

The Situation of At-risk and Displaced  
Artists and Culture Professionals

ON  
THE  
MOVE

Volume 3  
Case Studies

CHAPTER 7

From Hospitality  
to Responsibility:  
Professional  
Development for  
At-risk and  
Displaced Arts  
Workers



Co-funded by  
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**On the Move** is the international information network dedicated to artistic and cultural mobility, gathering 86 members from 32 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.

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**Acknowledgements to interviewees** Anna Galas-Kosil, Deputy Director for Programming, and Lena Tworkowska, Artistic Residencies Programme Coordinator, Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, Poland | Bénédicte Alliot, Executive Director, Cité internationale des arts de Paris, France | Bojana Panevska, Programme Adviser, DutchCulture / TransArtists, The Netherlands | Clymene Christoforou, Founding Member and Executive Director, and Andrea Carter, Lead Producer, D6: Culture in Transit, United Kingdom | Dirk De Wit, Innovation and Development, Landers Arts Institute / Kunstenpunt, Belgium | Dr Mary Ann DeVlieg, Independent Researcher, Italy | Dr Nicol Foulkes Savinetti, Global Humanities Coordinator, Faculty of Humanities, University of Copenhagen and Founder and Chairperson, Denmark | Dr Sarri Vuorisalo-Tiitinen, Managing Director and Alex Kollerová, Project Manager, Globe Art Point, Finland | Fabienne Brütt, Project Manager, European and International Action Office, Ministry of Culture, France | Geoliane Arab, International Adviser, Onda Office nationale de diffusion artistique, France | Heather O'Donnell, Founding Director, The Green Room, Germany | Houari Bouchenak, Coordinator and Curator, Jiser, Spain | Ilinca Martorell, AiR Programmes Manager, and Ioana Crugel, International and European Development Manager, ACCR-Association des Centres culturels de rencontre, France | Isabelle Mallez, International Relations, City of Paris' Department of Cultural Affairs, France | Julie Chenot, Director, Camargo Foundation, France | Julie Trébault, Executive Director, Artists at Risk Connection, NY, United States of America | Laura Gérard, Long Standing Partnerships' Coordinator, Cité internationale des arts de Paris, France | Laura Lohéac, Director of the PAUSE Programme, Collège de France, France | Laureen Grant, Head of PAUSE Programme's culture strand, Collège de France, France | Mary Sherman, Director, TransCultural Exchange, MA, United States of America | Mathieu Girard, Project Manager, Cité internationale des arts de Paris, France | Outi Elena Valanto, PhD Researcher, University of Lapland, Finland and Residency Coordinator, The Green Room, Germany | Simon Dove, Executive Director, CEC ArtsLink, NY, United States of America

**Acknowledgements** to Dr Mary Ann DeVlieg, initiator of the research project, as well as the advisory committee members.

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Suggested citation format: Ilić, M., 'Chapter 7: From Hospitality to Responsibility: Professional Development for At-risk and Displaced Arts Workers' in *The Situation of At-risk and Displaced Artists and Culture Professionals – Volume 3 Case Studies*, On the Move, 2025, available at [on-the-move.org/resources](https://on-the-move.org/resources).

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# CHAPTER 7

## From Hospitality to Responsibility: Professional Development for At-risk and Displaced Arts Workers

by Milica Ilić

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### CONTENTS

Methodology	4
Reframing the question	5
Financial infrastructure that supports both artists and hosts	5
Community is the infrastructure	6
Artist-led, flexible and responsive approaches	8
Structural and organisational reconfiguration	9
Key features of effective support schemes	11

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This text examines the professional development of at-risk and forcibly displaced artists and art workers through the lens of support structures. Like other contributions in this volume, it is grounded in sectoral experience, drawing on the perspectives of individuals and organisations with a sustained record of providing support, as well as those shaping professional development conversations within the arts sector. While the voices of displaced artists are central to understanding their needs, those of the institutions providing hospitality offer essential insights into what makes support effective, sustainable, and equitable. This analysis reflects the observations, concerns, and understanding of the challenges and needs involved from those who play a crucial role in hospitality processes.

The professional development of at-risk and forcibly displaced artists is inseparable from the capacity of institutions to host them meaningfully. It requires strengthening the competences and overall capacities of hosting organisations, including raising awareness of the barriers imposed by administrative systems and by dominant institutional models and practices, particularly those affecting artists from marginalised backgrounds. By combining practice-based insights with structural reflection, the text below aims to inform immediate actions and inspire further development of tools and practices.

## Methodology

This article is based on group conversations conducted online in June 2025, with a small group of individuals and representatives of organisations involved in supporting the professional development of at-risk and forcibly displaced artists and art workers in Europe. Participants were selected with attention to the diversity of organisations, approaches, and the relevance of their track record. In addition, the text was informed by discussions that took place at a closed meeting ‘Reimagining Hospitality’ held in the same period in Paris, France, co-organised by [Cité internationale des arts de Paris](#) and [DutchCulture, On the Move, Fresh Arts Coalition Europe](#) (FACE), and [Artists at Risk Connection](#) (ARC). These open, loosely structured, and facilitated discussions created a space for participants to share experiences, insights, and reflections. The author subsequently gathered and analysed the ideas expressed, identifying recurring concerns, challenges and suggestions.

This article privileges practice-based and lived organisational knowledge over academic or policy frameworks. It offers neither an objective overview nor an exhaustive mapping of the field. Instead, it provides a subjective snapshot of current thinking among a select group of professionals engaged in supporting the professional development of at-risk and forcibly displaced artists. Interlocutors were invited to speak from their personal and organisational perspectives, sharing observations, concerns, and insights shaped by their specific contexts.

As with any conversation-based process, the range of voices included is necessarily partial, and certain perspectives are undoubtedly missing. Time and availability constraints meant it was not possible to include all relevant actors. Nonetheless, this article aims to offer a valuable lens into current thinking within the field and encourages further research, dialogue and knowledge exchange.

While the conversations centred on the professional development of at-risk and displaced artists and art workers in Europe, participants consistently emphasised the importance of

situating this issue within a broader transnational and systemic perspective that recognises the global dynamics shaping mobility, access and equity in the arts.

## Reframing the question

This investigation began with the intention of examining how at-risk and forcibly displaced artists are supported in integrating into the professional arts sector in Europe, through training, language support, networks, and opportunities for artistic development. It focused on the perspectives of individuals and organisations with experience in providing such support. Yet, as the conversations unfolded, it became clear that professional development cannot be considered in isolation; it is inseparable from the structural conditions that define the cultural field as a whole.

What often appear as individual needs—access to work, visibility, mentorship, or peer exchange—are shaped by systemic barriers, such as unequal access to funding, restricted mobility, linguistic and bureaucratic hurdles, and **the continued dominance of Western-centric standards of artistic value**. For displaced artists, these challenges are intensified by legal precarity, trauma, and limited access to local infrastructure and knowledge.

Professional development must therefore be understood not only as a personal journey, but it must also take into consideration the structural issues in the sector as a whole. Supporting artists at risk means rethinking the systems that exclude or instrumentalise them, and critically examining how institutions may—consciously or not—reproduce hierarchies through their norms, cultures, and funding mechanisms.

Language and terminology emerged as central concerns in these discussions. Words like *integration*, *inclusion*, *hosting*, and *hospitality* carry embedded assumptions about power, belonging, and legitimacy. Interrogating and reimagining these terms became a vital thread in the conversations, shaping the reflections and recommendations that follow, grounded in the lived realities of those most actively engaged in this work.

## Financial infrastructure that supports both artists and hosts

A strong financial foundation is essential for providing meaningful support. Existing practices demonstrate that the professional development of at-risk and forcibly displaced artists cannot

take place without targeted, flexible, and sustained financial investment, both for the artists themselves and for the organisations that host them.

Yet the issue is not just the availability of funding, but how it is structured to meet the realities of this work. As Bojana Panevska of DutchCulture and [TransArtists](#) notes, many smaller or grassroots initiatives are leading the way in developing sensitive, artist-centred responses. Yet these organisations frequently work with limited resources and staff, and often cannot provide sustained or long-term support. The disparity in scale and capacity between institutions creates a fragmented landscape, where coordinated action becomes difficult. Clymene Christoforou of [D6: Culture in Transit](#), explains: ‘We fall into this space where we don’t want to become *not* about the art, and we don’t want to become *just* about the art, but we walk in a difficult space for the funding that’s available in this country.’

A revised funding architecture could help bridge these gaps, supporting partnerships between organisations of different sizes and enabling more cohesive responses, adapted to the specific needs of the artists and the organisations supporting them.

**Additionally, project-based funding often creates organisational precarity**, limiting the capacity to engage meaningfully over time. Structural or core funding is therefore crucial. In Finland, [Globe Art Point](#) has invested years in building trust with the Ministry of Education and Culture, demonstrating the unique value of their work and its relevance for the sector. As a result, they have secured more stable funding because the Ministry ‘learned about us and learned about our work.’ This institutional stability, as they note, allows them to expand and deepen their activities through projects, while keeping a safe core structure.

Short-term mechanisms like artist residencies or emergency relocation grants provide necessary relief, but more robust models go further. These approaches integrate continuous financial support into broader developmental frameworks, enabling artists to engage in long-term professional trajectories rather than isolated opportunities. For instance, the [Warsaw Observatory of Culture](#) developed a residency programme that combined financial support with structured mentorship and tailored introductions to the Polish arts sector, as described by Anna Galas-Kosil of the [Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute](#). Several interlocutors highlighted that **small-scale, low-cost interventions**—such as covering meals, transportation, childcare, or organising informal gatherings—are highly effective in fostering a sense of community and belonging. Yet such costs are often ineligible under conventional funding rules. Budgets that include room for these ‘invisible’ but vital forms of care can significantly strengthen the quality and impact of hosting.

In short, effective financial infrastructure is not only about the availability of funding, but about how it is framed, allocated, and sustained. The most promising support models are those that treat hospitality not as a short-term intervention, but as a structural commitment, one that recognises **time, trust, and care as essential components of professional development**. These approaches offer valuable insights for replication and scaling across the sector.

## Community is the infrastructure

Support for at-risk and forcibly displaced artists cannot focus solely on individual career development, it must also address the collective

and relational dimensions of artistic practice. A recurring theme across conversations was the **importance of building and sustaining a sense**

**of community and belonging.** While access to networks, funding, and opportunities is essential, it is often the feeling of connection—to a place and to peers—that enables artists to create, remain, and grow.

Community-building is especially critical for artists who arrive without existing networks or familiarity with the local cultural ecosystem. As Clymene Christoforou put it, displaced artists are often perceived as perpetually ‘emerging,’ forced to start over despite their established careers: **‘This idea that you are constantly an emerging artist if you are a displaced artist, that you have to redo it all again.’** In this context, moments of encounter, familiarity, and shared experience are not peripheral; they are fundamental conditions for meaningful engagement.

In practice, community-building can take many forms, from long-term residencies with embedded peer support to informal gatherings designed to create low-pressure spaces for connection. **Immart**, a Danish organisation working to support culturally and linguistically diverse artists, sees the creation of social networks as central to its mission. As founder, Nicol Savinetti explains, the shared dinners they organise with foreign-born artists have been hugely successful as ‘a vehicle to create togetherness.’ Similarly, Clymene Christoforou described how shared meals or visits to local heritage sites are **simple but powerful gestures that nurture trust and solidarity.** These actions can be critical to building a sense of belonging.

Support schemes that prioritise community-building offer essential spaces for trust, exchange, and informal learning—forms of knowledge rarely accessible through official channels. Many support structures have networking and community aspects built into their DNA. For example, Alex Kollerová explains how Globe Art Point fosters connectivity as part of its core

mission: ‘We are a great community, so we produce a lot of networking opportunities where people can meet.’

Another strong example is the **City of Sanctuary** movement in the United Kingdom. Driven by local communities and organisations, it provides a flexible framework for cities to become welcoming and safe spaces for refugees and asylum seekers. While it does not provide funding or legal aid, it fosters a culture of hospitality and inclusion, empowering communities to actively support those fleeing persecution or violence.

Crucially, community-building does not mean centring displacement as a singular or defining identity. As mentioned by Belarusian cultural manager, activist and performer Bahdan Khmialnitski at the 2025 edition of On the Move’s Cultural Mobility Forum in Riga, Latvia<sup>1</sup>, finding community within the LGBTQIA+ cultural scene was just as vital as being recognised through their national or displacement identity. **Support mechanisms that allow for multiple pathways of belonging give artists the freedom to define their place on their own terms.**

Community-building must also extend to the organisations doing the hosting. Partnerships, shared tools, and mutual learning strengthen the wider ecosystem and help prevent burnout or duplication. In this spirit, for the past three years the **Flanders Arts Institute / Kunstenpunt** holds regular open online meetings **‘Art During Crisis’** (first weekly, now monthly), where forcibly displaced artists, support organisations, and other professionals come together. As Dirk De Wit of Kunstenpunt described, these calls are ‘an open learning process’ that has strengthened both the sector’s capacity to engage with hosting issues and Kunstenpunt’s own institutional response.

Likewise, a **Sanctuary and Culture Network** was created in Newcastle, United Kingdom to bring

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<sup>1</sup> Resources from the Cultural Mobility Forum 2025 are available on [On the Move website](#), including audio-visual recordings and blog-articles.

together organisations working with displaced artists and communities, fostering knowledge-sharing and collaboration. Meanwhile, DutchCulture and Kunstenpunt implemented the Future Hospitalities programme to promote peer learning and capacity-building among hosting organisations. Nicol Savinetti also pointed to the [Displaced Artists Network](#) in Denmark, which initially focused on Ukrainian artists but is now expanding its scope and partnerships. In Poland, the informal network REACT was founded by around 40 diverse Polish organisations to support working conditions in the multicultural environment, as a response to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the arrival of forcibly displaced artists from Ukraine and Belarus.

The ‘Reimagining Hospitality’ meeting held in Paris in June 2025, gathered various support structures from Europe and the United States of America and emphasised the urgent need for a network of support structures, not only to facilitate peer learning but also to counter the institutional silence surrounding the situation of at-risk and displaced artists. **These ecosystems of support are not always visible from the outside, but they form the backbone of a truly hospitable environment.** Community building is not a soft add-on to professional development, it is part of the infrastructure that makes it possible. Where systems are rigid, extractive, or fragmented, artists are left to navigate alone. Where there is community, there is continuity, care, and the possibility of imagining a future.

## Artist-led, flexible and responsive approaches

The conversations held during this research consistently highlighted the need for support systems that are artist-led, flexible in design, and responsive to the evolving realities of artists’ lives and practices. This means moving beyond predefined opportunities and toward frameworks where artists help shape the terms of engagement.

**Displaced artists are too often viewed as passive recipients of aid rather than active agents shaping cultural life.** As Clymene Christoforou noted: ‘We just have to leave those spaces for where the artists arrive, at what point they’ve arrived from. And if they’ve arrived from a professional practice, then we have to say: you’re a professional.’ Starting from the premise of affirming existing expertise helps avoid the common trap of placing displaced artists in a perpetual state of emergence or dependency.

Support organisations, however, often operate within administrative and legal constraints. For instance, Globe Art Point works with refugee and

asylum-seeking artists in Finland but cannot fully engage with them until they have the right to work. In other cases, organisations are mandated to work only with artists who meet **certain definitions of ‘professionalism’, often rooted in Western-centric frameworks**, such as academic credentials or institutional recognition. As Dirk De Wit argued, we must ‘step out of the existing criteria of what is professional and what is not—maybe you don’t have a diploma, maybe you have another trajectory as an artist.’ This also calls for a reassessment of dominant value systems within the arts sector, which many interlocutors, including Ilinca Martorell and Ioana Crugel of the [Association of Heritage sites for Culture](#), described as increasingly inadequate.

Flexibility also involves recognising different timelines and trajectories. Some artists may be ready to begin new work immediately; others need time to navigate trauma, legal precarity, or rebuild their networks. Geoliane Arab of [Onda - Office national de diffusion artistique](#) warned against **extractive practices that demand**

**quick production**, especially on themes of displacement: ‘This practice of extractivism that exists with artists who are not in vulnerable situations continues to be reproduced and is even more accentuated with artists who are in this situation, because they have much less agency on what they choose to talk about, how they talk about it, and in what temporality.’

Responsiveness, then, requires institutions and funders to adjust expectations around outputs and timelines. As Clymene Christoforou put it: ‘Working with artists who are displaced is incredibly messy...the development takes longer. So, it’s not just about counting what we have delivered, but actually: how have we done that? What has been the process? What is the process of care?’ Some organisations are already embedding these principles into their work. At D6: Culture in Transit, artists are directly involved in shaping organisational activities and public programmes. Flanders Arts Institute uses its monthly open calls not only to support others but to adapt its own practices and grow institutional knowledge. Culture for All’s [Diversity Bridgers](#) programme formalised the expertise of international professionals around issues of racism and structural inequality, allowing them to train decision-makers across the Finnish cultural

sector and promote more equitable practices. Onda, meanwhile, has adapted its funding and support criteria to better respond to the specific conditions faced by at-risk and forcibly displaced artists.

Equally important is listening to and learning from artists’ critical feedback, especially when things go wrong. As Geoliane Arab suggested, ‘It would be very interesting to have an anonymous documentation from the perspective of the artists themselves of what has gone wrong...we can build a series of to-dos and not to-dos.’ **Creating structured spaces for honest, artist-led reflection helps institutions avoid repeating harmful practices and refine their approach over time.**

These examples reflect a shift toward shared authorship and mutual learning. Artist-led, process-driven approaches prioritise autonomy, reduce harm, and create conditions for long-term transformation. They also require humility on the part of host organisations, a readiness to listen, reflect, and adapt. This shift toward artist-led practice is not only more ethical, it is essential to building cultural systems that evolve with, rather than resist, complexity.

## Structural and organisational reconfiguration

Sustaining meaningful support for at-risk and forcibly displaced artists requires critical reflection on the structures and habits of the institutions providing that support. Across the conversations, it became clear that many challenges—such as limited access to platforms, aesthetic marginalisation, or lack of remuneration—are symptoms of deeper systemic patterns.

**The Western arts sector largely operates within frameworks that reward familiarity.**

Programmers and curators tend to work with artists whose references, aesthetic languages, or reputations are already known to them. This reflects a structural bias toward Western artistic norms, linear career trajectories, and established networks, placing newly arrived artists at a significant disadvantage. Their work, often shaped by radically different contexts and experiences, may be overlooked simply because it does not ‘fit’ existing curatorial languages or timelines. Geoliane Arab highlights that the first

step to addressing this bias is acknowledging the particular position Western institutions occupy in the global arts ecosystem. **Institutions must shift from offering development to artists towards cultivating their own capacity for listening, learning, and openness to different forms of knowledge.** Responsible hospitality is thus not just about what institutions offer artists, but about how they position themselves as spaces of ongoing learning.

Truly meaningful support demands that organisations rethink their ways of working, power distribution, and definitions of value. This entails new practices and new mindsets: greater flexibility, a longer-term perspective on artistic development, and openness to unfamiliar processes and aesthetics. Institutional expectations often compound these challenges, with rigid demands for clearly defined projects, immediate deliverables, and quick evaluation. As Anna Galas-Kosil noted, ‘What these communities need is genuine support and openness from institutions—including grantmakers—to communicate with them using different languages than with those familiar with such programmes.’ Trauma, legal precarity, language barriers, and disrupted professional trajectories make navigating rigid systems difficult.

Structural reconfiguration means moving **beyond integration**—where artists are expected to adapt to existing systems—toward a logic of institutional evolution that responds to new realities. Nicol Savinetti captures this shift: ‘inclusion often tries to expand what already exists, rather than imagining new ways forward through collective creation’.

Change also involves who holds decision-making power. Geoliane Arab emphasises that improving hospitality requires reconsidering recruitment, governance, and leadership to reflect the diversity of artists being supported. This goes beyond programming to accountability at all levels. Examples of organisations embracing

this transformation already exist. The Polish informal network REACT published guidelines to support organisations in becoming better hosts through shared learning. Immart advocates shifting from integration narratives toward a human rights framework, currently undergoing assessment under the [UN’s Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#). Flanders Arts Institute is actively moving away from inclusion logic, collaborating with Belgian organisations [Globe Aroma](#) and [Fameus](#) to develop support tools grounded not in integration but in common evolution.

Similarly, new initiatives embody shared responsibility for the global arts sector. [Sandberg Instituut’s Temporary Master in Lumbung Practice](#), rooted in the lumbung collective principles from documenta fifteen, prioritises collective learning, communal stewardship, and shared abundance over individual competition. Likewise, the French festival [Sens Interdits](#) experiments with shared responsibility by hosting a Palestinian company in Chile with support from the [Institut français du Chili](#), bypassing traditional national representation and truly embodying a logic of shared responsibility.

Reconfiguring institutions is neither linear nor easy, it demands discomfort, time, and ongoing dialogue. Yet the organisations that embrace this challenge—not as a burden, but as an opportunity—are helping build a cultural ecosystem that is more equitable, resilient, and responsive to today’s realities.

The reflections shared throughout this text underline that supporting at-risk and forcibly displaced artists requires long-term, structural commitment and a willingness to rethink how the cultural field operates. A number of shared features emerged from the practice-based conversations, pointing toward the elements that make support schemes not only functional, but meaningful, responsive, and sustainable.

# Key features of effective support schemes

## 1. Artist-led and co-created

Effective support schemes recognise the agency, expertise, and autonomy of displaced artists, allowing them to be active participants in designing, evaluating and/or adapting the support they receive.

## 2. Flexible and responsive

One-size-fits-all models do not work. Effective programmes are responsive to the different trajectories, timelines, and needs of artists, acknowledging that some may need immediate production support, while others require space, care and stability first.

## 3 Rooted in structural awareness

Schemes should be designed with a clear understanding of the systemic barriers facing displaced artists—such as legal precarity, racism, and aesthetic marginalisation—and actively work to dismantle them rather than reproduce them.

## 4. Long-term and sustainable

Beyond emergency or short-term interventions, effective support is embedded into longer professional pathways, offering continuity, stability, and room for growth.

## 5. Financially appropriate and flexible

Budgets go beyond project outputs to include the invisible labour of hosting—such as community-building, interpretation, mental health support, or childcare—and provide stable support for host organisations as well as artists.

## 6. Community-embedded

Effective schemes foster belonging and connection by creating moments and spaces for artists to build networks, share experiences, and access informal knowledge.

## 7. Accessible

Language, communication style, and application processes are adapted to different levels of familiarity with local systems, avoiding administrative jargon and opaque criteria.

## 8. Cross-sectoral and collaborative

Partnerships between organisations of different scales, profiles, and geographies strengthen impact. Shared tools, co-hosting models, and learning networks help avoid duplication and reduce isolation.

## 9. Institutionally reflexive

Organisations that are open to questioning their own assumptions, hierarchies, and working models make the most relevant support schemes. Professional development for artists goes hand in hand with institutional transformation.

## 10. Grounded in shared responsibility

Rather than reinforcing logics of rescue or representation, effective schemes are based on mutual accountability and global solidarity, recognising that cultural institutions are not neutral and that they must take an active role in building fairer futures.

This text reflects just a fragment of the ongoing conversations and efforts across the arts sector to support at-risk and displaced artists with care, imagination, and integrity. While there is no one-size-fits-all model, the examples shared here offer glimpses of what is possible when institutions are willing to listen, adapt, and act in solidarity. As this work continues, so does the opportunity to build a more responsive and connected cultural ecosystem, one that not only offers refuge, but creates space for new voices, practices, and ways of working to emerge and thrive.

## About the Author

Milica Ilić is a cultural worker with extensive experience in transnational cooperation within contemporary performing arts. She is particularly invested in exploring organisational practices in the arts sector that are grounded in equity and solidarity. Milica supports the strategic development of cooperation projects and actively contributes to the transnational arts scene as a trainer, educator, researcher, and evaluator. She has authored and co-authored numerous articles, policy papers, and analyses.

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To fully appreciate the breadth of the research on The Situation of At-Risk and Displaced Artists and Culture Professionals, please do consider reading the [other chapters](#) gathered in this third report, as well as the first two reports available for download: [Intersecting Temporalities: At-Risk and Displaced Artists in Transition – Volume 1 Scoping Review](#) and [Policy and Practice in the EU: Pathways, Impediments, and Patchwork Solutions – Volume 2 Cultural Policy Analysis](#).



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