

Cultural Mobility Forum 2026 in Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia

29-30 April 2026

On the Move is the international information network dedicated to artistic and cultural mobility, gathering 90 members from 33 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.

Each year On the Move proposes a Cultural Mobility Forum to collectively investigate international artistic and cultural mobility trends. As a unique knowledge platform, the network works together with its members and partners to design thematic panel discussions and contextualise global mobility issues.

Focus 2026: Cultural Mobility Justice

Cultural mobility justice examines and challenges the systemic inequities that determine who can move, create and participate within the global cultural landscape. It exposes how visa restrictions, economic disparities, and enduring colonial, ableist and patriarchal power structures disproportionately limit the mobility of artists and culture professionals – particularly those from marginalised communities, burdened by precarious working conditions, family responsibilities, or personal constraints, or from non-Western contexts.

This framework advocates for equitable access to resources, including visas, funding, information, and professional (digital) opportunities, while amplifying the voices of those most affected by mobility injustices. It demands alternative approaches to curation, cultural exchange, and the dismantling of institutional gatekeeping that perpetuates inequality. Ultimately, cultural mobility justice seeks to reimagine and redistribute the power dynamics of global circulation, ensuring that mobility becomes a fundamental right rather than a privilege reserved for a select few.

The international circulation of artists and culture professionals is a critical arena where mobility justice reveals deep-seated inequities. While globalisation promises borderless exchange, the reality remains stratified: who gains access, under what conditions, and who faces exclusion reflects historical colonialism, economic inequality, and institutional control.



ON THE MOVE

The 2026 edition of the Forum will explore these systemic inequities, interrogating how mobility within the cultural sector reinforces disparities and imbalances. Participants will examine how transnational cultural participation is not universally accessible but shaped by visa regimes, economic barriers, geopolitical hierarchies, and other structural constraints. The conversations will highlight alternative models of circulation, from self-organised networks and decolonial practices to policy reforms and solidarity-based economies. By centring artist-led initiatives, fair labour standards, and equitable visa policies, the Forum aims to envision a fairer framework for international cultural exchange. At a time when independent cultural cooperation in Southeast Europe (SEE) faces growing challenges, the Forum will relay the voices of cultural practitioners in the region to address a deteriorating political climate that threatens their mobility and creative freedom.

For this Forum, On the Move is proud to partner with one of its members, Kooperativa – Regional Platform for Culture, a network of organisations and national platforms dedicated to independent culture and contemporary art in SEE. Founded by 21 independent cultural organisations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Slovenia, Kooperativa now brings together 40 active members working across all areas of contemporary cultural and artistic practice.

Kooperativa's work focuses on fostering collaboration and exchange through joint projects, strengthening networks among advocates of independent culture, and delivering information and educational initiatives. The platform also plays a critical role in advocating for cultural policy reforms that enhance regional and international cooperation, while working to establish a sustainable framework for long-term collaboration and development among independent cultural organisations in SEE. A key part of this effort involves engaging in dialogue with stakeholders to address the conditions for cultural workers and ensure their voices are heard.



Programme

Tuesday, 29 April

Cultural Mobility Forum 2026

- 09:00-10:00 Registration & welcome coffee
[Albanian Theatre Skopje](#), Nikola Martinovski 41, Skopje
- 10:00-10:30 Opening and welcoming words
- 10:30-11:00 Keynote Speech by Marijana Cvetković (Stanica/Station – Service for Contemporary Dance, Nomad Dance Academy)
Mobility Justice: Fairer Policies, New Practices, and Radical Solidarity
- 11:00-12:30 Panel discussion: *Artistic Autonomy and the Balkans*
With Sara Whyatt (Freemuse) and Haris Pašović (Sarajevo Fest)
Moderator Mateja Lazar (Motovila)
Rapporteur Sviatlana Haidalionak (Warsaw Observatory of Culture)
- 11:00-12:30 Long Table: *Safe Havens: Artist Residencies in Turbulent Times*
Seed speaker Theresa Ridder (SWAN Emergency residencies)
Moderator Maik Müller (Martin Roth-Initiative)
Rapporteur Ika Sienkiewicz-Nowacka (Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art)
- 11:00-12:30 Long Table: *Building our Fairness Capacities*
Seed speaker Sabrina Kamili (Fondation Hiba, K&Co)
Moderator Kalina Dukovska (Laboratorium)
Rapporteur Antonija Letinić (Kultura Nova)
- 12:30-14:30 Lunch break & venue change
- 14:30-15:00 Check-in and moving forward
[MKC Youth Cultural Centre](#), 15 MK, Dimitar Vlahov Walk, Skopje
- 15:00-16:30 Panel discussion: *Cultural Mobility Funding: Biases and Blind Spots*
With Marina Mussapi (Moleskine Foundation) and Jon Opie (Acme)
Moderator Maria Vlachou (Acesso Cultura)
Rapporteur Lorena Copil (Centrul Cultural Clujean)

- 15:00-16:30 Long Table: *Navigating Visa Barriers in Cultural Mobility*
Seed speaker Marie Le Sourd (On the Move)
Moderator Sebastian Hoffmann (touring artists, Internationales Theaterinstitut)
Rapporteur Florent Mehmeti (Teatri ODA, HAPU Festival)
- 15:00-16:30 Long Table: *Mobility Justice – Invisible No More*
Seed speaker Abdullah AlKafri (Ettijahat)
Moderator Jordi Baltà Portolés (independent expert)
Rapporteur Argyro Toumazou (D6:EU)
- 17:00-18:30 Harvesting insights from rapporteurs and participants
Rapporteurs Sviatlana Haidalionak (Warsaw Observatory of Culture), Antonija Letinić (Kultura Nova), Ika Sienkiewicz-Nowacka (Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art), Florent Mehmeti (Teatri ODA, HAPU Festival), Argyro Toumazou (D6:EU), and Lorena Copil (Centrul Cultural Clujean)
Moderator Yohann Floch (On the Move)
- 18:30 Conclusions and announcement of the 2027 edition of On the Move's Cultural Mobility Forum
- 18:45 Reception with finger food and drinks

Wednesday, 30 April

Cultural visits and curated discussions

These parallel visits invite participants to move through Skopje's artistic landscape and discover how the local arts scene takes shape, resists, and evolves. From fragile and contested cultural spaces to self-organised structures of solidarity, and into the streets, buildings, and shared spaces of the city, each visit offers a different entry point into the conditions of artistic practice in Skopje and North Macedonia today. Together, they trace how bodies, spaces, and collective practices engage with social transformation through lived experiences, situated practices, and ongoing negotiation.

- 09:30-12:30 *Performing Public Space: Artistic Practices in the City*
with [Faculty of things that can't be learned](#) / [AKTO festival for contemporary arts](#)

- 09:30-12:30 *Holding the Line: Practices, Structures and Solidarity in the Visual Arts*
with [Centar Jadro](#)
- 09:30-12:30 *Anatomy of a Performing Arts Scene: Bodies, Spaces and Autonomy*
with [Lokomotiva - Centre for New Initiative in Arts and Culture](#)
- 09:30-12:30 *Music Landscape Session*
with [Creative Europe Desk - North Macedonia](#), [Password Production](#)
and [Laboratorium](#)



Keynote: Cultural Mobility Justice: Fairer Policies, New Practices, and Radical Solidarity

This opening keynote will examine how cultural mobility can – and must – be reimaged through **fairer policies, transformative practices, and new forms of solidarity**. As global inequalities deepen, the cultural sector faces urgent questions: How can we dismantle the barriers that restrict movement for marginalised artists and practitioners? What policies are needed to redress historical injustices and ensure equitable access to opportunities? And how might we forge new solidarities – across borders, disciplines, and communities – to challenge systemic exclusion?

Drawing on real-world examples, policy innovations, and grassroots strategies, this keynote will explore concrete pathways toward a more just cultural ecosystem – one where mobility is not a privilege but a shared right, and where solidarity is not performative but transformative.

Speaker:

Marijana Cvetković is a producer, curator and lecturer. She is a co-founder of Station Service for Contemporary Dance and Nomad Dance Academy, self-organised platforms dedicated to the development of contemporary dance and performing arts in post-Yugoslavia. Additionally, she serves as a cultural activist within the independent cultural scene of Serbia, where she co-founded platforms such as *druga scena*, Magacin Cultural Centre, Association of Independent Culture of Serbia, and Platform for the Commons ‘Zajedničko’.

Working as a lecturer at the University of Arts in Belgrade and Université Lumière Lyon 2, as well as within many informal education platforms, she shares knowledge in curatorial studies, cultural policies, and arts production. Her main interests are self-organisation, self-management, Yugoslav cultural policies, the political aspects of cultural work, institutional transformation, and working conditions in arts and culture.

Panel discussion: Artistic Autonomy and the Balkans

This panel will explore the realities of **cultural mobility practice in the Balkans**, where cross-border cooperation is shaped by complex socio-political legacies, economic precarity, and the challenges of transnational collaboration.

Cultural practitioners in the Balkans – several of whom have direct experience of detention, expulsion, and targeting by authoritarian regimes – are confronting a deteriorating political climate that threatens their transnational mobility and artistic freedom. In Serbia, for example, independent cultural organisations supporting democratic movements are under increasing pressure from authorities, while across the region cultural workers face systematic restrictions on their movement and cross-border work. These political pressures, combined with long-standing infrastructural barriers, are creating a concerning pattern of mobility restrictions that not only undermine individual liberties but also severely hinder cultural cooperation across Southeast Europe.

A key focus will be the role of Balkan diasporas worldwide in enabling and sustaining international cultural projects. How do these networks facilitate access to global opportunities – and what limitations do they face? What tensions emerge between local artistic priorities and external expectations? And how might transnational solidarity genuinely empower artistic communities in the region? By centring voices from the Balkans and its diasporas, this discussion seeks to dismantle stereotypes and envision **equitable models of collaboration** – ones that honour autonomy while nurturing meaningful connection.

Panellists:

Sara Whyatt is Research Director at the arts freedom organisation Freemuse. She headed PEN International’s freedom of expression programme for over 20 years before becoming a freelance consultant in 2013. Since then she has contributed her expertise to numerous organisations working in the field of artistic freedom. She is a member of the Expert Facility on the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and is also an Expert working on the Council of Europe Directorate for Democracy’s Free to Create-Create to be Free initiative.

Haris Pašović is a theatre and film director and the Director of Sarajevo Fest. His theatre productions have been presented in more than 20 countries worldwide, including at the Edinburgh International Festival, Festival d’Avignon, Singapore Arts Festival, National Arts Festival (South Africa), UK City of Culture Derry/Londonderry, and many others. He is the

creator of the Sarajevo Red Line, a kilometre-long installation of 11,541 red chairs in central Sarajevo, commemorating each person killed during the siege. His documentary *Greta*, about an Auschwitz survivor, has been shown at festivals internationally, including the New York Jewish Film Festival. Pašović founded the Sarajevo Film Festival in 1993 and directed the International Theatre Festival MES Sarajevo. He served as Director of Mittelfest, Italy, and is Artistic Director of the East-West Centre Sarajevo, as well as a tenured Professor of Directing at the Academy of Performing Arts in Sarajevo. He currently serves as Chair of the European Festivals for Emerging Artists Jury.

Moderator:

Mateja Lazar, co-founder and director of Motovila institute, is an expert in international cooperation in the cultural and creative sectors (CCSs). She specialises in EU programmes and policies and has over 20 years of experience in consultancy and training aimed at strengthening the capacities of CCSs and promoting cross-sectoral and transnational cooperation. She is head of Creative Europe Desk Slovenia and actively involved in European networks, in particular Culture Action Europe and On the Move, where she also serves as a board member.

Panel discussion: Cultural Mobility Funding – Biases and Blind Spots

As part of On the Move’s ongoing work with public and private funders, a continuous dialogue takes place to address the persistent challenges and evolving priorities shaping how cultural mobility is supported – from green and virtual mobility to values-based approaches. This panel discussion will critically examine funding methodologies that seek to address ingrained biases and overlooked barriers in grant-making.

At a time when societies are confronting overlapping social, cultural and economic crises, some of the most effective responses are emerging from the creative sector. **Forward-looking funders** support initiatives that operate at the **intersection of art, social action and community development**, tackling urgent challenges such as social exclusion, mental health, education and civic engagement through imaginative, inclusive and locally rooted approaches. Yet, despite their impact, socially engaged practitioners remain structurally fragile: often underfunded, reliant on volunteer labour, and stretched across multiple roles and responsibilities. Their intersectional work seldom fits neatly into traditional funding categories or evaluation frameworks, leaving much of its value unseen and unsupported, even as it helps communities retain their humanity in systems increasingly driven by efficiency, metrics and short-term outcomes. Funders explore new ways of representing and recognising their impacts.

Central to this panel discussion is the **trust-based funding model**, which shifts power dynamics by prioritising confidence in grantees over rigid control. This approach challenges traditional practices – such as overly restrictive eligibility criteria, excessive bureaucracy, or burdensome reporting – that often exclude less experienced arts workers or those facing accessibility challenges. By streamlining processes and reducing administrative hurdles, trust-based funding aims to foster freedom, equity and efficiency, ultimately empowering recipients to direct resources where they are most needed. Another key focus is the **randomised selection process**, a method designed to minimise bias by incorporating chance into decision-making. Unlike conventional evaluation systems, which may be influenced by unconscious prejudices or institutional preferences, randomisation offers a neutral, transparent, and fairer alternative. While not without its own complexities, this model prioritises equity and efficiency, ensuring that opportunities are distributed without favour or exclusion.

Through shared reflection, participants will consider how these and other innovative approaches can redress imbalances in cultural mobility funding – moving beyond well-

intentioned but flawed systems toward models that truly centre fairness, accessibility and trust.

Panellists:

Marina Mussapi is the Chief Operating Officer at the Moleskine Foundation, an organisation that champions creativity as a tool for social transformation and works to inspire a new generation of creative thinkers and doers. With over a decade of experience in strategic planning and cultural project management, she has collaborated with museums, theatres, festivals, and grassroots organisations in Italy and internationally. Guided by a deep belief in the power of culture to address complex issues and foster equity and resilience, Marina has consistently sought to support institutions that challenge themselves to remain relevant to evolving societal needs, fostering community driven initiatives and empowering underrepresented voices. Before joining the Foundation, she worked at BASE Milano (2016–2022), leading institutional fundraising and educational programmes. A Milan native, she studied Cultural Economics and Management at Bocconi University and holds a Master’s in Management of Creative Business Processes from Copenhagen Business School.

Jon Opie is Head of Artist Support for Acme, a London-based organisation providing over 500 affordable long-term studios for visual artists and a programme of international residencies hosting 40-50 artists annually. He oversees Acme’s relationships with artists, enabling them to sustain their studio practices and careers. Previously he was the Deputy Director of Jerwood Arts where he collaborated with organisations across art forms to create professional and creative development opportunities for artists, makers, curators and producers. He led on creating innovative awards, bursaries and fellowships, centring artists’ needs, care, and inclusive practices. For eight years he was a Trustee of Cardboard Citizens Theatre Company and is now a Trustee of the Live Art Development Agency, dedicated to the development of Live Art research, practice and infrastructure.

Moderator:

Maria Vlachou is a founding member and current Executive Director of Acesso Cultura. She is the 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), as well as the bilingual (pt/en) blog Musing on Culture. She is the manager of the Facebook group Museum texts / Textos em museus and co-manager of the blog Museums and Migration. She is also a member of the Board of the international museum professionals network Solidarity in Action.



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In the past, she was Communications Director of São Luiz Municipal Theatre and Head of Communication of Pavilion of Knowledge – Ciência Viva (Lisbon). She was a board member of ICOM Portugal (2005-2014) and editor of its bulletin, and has collaborated with different programmes of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. She participated in the European project RESHAPE within the group ‘Arts and Citizenship’.



Long Table: Safe Havens: Artist Residencies in Turbulent Times

Artist residencies have long been a cornerstone of artistic development, but their importance is magnified in times of crisis. On the Move's research into the challenges faced by **at-risk and displaced arts professionals** has highlighted the critical role of artist residencies at every stage of temporary or permanent relocation. From emergency hosting to long-term integration into a new cultural ecosystem, artist-in-residence programmes provide vital support, fostering the agency and autonomy of displaced artists. Through peer-to-peer mentorship, professional development, and community-building, these programmes create supportive environments that help artists navigate the complexities of relocation, including safety planning and mental health support.

This Long Table discussion will examine the evolving **role of artist residencies in today's landscape**, exploring both the challenges they face and the threats confronting arts and culture professionals. It will also highlight how residencies actively contribute to shaping responses in times of crisis. Together, attendees will identify concrete actions and innovative approaches to enhance the support available to at-risk and displaced artists, ensuring that creative practice continues to flourish even in turbulent times.

Seed speaker:

Theresa Ridder is a performance artist, visual artist, and residency host. Theresa is the founder and host of two artist residences in Sweden. In 2022, she initiated SWAN Emergency residencies in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, where she currently works as a project manager. In this role she coordinated safe residences in Sweden for artists in conflict zones by establishing a collaboration between SWAN and Artists at Risk (AR), matching 116 artists to SWAN ER residencies. She is also a board member of SWAN.

Moderator:

Maik Müller is head of the Martin Roth-Initiative, a protection and relocation programme for artists at risk initiated by Institute für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa) and Goethe-Institut, and funded by the German Federal Foreign Office. Before this role he worked for ten years in the human rights sector, especially on the issue of protection and support for human rights defenders at risk. He holds a Master's degree in Latin American Regional Studies as well as a postgraduate diploma in psycho-social intervention in situations of political violence and catastrophes. As a certificated professional mediator and coach with over ten years leadership experience working with people from repressive contexts, he contributes to counter the impacts of repression.

Long Table: Building our Fairness Capacities

This discussion will invite participants to share and explore **capacity-building initiatives, training programmes, academies, and mentoring schemes** designed to empower cultural practitioners in implementing fairer, more equitable practices. These programmes play a crucial role in addressing systemic inequities – from access to resources and inclusive decision-making to ethical labour practices and decolonial approaches in the cultural sector.

Participants will be encouraged to share experiences and critical reflections on what has succeeded, what obstacles remain, and how these initiatives might be scaled, adapted, or refined to **better support marginalised communities**. Key questions will guide the discussion: How can professional development programmes move beyond tokenistic inclusion to drive genuine structural change? What mentorship models prioritise the voices and needs of those most impacted by systemic injustice? And how can we foster cross-border and interdisciplinary collaboration to collectively strengthen fairness capacities?

By the end of the session, we aim to identify gaps in current professional development programmes and envision new approaches that contribute to a more equitable, accessible and supportive cultural ecosystem.

Seed speaker:

Sabrina Kamili is Head of Development at Fondation HIBA (Morocco), and co-founder of K&Co (consultancy) and 4S (NGO). Based in Rabat, she works on cultural policy and capacity-building within broader development frameworks, with particular attention to the intersections between creative economies and gender considerations. She acted as a local expert in the development of the European Union’s multiannual support programme for the cultural and creative sectors, currently implemented in Morocco. She has contributed to two sectoral studies on cultural value chains in Morocco, in collaboration with the HEM Research Centre and Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P), and advises cultural organisations, donors and public stakeholders on programme design and impact. Previously, she was Head of the Moroccan Music Export Office (2017–2018), Development Officer at L’Observatoire (local NGO), and a member of the Moroccan Cinematographic Center’s fund allocation committee for film festivals (2021–2022).

Moderator:

Kalina Dukovska is a proactive and multilingual researcher and cultural worker based in Skopje, North Macedonia. Deeply engaged in the intersection of socio-cultural work, youth

participation, and research-based activism, Kalina is part of the executive team of *Лабораториум* (Laboratorium) a cultural and educational centre in Skopje that fosters independent art and civic imagination through co-creation and regional cooperation. In this role, she coordinates cultural programmes, supports grassroots initiatives, and facilitates inclusive dialogue spaces for young people and marginalised communities. In 2024, Kalina led the Laboratorium team as a finalist in the New European Bauhaus awards for the cultural project that Laboratorium represented.

She also serves on the Executive Committee of Reset!Network, a European network of independent cultural and media organisations, thinkers, artists, and activists working toward systemic alternatives through transdisciplinary exchange and experimentation. In parallel, Kalina is a researcher at European Policy Institute-Skopje, where she contributes to projects on EU-Western Balkan relations, democratic resilience, and a just transition. Her broader aim is to contribute to the democratic, ecological and cultural renewal of the region by bridging policy, research and community-based practice.

Long Table: Navigating Visa Barriers in Cultural Mobility

This Long Table discussion confronts one of the most urgent and unjust obstacles in cultural mobility: visa discrimination. For artists and culture professionals, the ability to work, collaborate, or grow internationally is too often dictated by **passport privilege, bureaucratic hurdles, and systemic exclusion**. From rejected visas and exorbitant application fees to arbitrary refusals based on nationality or economic status, these barriers reinforce global inequities – limiting who gets to move, who gets to be seen, and who gets to thrive.

Participants will be invited to share their experiences – including **workarounds, solidarity networks, and legal strategies** that artists and culture professionals have used to navigate or overcome these barriers. The discussion will also explore how institutions, funders and peers can better support those facing visa discrimination, ensuring that such efforts move beyond tokenism or performative allyship.

A critical focus will be the tensions arising from illiberal or populist governments that weaponize cross-border mobility – whether through restrictive visa policies, nationalist rhetoric, or bureaucratic sabotage – to control artistic expression or suppress dissent. How can arts workers resist such instrumentalisation while still pursuing international collaboration?

What would truly equitable mobility policies look like? And how can we collectively advocate for their implementation – even in contexts where governments actively undermine fair movement?

By centring first-hand accounts and collective problem-solving, this discussion aims to expose the human cost of visa injustices – including those amplified by political manipulation – while brainstorming actionable solutions, from grassroots advocacy to institutional accountability and transnational solidarity networks.

Seed speaker:

Marie Le Sourd has since 2012 been the Secretary General of On the Move, the cultural mobility information and advocacy network active in Europe and worldwide. She was elected Board member of Culture Action Europe in June 2025. Previously, Marie Le Sourd worked for twelve years in Southeast Asia, first in Singapore for the Asia-Europe Foundation as lead manager of the Cultural Department and then as Director of the French Cultural Centre in Yogyakarta-Indonesia.

Over the years Marie has built a knowledge base on international cultural cooperation, funding schemes for the mobility of artists and cultural professionals, cultural networks, and web resources. In this work she is interested in the multidimensional impact of mobility on artists and cultural professionals, and in evaluation processes linked to these.

Moderator:

Sebastian Hoffmann works for the German Centre of the International Theatre Institute (ITI), where he coordinates the ‘touring artists’ help desk service on the administrative regulations of cross-border activities to/from Germany in the cultural sector. He studied North American Studies and Film Studies at FU Berlin and Reed College (USA) and has worked as an agent and promoter in the music sector and as a consultant at Music Pool Berlin.

Long Table: Cultural Mobility Justice – Invisible No More

This Long Table discussion will turn the spotlight on artists and culture professionals who have been **systematically sidelined or rendered invisible** within the cultural sector. From **disabled artists and those at risk** to **parents, practitioners from European overseas territories, Indigenous creators, and others pushed to the margins**, these voices are too often excluded – not just from international visibility and mobility opportunities, but from shaping the aesthetic, intellectual and structural future of the cultural and creative sectors.

The discussion will explore how to dismantle the barriers that prevent these artists from fully participating, leading and innovating. Participants are invited to share strategies and visions for making the cultural sector not only more representative and inclusive, but one where marginalised voices are actively empowered to drive change.

Key areas of focus will include redesigning funding, programming, and professional networks to centre these perspectives, as well as developing new models of collaboration and advocacy. These approaches must ensure that diversity is not merely represented but meaningfully integrated into the sector’s decision-making and creative processes.

By amplifying these conversations, the discussion aims to challenge the status quo and co-create pathways toward a cultural landscape where no one is invisible – and where every voice can thrive, contribute, and redefine what culture looks and feels like.

Seed speaker:

Abdullah Alkafri is the Executive Director and Co-founder of Ettijahat-Independent Culture, which supports artists from Syria and the Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) region. He is a playwright, cultural manager and cultural activist. His work spans cultural policy, strategic planning and arts education. As an author and researcher, he has published academic works on art, society and cultural change, including *On the Margin’s Margin: Some Fragmented Thoughts on the Circumstances of Those who Make Art*. His writing focuses on cultural displacement and artistic expression during crises, examining independent culture in the SWANA region. Based between Brussels and Beirut, he lectures at the Institute of Fine Arts and Audiovisual Studies, Beirut, teaching cultural production sociology, playwriting and theatre direction.

Abdullah holds a PhD in theatre studies from Saint Joseph University, Lebanon. Previously, he has served on the International Programme Advisory Committee for the 8th World Summit on Arts and Culture (2019, Malaysia).

Moderator:

Jordi Baltà Portolés works as a freelance consultant, researcher and trainer in cultural policy, cultural rights, sustainability, and international cultural relations. He is a member of the UNESCO Expert Facility for the implementation of the 2005 Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and an advisor on culture and sustainable cities at the Committee on Culture of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). He has also worked regularly with On the Move, including on the *Perspective* reports (2022-2024) and the *Capacity Building Report* (2025) as well as in several reports on performing arts and disability within the Europe Beyond Access project. Jordi holds a PhD from the universities of Girona and Melbourne, and teaches regularly at several universities.

Plenary discussion: Harvesting insights from rapporteurs and participants

Rapporteurs:

Sviatlana Haidalionak is a Manager of Artistic and Research Projects at the Warsaw Observatory of Culture, where she coordinates artistic and research residency programmes for cultural practitioners in Warsaw, with a strong focus on artists and researchers with migration experience. Her work engages closely with issues of cultural mobility, legal precarity, and the impact of migration policies on artistic autonomy and transnational collaboration.

With over fifteen years of experience in independent cultural and community-based projects in Belarus and internationally, she has led numerous initiatives supporting socially engaged art, inclusion, and cross-border cooperation. Her background in theatre and cultural management informs her practice of observing, facilitating, and reflecting on complex artistic processes shaped by political and social constraints. She contributes to discussions on cultural mobility justice by connecting institutional practice with lived experience and knowledge from the field.

Lorena Copil is a project coordinator and communications specialist with experience in the independent cultural sector, working at the intersection of cultural practice, care and sustainability. She has been involved in initiatives that question current dynamics within the cultural field and explore alternative approaches to cultural work. She coordinated Re:form (March 2024 – November 2025), an experimental programme developing frameworks of support and care for Romanian artists and cultural professionals, developed by Cluj Cultural Centre.

Her practice includes facilitating collaborative formats focused on collective speculative thinking and community building, as well as communications work on culture's role in well-being, sustainable development, the future of cultural work, and heritage preservation.

Ika Sienkiewicz-Nowacka is a curator and cultural manager, and Head of the Artistic Residencies Department at the Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art in Warsaw. In 2003, she founded the U-jazdowski Residencies (as A-I-R Laboratory), the first ongoing residency programme in Poland and one of the leading residency platforms in Central Europe.



She has contributed to the research and implementation of new residency models, particularly in Eastern Europe, as part of the European Commission-funded project RE-tooling RESIDENCIES (2010–2012). She works in politically sensitive contexts, co-organising residencies and exchanges between Palestinian, Polish, and international practitioners in Poland and Palestine within the long-term project Everyday Forms of Resistance (2016–2023). In response to Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine, she co-curated Emergency Residencies (2022), supporting displaced artists and cultural workers seeking refuge, which later informed and evolved into the current Solidarity Residencies programme.

Her work also addresses working conditions in the arts and culture sector, with particular attention to the precarity of cultural labour. This approach informed her involvement in Care, Community, Laboratory: Mapping Residencies (2018–2023), an international research project examining residencies as spaces of care and institutional responsibility. She is a co-author of publications dedicated to the residency sector: *Re-tooling Residencies* (2009), and *On Care. A Journey into the Relational Nature of Artists’ Residencies* (2023).

Antonija Letinić works as Senior Advisor for Development and Strategic Partnerships within the Department for Research and Development of Kultura Nova Foundation. Since 2000 she has collaborated with numerous organisations engaged in the field of culture, arts and media in Croatia. She worked as coordinator and programmer for the organisation Kurziv – Platform for Matters of Culture, Media and Society, as Editor-in-chief of the online publication Kulturpunkt.hr, and as a coordinator of the local network of independent cultural organisations Operation: City as well as the regional platform for culture Kooperativa. At Kultura Nova, she works on development and capacity building programmes, international cooperation projects such as ADESTE+ and IN SITU, and on networking, cooperation and strategic partnerships. She has conceptualised, edited and contributed to numerous publications and specialised magazines, as well as participating in different research initiatives (across media, youth and cultural policies).

Florent Mehmeti is a senior theatre and film director and Professor of Theatre Production at the University of Prishtina. A long-standing cultural entrepreneur, manager, and cultural policy contributor, he is a PhD candidate specialising in cultural entrepreneurship and management within cultural policy. From 2000 to 2002, he served as Manager for PR and Development at the National Theatre of Prishtina. Since 2003, he has been a co-founder and Director of ODA Theatre, and since 2015, the Founder and Artistic Director of HAPU, an international festival dedicated to artistic creation in public spaces. He initiated and

served two mandates as President of the Cultural Forum, a network of 55 independent cultural organisations in Kosovo, and has been a member of the Board of Advisors of IETM, Europe's largest contemporary performing arts network. His artistic portfolio spans over 60 theatre, film, television, and public-space projects, alongside three decades of cultural policy and project leadership.

Argyro Toumazou is a cultural producer based in Nicosia. She has collaborated with artist groups, communities and NGOs in Cyprus for over two decades, with extensive experience in bi-communal programmes and art initiatives between the two Cypriot communities while working closely with local authorities, UNDP, and Cyprus' Ministry of Culture. Since 2000, she has been a co-founding cultural director of D6:EU in Cyprus, coordinating EU Creative Europe multi-annual programmes.

She is currently working on *Contested Desires: Constructive Dialogues* (CDCD, 2023-27), considering the problematic legacy of European colonialism, and *Mediterranean as the Climate Hotspot* (MATCH, 2025-2027), engaging artists and communities in climate action across the Mediterranean. In 2026, working with On the Move and other OTM members, the D6 team is leading on a new programme, *ASSEMBLE* (2026-2028), as a critical response to the climate emergency and ecological decline at the intersection of conflict and displacement.

Moderator:

Yohann Floch is the Director of Operations at On the Move, the international network dedicated to the circulation of artists and culture professionals. He is also Director of FACE, a resource platform supporting European capacity-building programmes in the contemporary performing arts. Over the course of his career, Yohann has designed, coordinated and contributed to numerous European cooperation projects and pilot international collaborations, working with independent arts organisations and cultural institutions. He regularly acts as an external expert for governmental bodies and private foundations, and leads or co-authors European policy reports. He currently serves as a member of the international advisory board of the Danish organisation IMMART – International Migration Meets the Arts.

Previously, he has held several senior leadership roles, including Secretary General of the European Dancehouse Network, Director of Skåne's International Resource Office, Coordinator of Dansehallerne's Nordic dance network, and Coordinator of the Circostrada network.

Cultural visits and curated discussions

These parallel visits invite participants to move through Skopje's artistic landscape and discover how the local arts scene takes shape, resists, and evolves. From fragile and contested cultural spaces to self-organised structures of solidarity, and into the streets, buildings, and shared spaces of the city, each visit offers a different entry point into the conditions of artistic practice in Skopje and North Macedonia today. Together, they trace how bodies, spaces, and collective practices engage with social transformation through lived experiences, situated practices, and ongoing negotiation.

1. Performing Public Space: Artistic Practices in the City

with [Faculty of things that can't be learned](#) / AKTO festival for contemporary arts

This visit explores practices that approach the city as a site of artistic exploration and collective engagement with shared community concerns. Taking place in the former Railway building, the visit begins with the discovery of the building's original community-oriented vision and its current revitalisation. Participants are then introduced to the long-term practice *City as a Stage*, which uses diverse research methods, scenographic tools, and the involvement of communities and experts from different fields to approach the urban environment as a performative space. A final discussion with Macedonian interdisciplinary arts practitioners reflects on how performance engages with the city as a living and evolving context, and how public space becomes a stage where collective concerns and urban questions are made visible.

2. Holding the Line: Practices, Structures and Solidarity in the Visual Arts

with [Centar Jadro](#)

This visit highlights experiences of solidarity, mutual support, and self-organisation within Skopje's visual arts scene. Beginning with a visit to SC Dunja and continuing to Jadro, participants explore how informal networks, self-organised initiatives, and innovative structures sustain artistic practice and professional life in response to local challenges. Meetings with artists of different generations and practices offer a broader picture of a scene that survives, adapts, and reorganises itself through collective action.

3. Anatomy of a Performing Arts Scene: Bodies, Spaces and Autonomy

with [Lokomotiva - Centre for New Initiative in Arts and Culture](#)

This visit explores the anatomy of Skopje's independent performing arts scene through its spaces, bodies, and modes of organisation. Starting from the former Kino Kultura site, it opens a discussion on the loss and precarity of independent cultural infrastructure, and on what it means for a scene to exist and sustain itself without stable spaces. The visit continues with a guided walk focusing on performing arts spaces, leading to Dom na kultura Kočo Racin and a meeting with local practitioners. Through conversation and exchange, it explores the relationship between physical space and artistic freedom, the 'body' of the scene and its responses to social and geopolitical pressures, and possible futures for independent performing arts in Skopje.

Lokomotiva - Centre for Initiative for Arts and Culture is supported by the Culture for Development project of the Government of Switzerland and is implemented by Heartefact Fund. The content/opinions can in no way be considered to reflect the views of the donors.

4. Music Landscape Session

with [Creative Europe Desk - North Macedonia](#), [Password Production](#) and [Laboratorium](#).

The Music Landscape Session explores how Balkan music professionals can tour, showcase, connect, and build sustainable international careers without burning out or going broke. It highlights concrete mobility and collaboration opportunities within the Creative Europe framework, while addressing the structural gaps the sector still faces – from support for emerging artists and professional management to touring budgets, export strategies, and cross-border partnerships. As Skopje moves toward European Capital of Culture 2028, the session asks whether music will be recognised as a serious economic and cultural sector with a long-term development vision. The discussion advocates for strategic public investment focused on capacity building and sustainable growth rather than short-term spectacle. By connecting policy, funding and practice, the session aims to strengthen the international positioning of Balkan music across European stages and markets.

About the Panel Discussions

Each panel discussion brings together two guest speakers, each invited to contribute their unique expertise, perspectives, and lived experiences – rooted in both their personal journeys and the projects they have led or collaborated on. The format is designed to foster meaningful exchange, offering participants the opportunity to engage with diverse viewpoints, practical insights, and critical reflections on the session’s theme.

A skilled facilitator, well-versed in the subject matter, will guide the conversation to ensure it remains balanced, dynamic and inclusive. They will carefully allocate time so that each speaker has the opportunity to fully present their ideas and experiences. In addition, they will actively encourage dialogue between the panellists, creating space for contrasting opinions, shared learnings, and unexpected connections to emerge. The facilitator will also open the floor to participants, fielding questions and comments to ensure the discussion remains interactive and focused on the key issues at hand.

About the Long Tables

A Long Table¹ is both a physical space and a non-hierarchical process for communal dialogue on shared concerns. It fosters an abundant, free-flowing exchange of ideas, perspectives, information and energy.

A curated group of core participants sets the table – not as experts delivering presentations, but as conversation catalysts. They offer initial thoughts or provocations on the topic, modelling engagement by introducing themselves when they first speak. There are no formal speeches or Q&As; instead, they invite *you* – seated around the perimeter – to join in at any moment and renew the table’s energy.

The table is arranged with chairs for the core group, plus a few empty seats. If you wish to contribute, simply take a seat and wait for a natural pause to speak. Over time, the conversation should see a dynamic flow of participants moving to and from the table.

Need a seat when none are free? Gently tap someone’s shoulder to ask if they’ll yield their spot. If you leave the table – or even the room – you’re welcome to return whenever you like.

To ensure the discussion insights are preserved and shared, dedicated guest rapporteurs will take detailed notes throughout the sessions. Their role is to carefully synthesise the main themes, insights, and actionable ideas that arise from the conversation. These key takeaways will then be presented during the ‘Harvesting Insights’ session, ensuring that the collective knowledge and ideas generated here contribute meaningfully to the broader learning and outcomes of the Forum.

¹ The Long Table format was conceived by Lois Weaver, an artist, activist, academic, and founding Board Member of Queer Up North. Lois is co-founder of the New York performance company Split Britches. Weaver’s inspiration for the Long Tables came from scenes in Marleen Gorris’ feminist film *Antonia’s Line* (1996) in which a tight-knit family welcomes more and more family and neighbourhood characters to their long dining table. In a similar way, Weaver’s format welcomes you to the table to share your experiences, thoughts, ideas, questions and visions.