norwegian University of Science and Technology since 2015. She holds a position as visiting professor in Dance Education in Contemporary Contexts at Stockholm University of the Arts since 2020. She is active as artist/researcher/teacher with a special interest in participatory arts, choreographic processes, inclusive and critical pedagogies, bodily learning, and the performativity of research, learning and teaching. A/r/tography and Educational Design Research are important approaches in her research. She is programme leader of the 2-year Master of Education at Department for Teacher Education 2022-25 and head of Forum for Equity, Inclusion and Diversity from 2022. She is creative leader of Inclusive Dance Company together with Arnhild Staal Pettersen and Luis Della Mea since 2000.

Elen Øyen is a Norwegian dance artist and works as a producer for DansiT choreographic centre. She is a dancer in Danselaboratoriet, where she has been since 2005. Elen was born with spina bifida and uses a wheelchair. She dances in her wheelchair and on the floor. Her main focus is improvisation. Elen works closely with NTNU professor and founder of the Dance Laboratory Tone Pernille Østern. She has lectured at conferences, seminars and festivals in Norway and abroad. She has developed a broad experience in dance, and has been working on the research project "Artist – an accessible profession?" since autumn 2021.

Magali Saby is a professional actress and dancer, who has spent the last fifteen years working internationally on inclusive artistic projects that promote the professional recognition of artists with disabilities. Thus began an international career that has taken her from Paris to Indonesia, via Germany, England, Belgium, Scotland, Greece and Turkey. She has danced for Jérôme Bel, Perrine Valli and Sylvère Lamotte. In 2024, Magali Saby played the lead role in director Jean Pierre Améris's next TV film, *Danse ta vie*. Determined to raise awareness, she founded Be Together Académie, an inclusive arts teaching establishment, and All Moov, an inclusive arts company, to promote artistic inclusion and facilitate the professional integration of artists with disabilities.

Irene van Zeeland is Head of the Education and Outreach Department of the Holland Dance Festival. She also teaches modern/contemporary dance and works as an independent choreographer for film and theatre. She is based in Paris, where she teaches classes at the Paris Marais Dance School, Be Together Académie/Carreau du Temple and Kâyastha Yoga on a regular basis. It is also where she has based Omaro Productions together with Carolina Kzan for which she is a choreographer and producer.

About the authors

Jordi Baltà Portolés is a consultant, researcher and trainer in cultural policy and international cultural relations. His areas of interest include local cultural policy, culture and sustainability, cultural rights and cultural diversity. He is an advisor on culture and sustainable cities at the Committee on Culture of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and a member of the UNESCO Expert Facility for the implementation of the 2005 Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Jordi works regularly with Trànsit Projectes, a cultural management company based in Barcelona, and provides consultancy to a wide range of local, national and international organisations and networks. He teaches at the Degree in International Relations of Blanquerna – Universitat Ramon Llull (URL) and the MA in Cultural Management of the Open University of Catalonia (UOC) and Universitat de Girona (UdG). He holds a PhD from the universities of Girona and Melbourne.

John Ellingsworth works as a writer and editor in the cultural field. As an editor, he has worked on projects and publications for On the Move (Belgium), Kulturrådet (Sweden), IETM - International network for contemporary performing arts (Belgium), Dansehallerne (Denmark), ELIA - European network for higher arts education (the Netherlands), Flanders Department of Culture, Youth and Media (Belgium), EDN - European Dancehouse Network (Spain), among others. Since 2024, he works at Goethe-Institut Belgium on the implementation of the Culture Moves Europe project.

Sophie Dowden is a freelance project manager, writer, speaker and facilitator based in the south of France. She works largely in the European-level cultural space with a particular focus on diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEI&B) as well as mental health. In this capacity, she consults on advancing and refining DEI&B policies and processes, developing professional resources on DEI&B and mental health in the culture sector as well as managing DEI&B projects and working groups with different cultural networks.

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Co-funded by
the European Union