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Time To Act: Two Years On

Data-led insights on Performing Arts & Disability in Europe

A research report authored by On the Move, commissioned by the British Council at the conclusion of the Europe Beyond Access project, May 2023




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Time To Act: Two Years On, Data-led insights on Performing Arts & Disability in Europe is commissioned by the British Council, within the context of Europe Beyond Access – the world’s largest transnational Arts & Disability project. Co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union, Europe Beyond Access supports disabled artists to break the glass ceilings of the contemporary theatre and dance sectors.

The core partners of the project are the British Council, Holland Dance Festival (The Netherlands), Kampnagel (Germany), Onassis Stegi (Greece), Oriente Occidente (Italy), Per.Art (Serbia), and Skånes Dansteater (Sweden).

A first report, *Time to Act* was commissioned to On the Move by the British Council and published in November 2021 (available in English and French, with executive summaries in French, Italian, Polish, Spanish, German, Serbian, Greek, Romanian and English).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, *Time to Act: Two Years On, Data-led insights on Performing Arts & Disability in Europe* identifies the most significant barriers to the accessibility, participation, international mobility and professional development of disabled artists in the European performing arts, as well as the progress made in some countries in recent years. Conducted in the framework of Europe Beyond Access,¹ a large-scale cooperation project funded by the Creative Europe programme of the EU, the report builds on the results of *Time to Act*, a report undertaken in 2020/21.² As in the case of *Time To Act*, this new report has been conducted by On the Move (OTM), the international cultural mobility information network,³ on behalf of the British Council.

As Europe Beyond Access reaches its final stages, one of the aims of *Time To Act: Two Years On* is to take stock of the contribution made by the project in some of the countries where it has been implemented, as well as to analyse changes since the previous report was published. The research shows some achievements and successes to celebrate, which have occurred since then, but also some outstanding challenges which continue to obstruct the professional participation of disabled artists in the European performing arts scene. These identified challenges should be addressed by future projects.

WHAT THE STATISTICS SHOW

The survey conducted in the context of this research report shows some important evidence on the accessibility and professional participation of disabled artists:

- It is important to note that 62% of respondents to the survey indicate that they are planning to programme works by disabled artists in the 2023-2024 season, and an additional 33% are considering it.
- This would be quite a significant change because, according to the survey, 48% of respondents currently present work by disabled artists only occasionally (that is, less than once a year) and 23% never do it.

¹ For more information: www.europebeyondaccess.com

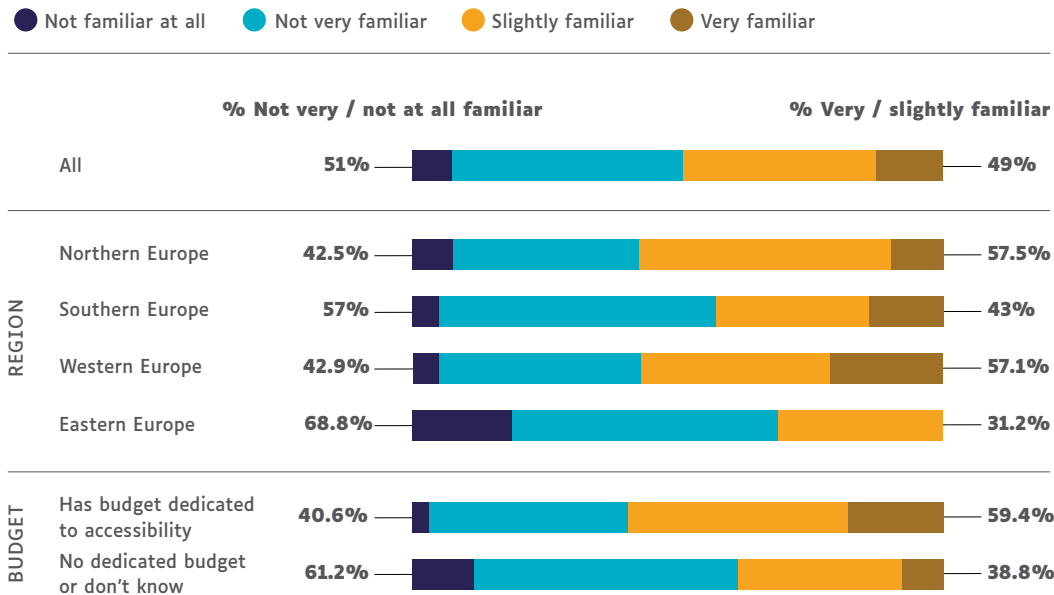
² For more information: <https://www.disabilityartsinternational.org/resources/time-to-act-final-results/>

³ For more information: www.on-the-move.org

Familiarity with the works of European disabled artists

In percentage: total, regional breakdown, and breakdown on the basis of availability of dedicated budgets

How familiar do you consider yourself with the works of European disabled artists?



Source: On the Move's elaboration, on the basis of survey results.

- However, the level of knowledge of works by disabled artists remains low: 51% of professionals surveyed say they are not very familiar or not familiar at all with this work. The figure is very similar to that of the previous report (52%). This means that, although programmers are expressing an increased interest in programming disabled artists, their knowledge of available work in this field needs broadening.
- The number of works by disabled artists seen by professionals in the field remains similar: while there is an increase in the percentage of professionals who have seen seven or more productions and a slight decrease in those who have not seen any, broader trends show only limited improvement. One in seven performing arts professionals have not seen any work by disabled artists over the last two years.
- Data in several of these questions shows very marked differences between European sub-regions. In general, venues and festivals in Northern and Western Europe are more likely to present or support work by disabled artists than those in Southern and Eastern Europe. The percentage of organisations that do not present or support work by disabled artists ranges from 5% in Western Europe to 29% in Southern Europe. The same patterns appear across several other questions, including the frequency of measures adopted to enable accessibility for disabled artists.

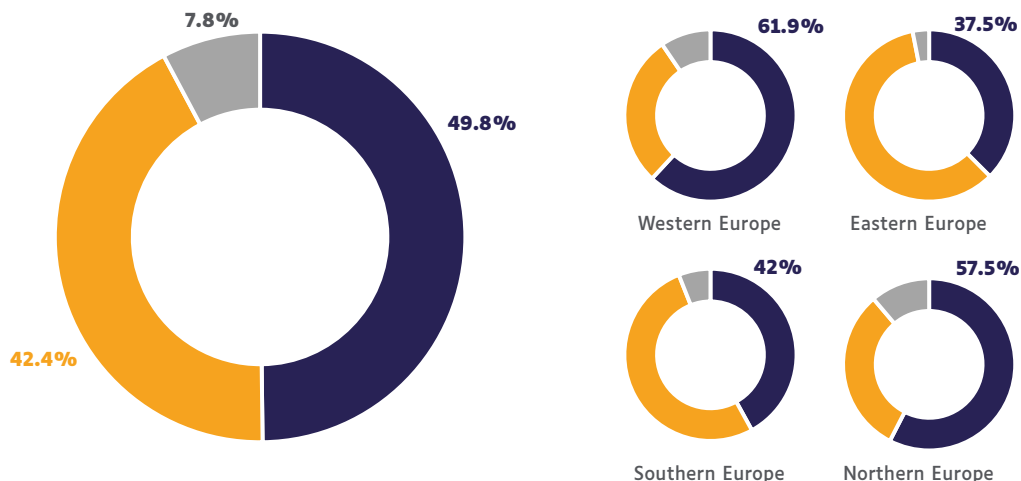
- National organisations and networks appear to gain importance as places where to scout for new works by disabled artists, while European and international events and networks, that had been more important at the time of the previous report, are mentioned less frequently now. This may point to an increased availability of knowledge at national level, something to which initiatives such as Europe Beyond Access, by strengthening key national and local organisations and networks, have contributed. Indeed, several organisations connected to Europe Beyond Access were mentioned by survey respondents as key information providers.
- Again, visible differences arise when regional comparisons are established here: direct contacts between artistic leaders and companies, tour bookers and agents are much more frequent in Western Europe than Eastern Europe.
- The level of confidence in the accessibility of artistic programmes remains modest: only 45% of survey respondents are very confident or confident that their programmes are accessible.
- Meanwhile, however, there is a positive perception of the progress made in terms of accessibility for disabled artists: 75% of respondents observe either a significant or slight improvement in accessibility of their organisations over the past five years, with a marked increase over 2020/21 figures.
- While similar trends are observed across the regions, there are visible differences depending on whether organisations have a dedicated budget for accessibility. For those that have a dedicated budget, 86% observed an improvement in terms of the accessibility of their organisations, with 0% noting any worsening of accessibility. Those that didn't have a dedicated budget were much less likely to note an improvement (only 62%) and 4.6% reported a decline in their accessibility. This confirms the importance of allocating resources to accessibility.

Dedicated budgets for inclusive policies or activities

In percentage, total and regional breakdown

Is there any dedicated budget to adopt and implement inclusive policies or activities in your organisation?

● Yes ● No ● Don't know



Source: On the Move's elaboration, on the basis of survey results.

PROGRESS MADE, AND THE IMPACT OF EUROPE BEYOND ACCESS

The report also examines what areas of qualitative progress can be observed across Europe in terms of the accessibility and professional participation of disabled artists, and particularly what evidence can be extracted from the experience of Europe Beyond Access. In this respect, in the countries where an in-depth analysis has been conducted (Italy, Poland and Sweden), evidence suggests the following:

- Europe Beyond Access and other initiatives in this field are contributing to progressively moving approaches to disability in the arts from a social assistance perspective to one that recognises the agency of disabled artists. This is reflected, for instance, in the engagement of disabled artists (such as members of the Italian association Al.Di.Qua Artists, established in the context of Europe Beyond Access) as consultants to improve accessibility in venues and festivals.
- There is also increased visibility and recognition of the artistic value of disabled artists in the mainstream performing arts, even if this is frequently restricted to a relatively small group of artists. The activism of artists and culture professionals engaged in this area, the commitment of a few pioneering organisations, and the role of some European networks and EU-funded projects, including Europe Beyond Access, have been critical in

this respect. Visibility has also been enabled by large-scale communication campaigns such as *I am an artist*, conducted by the British Council in Poland, in the context of Europe Beyond Access: its billboards were seen by 5.4 million people, and the online campaign reached 1.4 million people in Poland and across Europe.

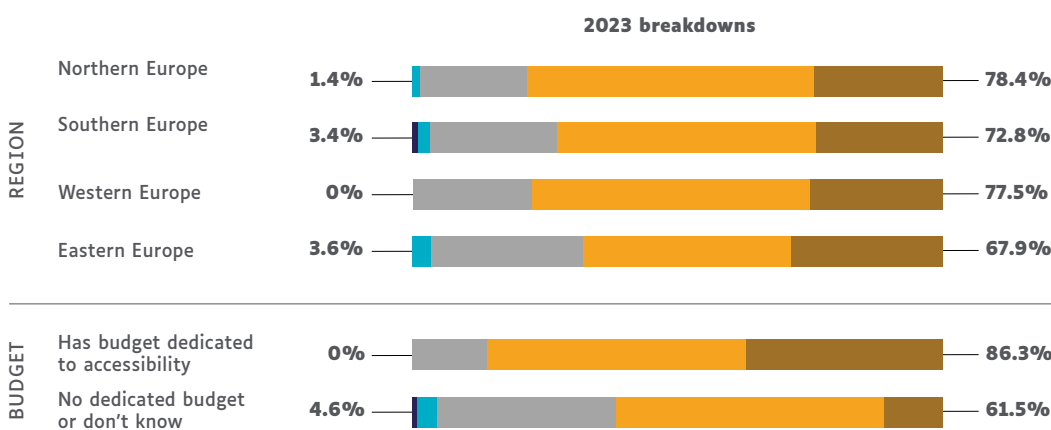
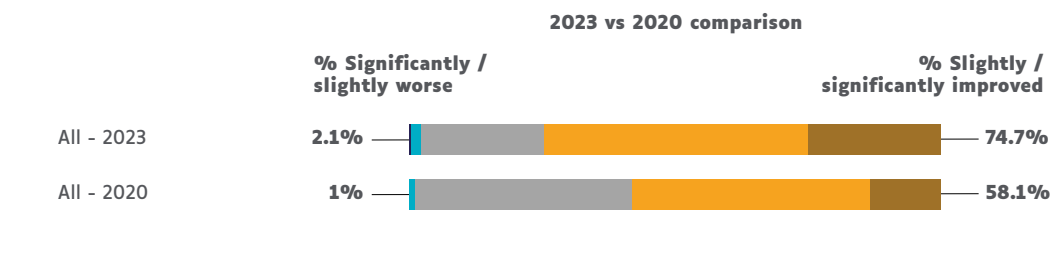
- By supporting the professional development of disabled artists and their engagement with specialised and mainstream arts organisations, projects like Europe Beyond Access, and the drive of the organisations involved in them, contribute to opening up the aesthetics and diversity of the performing arts. An illustrative example is the recruitment of a disabled dancer and choreographer by mainstream dance company Skånes Dansteater, in Sweden, which contributes to a more diverse representation on stage. These steps are leading performing arts organisations to make internal procedures more accessible, and contribute to changing mindsets and practices across the sector.
- In some countries, there is an increasing number of collaborations and partnerships between disabled artists and organisations supporting them, as well as between these and mainstream arts organisations. In Italy, a national network which currently involves 60 organisations has been established as a result of Europe Beyond Access.
- Cross-border knowledge and collaboration, in the form of artist laboratories, co-productions, conferences and networks (such as the European Arts & Disability Cluster), have also been enhanced through Europe Beyond Access and other EU-funded projects and networks.
- *Time to Act* helped to shed light on the limited availability of knowledge on accessibility and inclusion, and how this was an obstacle to further progress: in order to face this, several new initiatives are aiming to strengthen advocacy and raise awareness on the importance of specialised knowledge, leading to increased data collection and dissemination, and capacity-building.
- Overall, this is contributing to making accessibility and professional participation of disabled artists a more central issue in the policy agenda, at least in those countries where activities have focused. In Italy, the Ministry of culture has launched its first-ever call to support national tours of disabled performing artists. In Poland, some progress in the availability of funding for accessibility at national and local level has also been observed. In Sweden, Region Skåne's Regional Cultural Plan 2021-2024 was informed by work undertaken in the context of Europe Beyond Access, including the *Time to Act* report, and places emphasis on the accessibility and inclusion of disabled artists and audiences.

Change in accessibility for disabled artists in the last 5 years

In percentage, with comparison with 2020 data: total results, regional breakdown and breakdown as per availability of dedicated budgets

Has accessibility for disabled artists improved or worsened in your organisation in the last 5 years?

● Significantly worsened
 ● Slightly worsened
 ● No change
 ● Slightly improved
 ● Significantly improved



Source: On the Move's elaboration, on the basis of survey results. Percentages exclude respondents who answered 'Don't know'.

CHALLENGES REMAINING

At the same time, the report sheds light on a number of challenges and obstacles that remain pending, including the following:

- Accessibility to venues remains a central challenge in many countries: very often, accessibility improvements are targeted to audiences rather than artists.
- Lack of funding to address accessibility and full professional participation of disabled artists, related to the absence of dedicated policies, is also identified as a major challenge in many countries.
- Even though more awareness of accessibility and inclusion exists, much remains to be done in this field – a change in mindsets, or a cultural

change to make accessibility, inclusion and participation central to arts organisations and venues is still pending. This should involve multiple areas: revising canons or narratives, involving disabled people in decision-making, ensuring that higher education institutions are open to disabled people, etc.

- It is also necessary to distribute responsibilities in terms of accessibility better within organisations and across the performing arts sector – this should help to address the frequent tendency to expect that disabled artists and professionals, as well as specialised organisations, hold the knowledge and responsibility for driving change.
- Improving access to education, developing policies which provide an enabling environment to develop more accessible performing arts, and improving the availability of data arise as other challenges to be tackled.
- As the survey has amply demonstrated, there are significant regional differences across the EU in terms of awareness, knowledge and resources to make the performing arts more accessible to everyone. Organisations and professionals in Northern and Western Europe have better knowledge and are more actively engaged in accessibility, inclusion and participation than their peers in Southern and Eastern Europe. Addressing these inequalities, through national, regional and local policies, as well as the role of the EU and European networks and platforms, arises as a major issue in the short and mid-term.

CONCLUSIONS

The report closes with a set of observations that summarise the progress made, and the challenges that remain:

- There is evidence of progress towards the accessibility of disabled artists. Progress is slow and complex, but it can happen, when organisations and professionals are committed to foster change and resources are available.
- There is more awareness about accessibility, in a context where equality, diversity and inclusion gain relevance, at least in some countries. This remains, however, a long-term process, and very often it is easier for professionals in this field to identify the challenges remaining than the progress observed.
- There are very significant regional differences across Europe, which need to be addressed. Opportunities for disabled artists differ significantly across societies, as a result of resources available, political will, mindset shifts, and

the availability of knowledge. In general, countries in Northern and Western Europe are doing better in these areas than those in Southern and Eastern Europe.

- EU-funded projects and initiatives have made significant contributions in raising awareness about accessibility and participation, presenting the work of disabled artists across borders, helping to build capacities, and contributing to the emergence of a coalition of dedicated professionals and organisations.
- The availability of dedicated policies and budgets makes a difference. Progress has been achieved particularly in countries where access is a policy priority, and where organisations have dedicated budgets for accessibility, inclusion and participation.
- Information and knowledge remain central and need to be more widespread. Knowledge on how to make the performing arts more accessible to everyone is not yet sufficiently widespread. In the countries where it is available, it contributes to triggering change. Data collection and dissemination, capacity-building and peer-learning, and good practice transfer need to be seen as priorities.
- Progress continues to be necessary even where positive change has been achieved. While the report illustrates significant progress in several countries and organisations, which needs to be celebrated, these are often small-scale stories. More change is still necessary, by further involving disabled artists and audiences in decision-making, addressing education, or scaling up good practices.

Overall, the report shows that progress has been achieved, particularly in the countries where organisations, disabled professionals and policymakers have taken a commitment and actively worked together to foster change. It demonstrates that multi-country, long-term actions lead to change. EU funding has also made a very significant contribution in this respect. However, progress continues to be necessary even where advancements have been made.

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PREFACE

by Ben Evans, Project Director, Europe Beyond Access

Head of Arts & Disability, European Union Region, British Council

It has been two years since On the Move authored "Time To Act".

The subtitle of the original report was "*How lack of knowledge in the cultural sector creates barriers for disabled artists and audiences*". And, of course, this is the key. Although arts organisations will forever be financially stretched, often working in old and inaccessible buildings, and within towns and cities whose own infrastructure is actively obstructive to the independence of disabled people, the report showed that **lack of knowledge** amongst Europe's arts professionals is one of the key barriers to change. It is the cultural sector's deficit that is the problem.

Sadly, that hasn't changed in the last two years, as *Time To Act: Two Years On* proves.

52% of respondents indicated they still have poor or very poor knowledge of artistic works by disabled artists, and one in seven performing arts professionals have not seen any work by disabled artists over the last two years (and more than one in five in Eastern Europe). That feels shocking.

One thing that has changed is the awareness of the problem that *Time To Act* brought to light. Cultural Policy reports are not usually the most sought-after reads, but the report has been downloaded 1742 times. The results were unique – the first ever trans-national statistics in this area of research. The results have been presented to thousands of cultural managers in conferences and online training sessions across Europe and internationally. Alongside the artists and cultural professionals interested in the report have been 17 National Arts Councils and Cultural Ministries. *Time To Act* has been quoted in new initiatives reaching geographically from Sweden's Skånes Region report on culture, and Arts & Culture Norway's own subsequent national research, right down to the Italian Ministry of Culture's new funding programme for disabled performing artists – all crediting *Time To Act* as proof that change is needed.

One of the most striking statistics from the original *Time To Act* report was that whilst 48% of respondents said they were "Not at all Confident" or "Not very confident" that their programmes were accessible to disabled

artists, amongst Funders this figure was a massive 64%. This was made even more notable as the report showed that arts professionals thought it should primarily be precisely those institutions (Arts Councils and Cultural Ministries) who should be leading and sharing best practice guidance with the sector. So, any formal action taken by funders and ministries feels like an important step forward. Or, to quote the disabled-identifying member of Norway's 10-member Arts Council, Bjørn Hatterud, at the launch of an impressive cultural accessibility initiative by Arts & Culture Norway: "*We need to get a grip on ourselves. We need to get our act together!*".

ALTERNATIVE READINGS OF THE REPORT

Discussing this new report, *Time To Act: Two Years On* with colleagues and representatives from the Arts & Disability field, it is clear that the report can be read in different ways. On the one hand there is evidence of progress. For example, more programmers have seen more works by Deaf and disabled artists, and the group which had the least knowledge and experience of seeing and hosting disabled artists has grown smaller. Remarkably, if respondents are to be believed, a massive 62% of respondents are planning to programme works by disabled artists in the 2023-2024 season.

Progress, too, is clearly identified in the three national case studies the report explores: Poland, Sweden and Italy. For transparency, as commissioners of the report, the countries were chosen by us a) as countries of Europe Beyond Access activity, b) to explore geographic diversity in the report, but also c) to explore how change in the cultural sector has happened in different ways. The mindset shift outlined in the Swedish case study is different, though equally valuable, to the structural and policy shift that has marked the last five years in Italy. And for Poland, starting Europe Beyond Access with so few opportunities for Deaf and disabled artists, perhaps the biggest change has been for individuals who have finally been able to take their rightful place on the national and international scene.

However, an alternative reading of the report is also possible. Although the arts managers with most experience of the work of disabled artists have become even more experienced, with now 20% of respondents saying they had seen more than seven productions over the last two years, the worrying thing is that the majority of the sector have not really changed their experience and knowledge. The majority of respondents remained having seen work very infrequently, and express low confidence in their ability to make their programmes accessible to disabled artists. I can't help but repeat myself - one in seven performing arts professionals have not seen any work by disabled artists over the last two years.

Progress can also be over-interpreted when reading the national case studies. Italy is an example. What the Al.Di.Qua association has achieved is remarkable. As is the impact of Oriente Occidente, the Europe Beyond Access partner which, in many ways, has acted as a convenor of conversations in Italy – bringing together artists, institutions, and regional and national arts funders and policymakers. However, we must be clear that this change has taken place in a small corner of the arts ecosystem – largely in contemporary dance, and, as always, the challenge in Italy is for innovations in the cultural sector to have a truly national impact. It would be insulting to the hundreds of early career and aspiring disabled artists in Italy to pretend that they do not face very real barriers to cultural education, to training, to presentation, promotion and to touring. Change has taken place, but it is only the start.

The report's evidence of the very positive impact of the 5-year Europe Beyond Access project is humbling – not only in the national case studies, but in the survey responses where the overall project and the individual project partners are repeatedly named as key information sources for arts managers seeking to improve their knowledge. Here I should say that this is due to the hard work and commitment of all of the project partners, but also a shared understanding that as major cultural institutions on the international field not only do we have a responsibility to improve our own organisations' practice and knowledge, but also a responsibility to share that with the institutions and policymakers with which we have a privilege to engage.

Considering those alternative readings of the report, I am left with my own interpretation.

The report provides clear evidence that long-term and large-scale investment in the work of marginalised Deaf and disabled artists can have a major regional, national, and international impact on our cultural ecosystem. Europe Beyond Access proves that by providing significant investment to targeted actions arts funders and policymakers are able to effect change. They do so whilst contributing to the creation and circulation of high-quality artistic works; they do so whilst contributing to greater knowledge levels in the cultural sector; and, through targeted actions, they contribute to greater engagement in the arts by disabled people as audiences and visitors.

Surely, no funder, cultural official or politician can argue with that!

1.

INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT AND GOALS

The report *Time to Act: Two Years On, Data-led insights on Performing Arts & Disability in Europe* identifies the most significant barriers to the accessibility, participation, international mobility and professional development of disabled artists in the European performing arts, as well as the progress made in some countries in recent years. It builds on the *Time to Act* report, undertaken in 2020/21, which focused on the level of knowledge and experience held by European cultural operators in order to make the performing arts more accessible to both disabled artists and disabled audiences.⁴ As in the case of that first report, *Time To Act: Two Years On* has been conducted by On the Move (OTM), the international cultural mobility information network,⁵ on behalf of the British Council.

The report is part of the large-scale cooperation project Europe Beyond Access.⁶ Co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union, Europe Beyond Access aims to support disabled artists to break the glass ceilings of the contemporary theatre and dance sectors. The core partners of the project are British Council (operating for this project in the UK and Poland), Onassis Stegi (Greece), Holland Dance Festival (The Netherlands), Kampnagel (Germany), Per.Art (Serbia), Skånes Dansteater (Sweden), and Oriente Occidente (Italy). Dissemination associates are IETM, ONDA (France), EUCREA (Germany), Acesso Cultura (Portugal), Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego / Theatre Institut (Poland), Un-Label (Germany), and ISPA – International Society for the Performing Arts.

Between September 2018 and June 2023, Europe Beyond Access partners are implementing an ambitious 4 million € work programme in order to:

- Support disabled artists to internationalise their artistic innovations and their careers;
- Develop a network of leading mainstream organisations with a commitment to present and commission at the highest level;

⁴ For more information: <https://www.disabilityartsinternational.org/resources/time-to-act-final-results/>

⁵ For more information: www.on-the-move.org

⁶ For more information: www.europebeyondaccess.com

- Build European audiences interested in high-quality innovative work by Europe's disabled artists;
- Develop tools and understanding in the wider performing arts market;
- Collaborate with many of the world's leading arts networks to champion excellent artistic works, and to educate arts professionals.

As Europe Beyond Access reaches its final stages, one of the aims of *Time To Act: Two Years On* is to take stock of the contribution made by the project in some of the countries where it has been implemented, as well as to analyse changes since the previous *Time to Act* report was published.

BACKGROUND: THE *TIME TO ACT* REPORT (2021)

Time to Act was the first ever transnational study which robustly evidenced that culture professionals in the performing arts across Europe lack the knowledge and experience needed to support equal access to the cultural sector for disabled artists, disabled arts professionals, and disabled audiences.

Based on a large-scale open survey covering 42 countries, a series of in-depth interviews, and an analysis of existing literature, reports and practical tools, *Time to Act* found that a majority of professionals in the performing arts needed better knowledge of work by disabled artists. More than half of survey respondents rated their current knowledge as poor or very poor. Around 1 in 6 had not seen any productions by disabled artists over a two-year period. Unsurprisingly, lack of knowledge was given as one of their largest obstacles to supporting and programming more work by disabled artists.

The report showed greater engagement around access for disabled audiences (when compared to support for disabled artists), although 39% of respondents did not feel very confident or not at all confident in the accessibility of artistic programmes for disabled audiences. There were still major gaps in provision, particularly around online access (e.g. accessible websites and booking processes). The research also found that, while some mainstream organisations emphasised they were open to everyone, disabled artists and companies themselves often felt that their specific needs were not well understood.

Although an extensive literature of reports, checklists, and toolkits to guide culture professionals in providing greater access was available, *Time to Act* observed that they were not widely circulated, partly because they were often focused on a single country, or available in only one language. In the absence of more structured forms of guidance and training, disabled artists themselves were often used as informal sources of advice, though are seldom paid for it.

Conducted in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, *Time to Act* highlighted that this period had increased online and remote working and seen a broader turn towards digital approaches that may provide a path to greater access. At the same time, participants in the research raised concerns that ongoing health risks impacted disabled people disproportionately, that tighter resources could push inclusion strategies off the agenda, and that disabled people risked disappearing from the public space again.

Overall, *Time to Act* argued that there was a huge need for more guidance and increased understanding if the cultural sector was to achieve equal access. It also stressed that the whole cultural sector was responsible for addressing the gaps existing in the availability of knowledge and the implementation of better practices. In particular, governmental bodies such as ministries of culture and national arts councils were identified as holding particular responsibility to improve guidance and knowledge and to contribute to more accessible practices for disabled artists and audiences. It is worth mentioning, however, that the percentage of funders and policymakers that did not feel confident about the accessibility of their programmes was higher than the sector average, thus highlighting the lack of knowledge existing in this specific group of stakeholders.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Time To Act: Two Years On has been conducted between November 2022 and March 2023. It has involved an online survey open to performing arts professionals across Europe, a set of 13 semi-structured interviews with Europe Beyond Access partners and other relevant stakeholders, and an analysis of some of the documents and outputs generated by Europe Beyond Access. The report combines a regional focus, covering all the countries participating in the EU's Creative Europe programme (as well as Switzerland and the UK), and more specific analyses of the progress made in three of the countries where Europe Beyond Access has operated – namely, Italy, Poland, and Sweden.

While the previous *Time to Act* report addressed both disabled audiences and disabled artists and had a specific focus on knowledge and experience, *Time To Act: Two Years On* has analysed accessibility and professional participation for disabled artists but does not particularly focus on accessibility for disabled audiences. The scope of the report covers both the practices of performing arts organisations and the broader context in which they operate (i.e. policies, other enabling factors, potential obstacles) insofar as this contributes to enhancing accessibility and professional participation for disabled artists. The report combines an analysis of activities undertaken in the context of Europe Beyond Access, and the achievements made in this context, with a broader perspective on the European landscape of accessibility and inclusion for disabled artists. Ultimately, *Time To Act: Two Years On* aims to examine how progress in this

field can be achieved, and to identify remaining challenges which could guide action in the next few years.

Following this introductory chapter, section 2 of the report presents some highlights drawn from the online survey launched during the preparation of *Time To Act: Two Years On*, including some comparisons with data from the survey conducted in 2020. Sections 3 and 4 examine, respectively, the progress made and the challenges remaining in some of the countries under analysis, as well as at European level more broadly. They adopt a more qualitative approach, drawing mainly on evidence from semi-structured interviews and the survey's open questions. Finally, section 5 presents the conclusions of the report.

DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY USED

The research team adopted the description of 'disability' used in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006), which states: 'Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.'

The research team acknowledges that terminology around Disability, Inclusion and Access is used differently in different cultural, national and political contexts. Terminology is also rapidly evolving. Even in the English language, preferred terminology differs between the UK (for example 'disabled people') and Ireland ('people with disabilities'). This report uses the preferred terminology used in the country of the report commissioner, the British Council, UK. Where quoting from research subjects who responded in English (whether using their first language or not), this report uses the terminology chosen by the research subject. Where the researchers have translated the response from a language other than English, UK terminology has been chosen.

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

An open online survey was launched in early December 2022 and remained open until 30 January 2023. It was available in six languages (English, French, Italian, Swedish, Polish, and Spanish) in OTM's website, and disseminated widely through OTM's own and others' newsletters and by direct e-mail from the British Council to Europe Beyond Access partners and other stakeholders in the European performing arts, complemented by massive communication on social networks. The survey was addressed primarily to culture professionals involved in performing arts venues or festivals, e.g. as artistic directors, programmers,

curators, general managers, chief executives, creative producers, cultural managers, etc. Further to the six aforementioned languages, respondents were invited to fill the survey in their own languages.

257 full responses were obtained, coming from 28 different countries. The group of respondents can be characterised as follows:

- **Countries:** Spain (15%), UK (12%), Sweden (10%), Portugal (9%), Poland (7%), Greece (7%), Germany (5%), the Netherlands (5%), and Italy (4%) were the countries from which more replies were obtained.
- **Regions:** A regional breakdown shows that 39% of responses came from Southern Europe, 31% from Northern Europe, 16% from Western Europe, 12% from Eastern Europe, and 1% from Western Asia.⁷
- **Main artistic field:** When asked about their main artistic field, respondents' most frequent answers were theatre (38%), dance (17%), performance (10%) and 'other' (30%), with site-specific and outdoor arts (3%), puppetry (2%), and circus and physical theatre (1%) only receiving a few entries. There were visible differences across the regions analysed: in Southern Europe, theatre was the main artistic field for 54% of respondents, whereas in Eastern Europe 'other' came first (53%), followed by theatre (19%) and site-specific and outdoor arts (12%). In Northern Europe, 'other' (31%) was also a more frequent response than theatre (29%) or dance (22%).
- **Disability status:** 88% of respondents identified as 'non-disabled', whereas 9% identified as 'disabled', and 3% did not want to disclose this information.
- **Familiarity with Europe Beyond Access:** 39% of respondents were not familiar at all with Europe Beyond Access, and 31% were not very familiar with it. On the other hand, 21% were slightly familiar and 9% were very familiar – altogether, 30% of respondents were slightly or very familiar with the project. While patterns were similar across all regions, Western Europe (where 38% of respondents were slightly or very familiar with Europe Beyond Access) and Northern Europe (35%) were the regions where the project was better known, whereas in Southern Europe (21%) the lowest level of familiarity was found.

⁷ The geographic regions used in this report are based on the framework of the UN Statistics Division, available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49>. Eastern Europe includes replies coming from Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia; Northern Europe includes Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, and the UK; Southern Europe includes Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Malta, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, and Spain; and Western Europe includes Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Switzerland.

Additional information obtained from the survey will be presented in the next chapter, in the form of graphics and accompanying comments, and will also be integrated in sections 3 and 4.

Furthermore, 13 semi-structured interviews with performing arts stakeholders in the three countries under specific analysis (Italy, Poland, and Sweden) were conducted between February and March 2023. Interviews were carried out mainly through video-calls (12 interviews) and occasionally in a written format to accommodate the respondent's preferences. One of the online interviews involved a sign language interpreter. In some cases, e-mail correspondence after the interview helped to exchange additional information.

The sample of interviewees was determined by the research team on the basis of a preliminary proposal made by the British Council, as well as taking into account, in some cases, names suggested by previous interviewees. The sample aimed to combine different profiles and roles: Europe Beyond Access partners, independent companies specialising in arts and disability, independent disabled artists, funding organisations, and mainstream institutions in the performing arts. All respondents had some previous knowledge of Europe Beyond Access, although with varying levels, and had in all cases taken part in some of the project's activities.⁸ Interviews provided an opportunity for the research team to delve into some of the activities conducted in the context of Europe Beyond Access and the project's impact in the organisations involved, the careers and opportunities of disabled artists, and the broader policy and social context of arts and disability. Evidence obtained through the interviews has been integrated primarily in sections 3 and 4 of this report.

⁸ The list of interviewees is presented in [Annex 1](#).

2.

ACCESSIBILITY AND PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPATION OF DISABLED ARTISTS: SURVEY TAKEAWAYS

The online survey distributed during the preparation of this report aimed to obtain updated information on how performing arts professionals and organisations are taking measures to enhance accessibility and professional participation for disabled artists. Several questions followed a pattern similar to that of the survey undertaken in 2020 for the *Time to Act* report – therefore, some of the evidence presented hereafter includes comparisons with data from the previous survey. This section will mainly cover the results of the survey's closed questions, while most evidence from open questions has been integrated in sections 3 and 4.

ONE-HALF OF ORGANISATIONS HAVE DEDICATED BUDGETS FOR ACCESSIBILITY

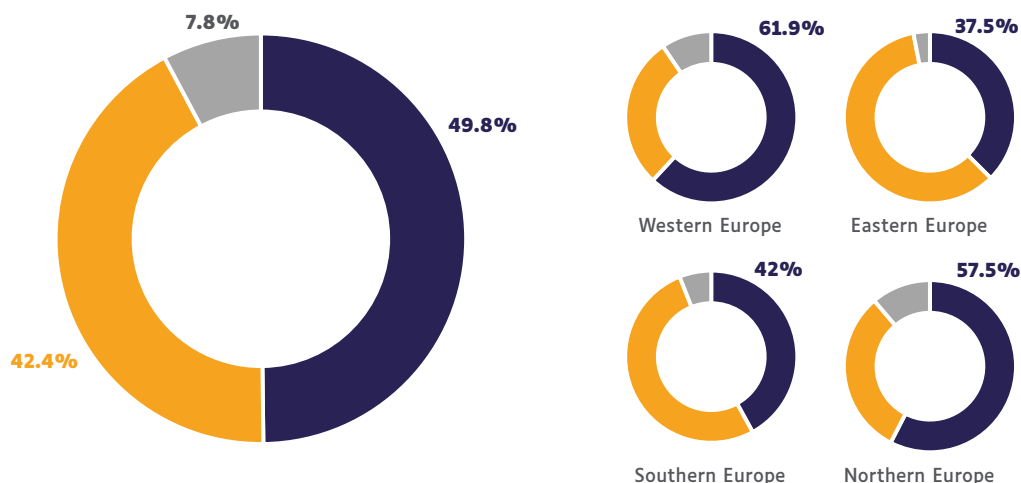
50% of respondents to the survey stated that their organisation has a dedicated budget to adopt and implement inclusive policies or activities, as illustrated in **Figure 1**. It is important to note that these dedicated budgets may be meant both for accessibility for audiences and artists. Meanwhile, 42% of respondents do not have a dedicated budget, and 8% do not know. The latter figure may include respondents who are individual professionals and may not be able to respond on behalf of an organisation, or those whose positions in an organisation do not involve overseeing budgets. Western Europe (where 62% of organisations have dedicated budgets) and Northern Europe (58%) are the regions where this practice is more widespread, whereas in Southern Europe (42%) and Eastern Europe (38%) not having a dedicated budget is more frequent.

Figure 1: Dedicated budgets for inclusive policies or activities

In percentage, total and regional breakdown

Is there any dedicated budget to adopt and implement inclusive policies or activities in your organisation?

● Yes ● No ● Don't know



Source: On the Move's elaboration, on the basis of survey results.

The survey also enquired respondents on the purpose of such dedicated budgets. The most frequent replies concerned accessibility (e.g. improvements in physical accessibility, sign language, speech to text captions, audio descriptions, hearing loops, accessible communication material, accessible website, accessibility plans in general), and training and capacity-building.⁹ Other respondents mentioned the hiring of additional staff to provide services (e.g. access managers for a festival, support workers to assist board members with learning disabilities), artist commissions, ensembles or groups involving disabled artists, or consultancy work to improve accessibility. A few also stated that, since their main focus is on the organisation of events dedicated to disabled artists, all their budget is relevant to this area.

KNOWLEDGE OF WORKS BY DISABLED ARTISTS REMAINS MODEST

One of the findings of *Time to Act* was that 52% of the performing arts professionals surveyed indicated they had poor or very poor knowledge of artistic work by disabled artists, while only 16% rated their own knowledge as

⁹ The survey asked about the availability of dedicated budgets for accessibility, without specifying whether this was addressed to disabled artists, audiences or both. Some of the specific replies presented here (including sign language interpretation, audio descriptions, hearing loops or accessible communication material) seem to be targeted primarily at audiences. This could imply that only part of the 50% organisations with a dedicated budget devote resources to accessibility for disabled artists.

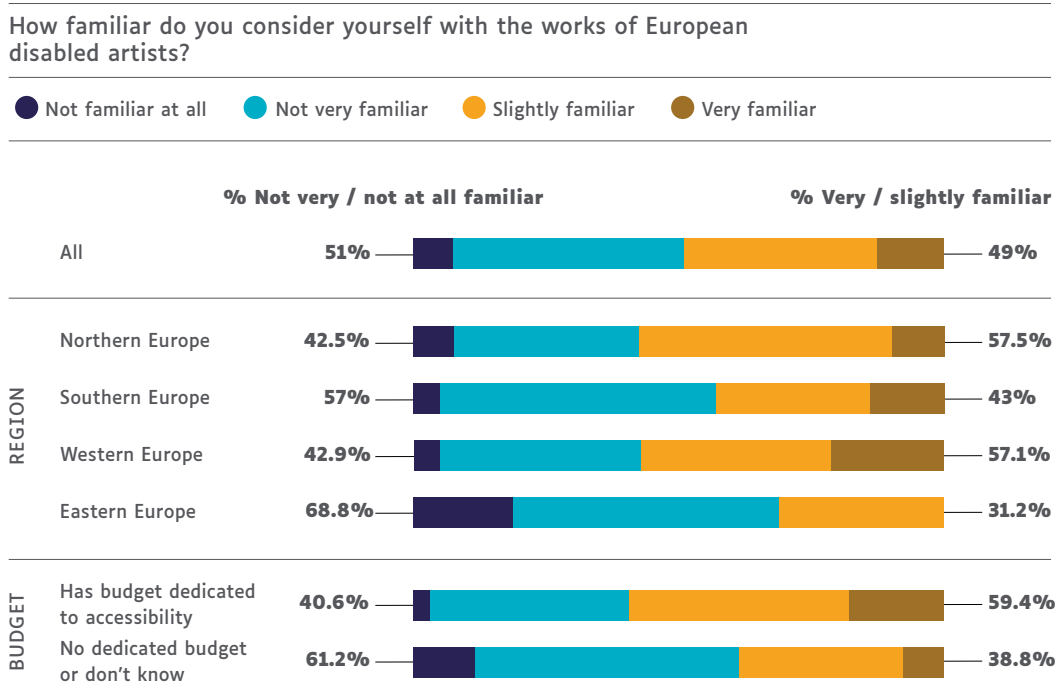
good or excellent. The new survey has slightly revised the formulation of the question ('How familiar do you consider yourself with the works of European disabled artists?') but shows similar results. As observed in **Figure 2**, 51% of respondents say they're either not very familiar (44%) or not familiar at all (7%) with this work, a figure relatively similar to its equivalent in the 2020 survey (52%). There is however a slight improvement in those at the lowest levels: while in the previous study 12% had 'very poor knowledge', the figure for those who are 'not familiar at all' now is 7%.

Meanwhile, 13% say they are very familiar with the works of European disabled artists (whereas only 4% rated their knowledge as 'excellent' in 2020) and 36% are slightly familiar with it, thus totalling 49% of respondents. The increase from 4% to 13%, despite the different language used in both surveys, could be interpreted as a demonstration that those who have most knowledge have further increased their knowledge of the sector. However, the overall level of familiarity with the works of European disabled artists (49%) remains modest and relatively similar to the 48% of respondents who said they had excellent, very good or good knowledge three years ago.

The regional breakdown shows that a majority of respondents in Northern Europe (58%) and Western Europe (57%) are very or slightly familiar with works of disabled artists, while figures are visibly lower in Southern Europe (43%) and Eastern Europe (31%). Organisations with a dedicated budget for accessibility are generally also more familiar with works by disabled artists (18% are very familiar and 41% slightly familiar, thus totalling 59%), whereas, among those without a dedicated budget, only 39% are either slightly or very familiar, thus showing a 20% gap.

Figure 2: Familiarity with the works of European disabled artists

In percentage: total, regional breakdown, and breakdown on the basis of availability of dedicated budgets



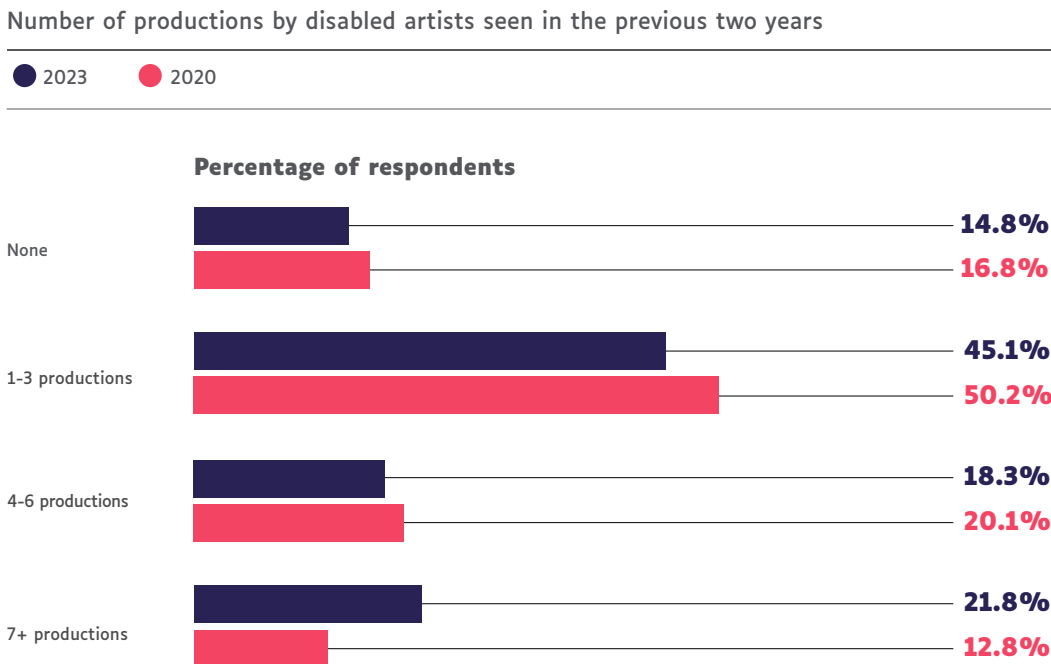
Source: On the Move's elaboration, on the basis of survey results.

SLIGHT IMPROVEMENTS IN THE NUMBER OF WORKS SEEN

Evidence from the survey shows that 45% of the survey respondents have seen between one and three productions involving disabled artists in the last two years (2020-2022), including online (**Figure 3**). While the figure is slightly lower than that of the previous period (50%), where online viewing was not explicitly mentioned, this is compensated by a visible increase in the number of respondents who have seen seven productions or more (22%, increasing from 13% in 2020). Meanwhile, 18% have seen 4-6 productions (the figure was 20% in the previous survey) and 15% have not seen any production involving disabled artists – a figure which, while slightly lower than the 17% found in the previous survey, still means that approximately one in seven performing arts professionals have not seen any work by disabled artists over the last two years. Therefore, comparative data may point to the existence of a small group of professionals with very good knowledge of the work of disabled artists and who have further deepened their knowledge in the intervening period (22% who have seen seven productions or more). However, trends elsewhere in the sector remain relatively similar, both for those who have only occasionally viewed performances and those who have not.

Figure 3: Works by disabled artists seen in the last two years (2020-2022) and comparison with previous survey

In percentage, per number of productions. Results from surveys conducted in 2020 and in 2022-23



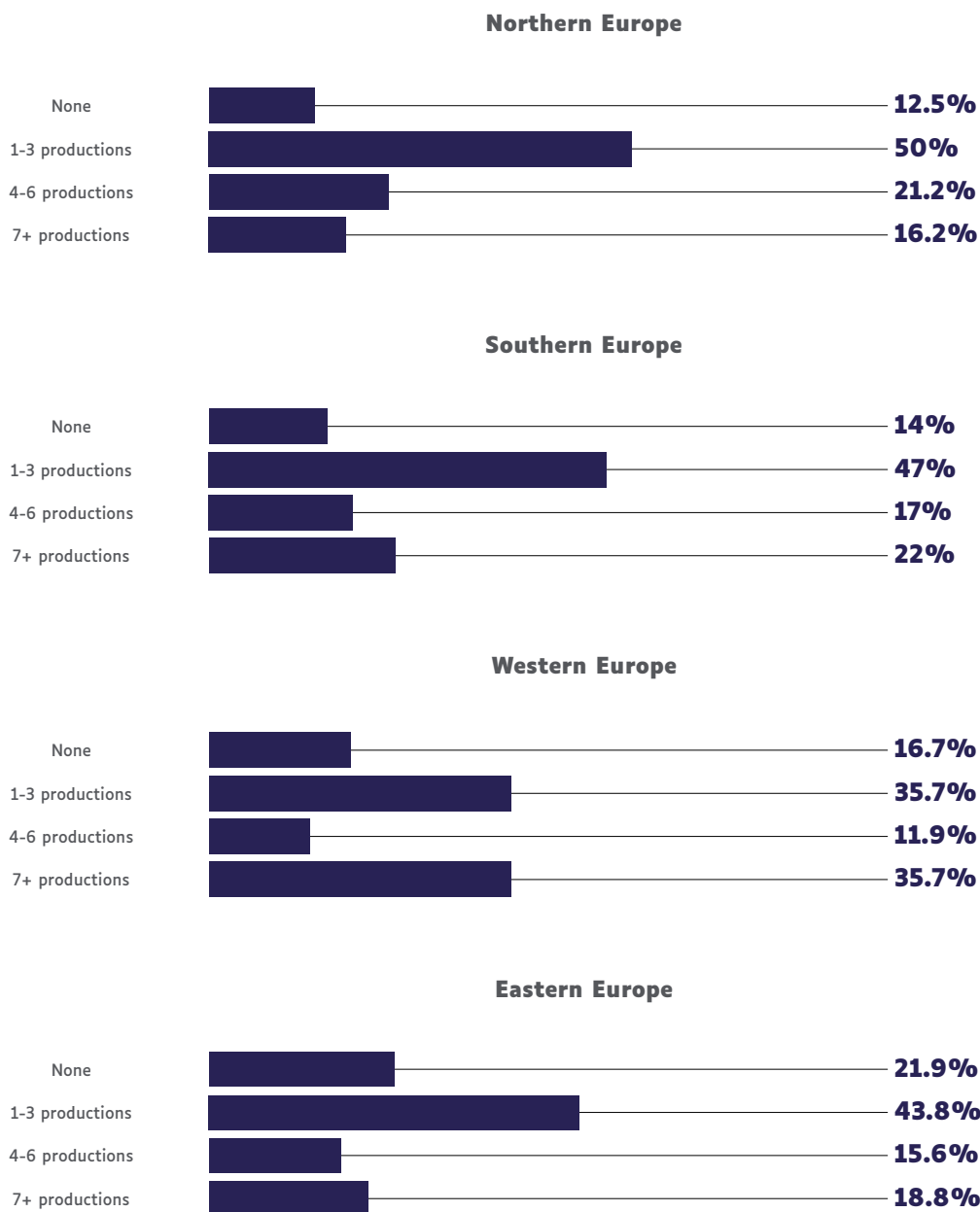
Source: On the Move' elaboration, on the basis of survey results.

As **Table 1** shows, Western Europe is the region where access to works by disabled artists was more frequent: 48% of respondents had seen four works or more, including 36% who had seen seven or more productions. Meanwhile, percentages in other regions are similar: 39% of respondents in Southern Europe, 37% in Northern Europe, and 34% in Eastern Europe had seen four works or more. 22% of respondents in Eastern Europe, however, had not seen any production, something which confirms the visible differences existing across Europe.

Table 1: Works by disabled artists seen in the last two years (2020-2022), per region

In percentage, per number of productions

Number of productions by disabled artists seen in the previous two years



Source: On the Move's own elaboration, on the basis of survey results.

The questionnaire asked respondents to give examples of works by disabled artists they had seen over this period. The most frequent answers include works by Claire Cunningham, Chiara Bersani, Diana Niepce, StopGap, Dan Daw, Michael Turinsky, and Candoco Dance Company. Several other names were mentioned by multiple respondents, though most frequently in their own countries: they included La Bulle Bleue, Danskompaniet Spinn, Danza Mobile, Clàudia Cedó's show *Mare de sucre*, Skånes Dansteater, Moomsteatern, and EnDynamei.

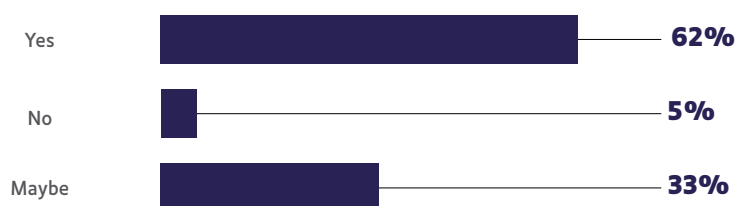
A MAJORITY OF PROGRAMMERS EXPECT TO INCLUDE DISABLED ARTISTS NEXT SEASON

Figure 4 presents answers to the question on plans to programme disabled artists in the season 2023-2024. It excludes those respondents who indicated they were not programmers and therefore could not provide an answer. The results are important, by indicating that 62% of respondents are planning to programme works by disabled artists in the 2023-2024 season, and 33% are considering doing it. Only 5% indicate that they are not planning to programme disabled artists. The question had not been included in the previous survey. Answers are relatively similar across all regions covered.

Figure 4: Plans to programme disabled artists in the season 2023-2024

In percentage

Do you plan to programme disabled artists during the 2023-2024 season?



Source: On the Move's elaboration, on the basis of survey results. Note that results are based on replies from respondents who identified as programmers (i.e. 169 respondents, as compared to the 257 respondents of most other questions)

MOST ORGANISATIONS ONLY PRESENT WORK BY DISABLED ARTISTS ON AN IRREGULAR BASIS

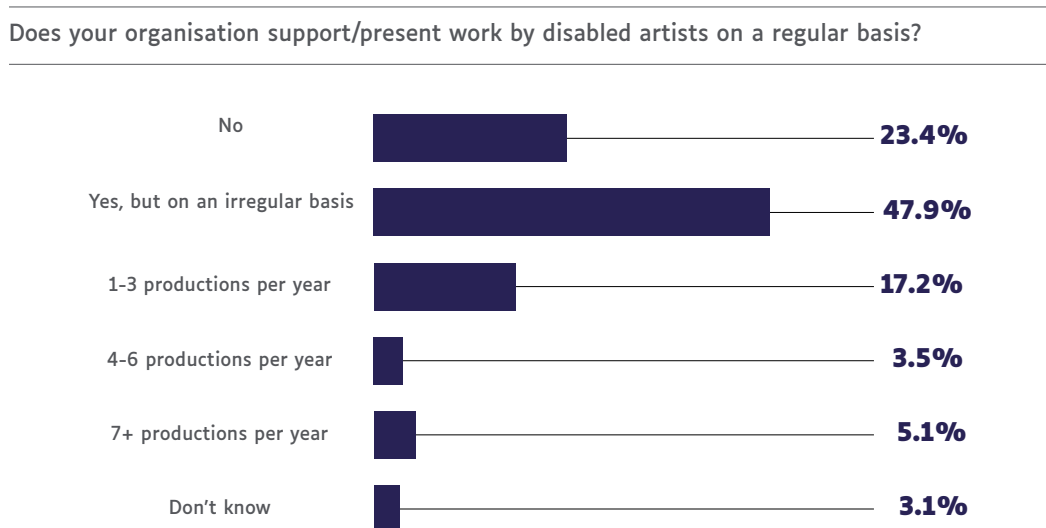
The original *Time to Act* report found that, while 81% of venues and festivals indicated that they presented work by disabled artists, 53% did so only on an irregular or occasional basis, thus less than once a year. A direct comparison with the new survey is rendered difficult by the fact that the question was now addressed to all respondents, including those that do not work for a venue or a festival.

However, the general trend remains similar: as shown in **Figure 5**, 48% of respondents said they present work on an irregular basis. 26% of respondents do so more regularly: the figure was 28% in the previous survey, something which may be partly justified by the differences in the sample. Among those

who do present work regularly, there are slight increases in the percentage of organisations that support or present seven or more productions per year (from 4.7% to 5.1%) and between four and six productions (was 1%, now 3.5%). Meanwhile, 23% of respondents do not support or present work by disabled artists (the equivalent figure was 15% in the previous survey, although the difference might be explained by differences in the sample).

Figure 5: Support or presentation of works by disabled artists

In percentage, per number of productions per year



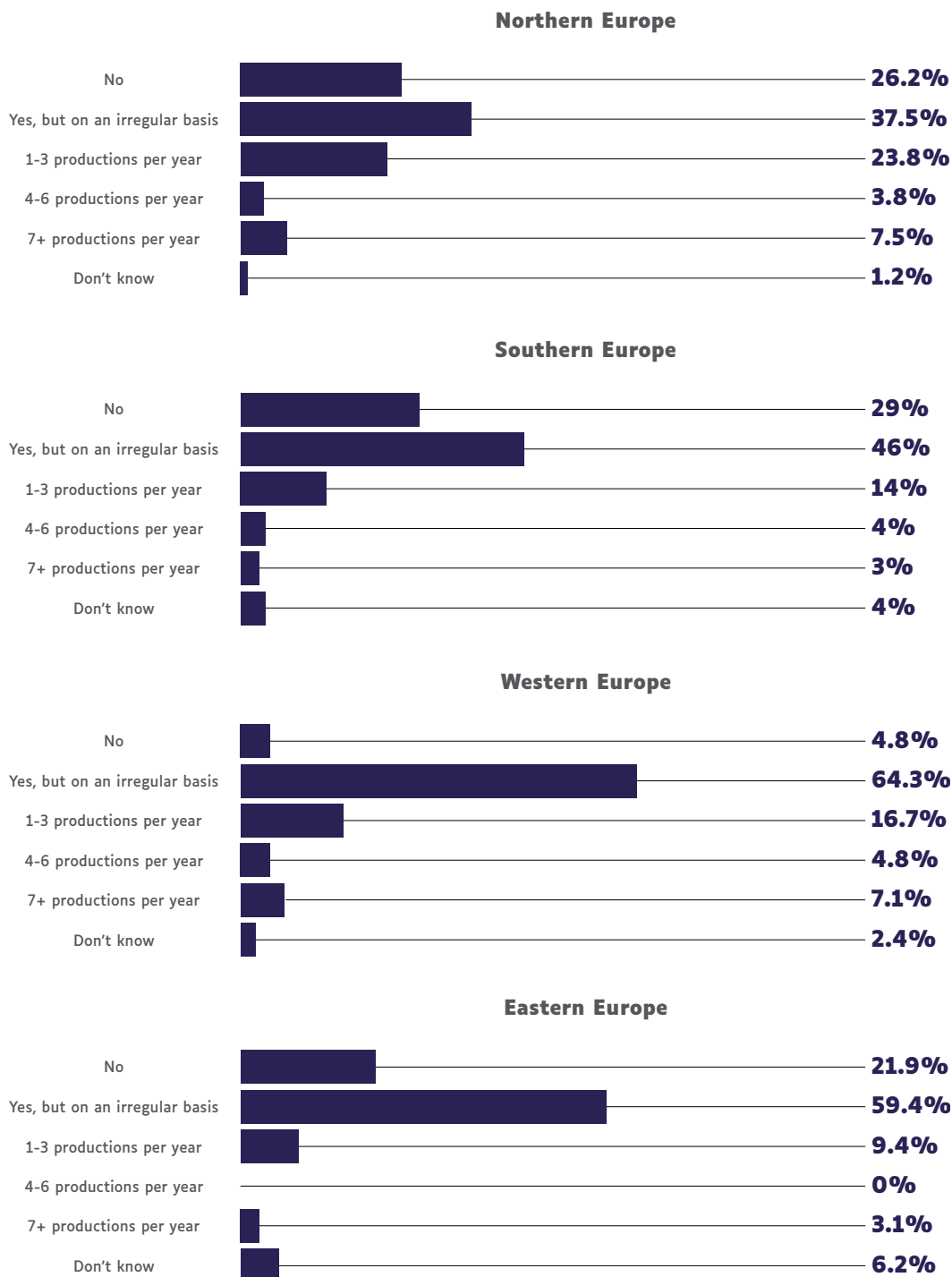
Source: On the Move’s elaboration, on the basis of survey results.

The regional breakdown, presented in **Table 2**, shows some very significant differences. The percentage of organisations that do not present or support work by disabled artists ranges from 5% in Western Europe to 29% in Southern Europe. Similarly, those who do present work on an irregular basis vary from 38% in Northern Europe to 64% in Western Europe. Organisations that support or present one or more productions each year are 35% in Northern Europe, 29% in Western Europe, 21% in Southern Europe and 12% in Eastern Europe.

Table 2: Support or presentation of works by disabled artists, per region

In percentage, per number of productions per year

Does your organisation support/present work by disabled artists on a regular basis?



Source: On the Move's elaboration, on the basis of survey results.

NATIONAL EVENTS AND NETWORKS GAIN RELEVANCE AS PLACES WHERE TO SCOUT FOR NEW WORKS

Both the previous and the new survey asked respondents to discuss how artistic leaders in their organisations scouted for new works by disabled artists. Multiple answers were possible. Direct contacts with companies, tour bookers and agents (32%) remain the most trusted source, though with a slight decrease (from 37%). The second most frequent method now is via national peers and national performing arts networks (increasing from 28% to 31%), something which, despite the relatively limited increase, may point to an increased availability of information at national level and the strengthening of national networks' knowledge in this field, at least in some countries. In particular, as subsequent sections will show, there is evidence that, in the countries where Europe Beyond Access has operated, networks and key organisations have been strengthened, something which could to a significant extent be connected to the results of the project. In a similar trend, regional and national fairs and festivals also gain relevance (from 18% to 23%).

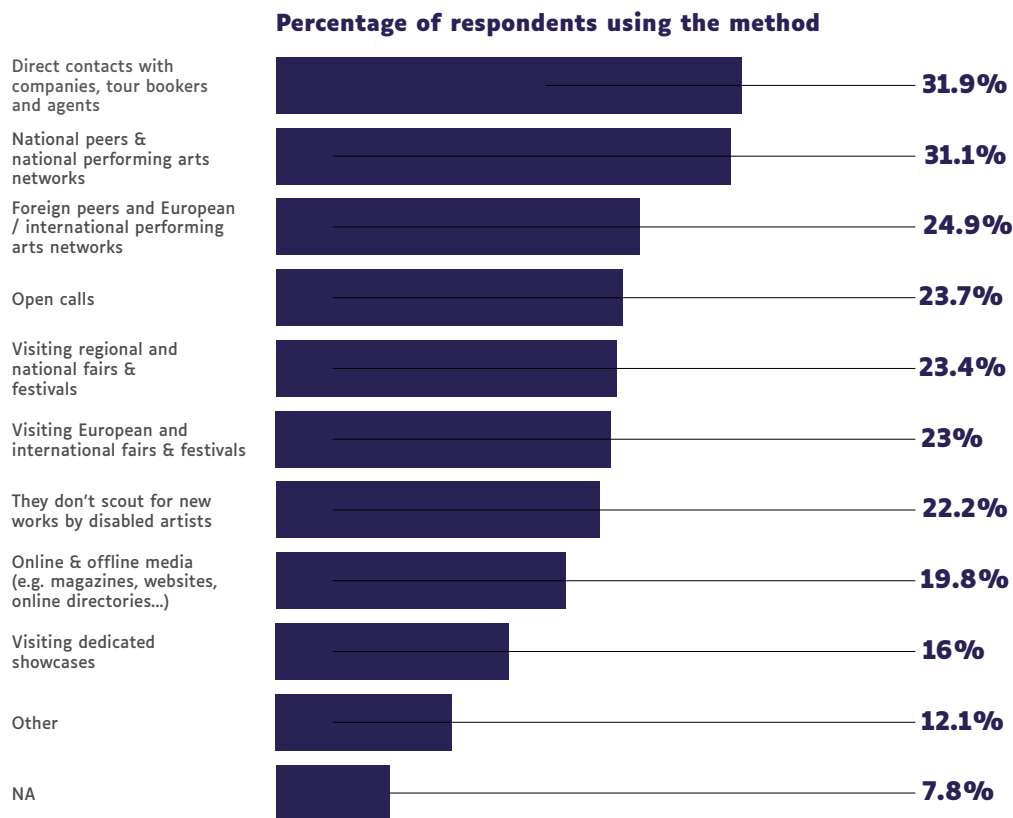
Meanwhile, international peers and networks, which used to account for 36% of responses, are now only 25%. Other relevant sources include open calls (slightly increasing from 22% to 24%) and visiting European and international fairs and festivals (which had not been included in the previous survey and now accounts for 23% of responses). Both online and offline media (from 27% to 20%) and visits to dedicated showcases (from 24% to 16%) seem to have lost relevance, although the latter case may partly be due to the new option for European and international fairs and festivals, which may divert some responses.

Finally, 22% of respondents state that they do not scout for new works by disabled artists. When further asked, some respondents explain that they do not specifically look for works by disabled artists (but rather for new artistic works in general) or that they do not engage in programming or presentation of new works.

Figure 6: Places where to scout for new works

In percentage. Multiple responses allowed

In your organisation, how do artistic leaders scout for new works by disabled artists?



Source: On the Move's elaboration, on the basis of survey results.

The regional breakdown for this question shows similar trends everywhere but some interesting variations. The percentage of organisations that do not scout for new works by disabled artists ranges from 17% in Western Europe to 28% in Southern Europe. Direct contacts with companies, tour bookers and agents range from 19% in Eastern Europe to 50% in Western Europe, something which might point to an unequal ability of disabled artists and companies to pitch their work to programmers, or to varying number of productions existing. The importance of online and offline media also varies, from under 20% in Northern, Southern and Eastern Europe, to 40% in Western Europe. Visiting European and international fairs and festivals is relevant to 36% of organisations in Western Europe, but only 16% and 12% of those in Southern and Eastern Europe respectively.

The question included one further item, regarding the platforms where respondents discovered works by disabled artists. Responses include some European networks (Aerowaves, in particular), several festivals (No Limits, Berlin; Unlimited Festival, London), and some organisations, national networks, and programmes (British Council / Disability Arts International; Arts and Disability Ireland; Disability Arts Online; Onassis Stegi; Red Andaluza de Teatros Públicos, Skånes Dansteater).

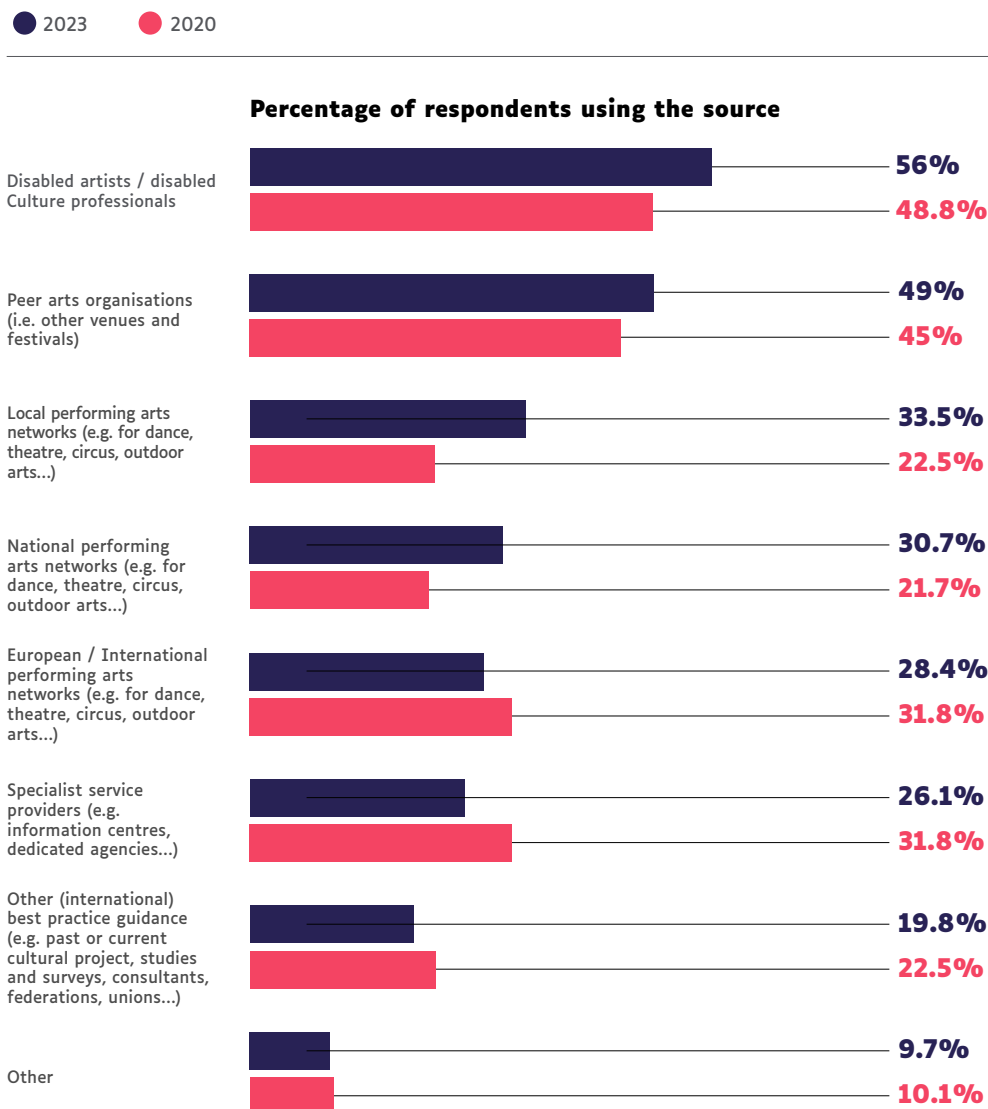
DISABLED ARTISTS AND DISABLED CULTURE PROFESSIONALS REMAIN THE MOST TRUSTED SOURCE OF INFORMATION

The survey shows that disabled arts and disabled culture professionals remain the most frequent source of information when arts organisations have questions or needs in relation to supporting or programming works by disabled artists (**Figure 7**). This was one of the findings of the previous report and the new survey reinforces it, as the percentage increases from 49% to 56%. Peer arts organisations remain in second place, also increasing from 45% to 49%, something which, as in the previous question, may point to an increased availability of knowledge existing at local and national level. This might be confirmed by the fact that local performing arts networks gain relevance, with an increase from 22% to 34% and becoming the third most frequent option, whereas national performing arts networks also increase from 22% to 31%. Conversely, European and international performing arts networks are mentioned less often (from 32% to 28%), as do specialist service providers (from 32% to 26%).

Figure 7: Organisations consulted when questions on disabled artists arise

In percentage. Multiple responses allowed

Who / which organisation(s) do you currently look to if you have a question or a need in relation to supporting/programming works by disabled artists?



Source: On the Move’s elaboration, on the basis of survey results.

The question was complemented with a request for examples of individuals or organisations that respondents would reach out to when in need. A few organisations appeared repeatedly in the answers, which may confirm the perception that knowledge tends to, or is perceived to, be concentrated in a relatively limited number of stakeholders. Several organisations connected to Europe Beyond Access, including the project partners and organisations that have hosted or participated in some Europe Beyond Access activities, were mentioned as key information providers. Other specialised organisations, including Acesso Cultura (Portugal) and Arts and Disability Ireland, were identified as well. Some respondents also referred to the names of individual disabled artists as trusted sources of information in this field.

Trends at regional level are relatively similar to the overall picture, with disabled artists and disabled culture professionals, and peer arts organisations being the two most trusted sources in all regions. It is interesting to note, however, that respondents in Southern Europe have lower percentages of trust in all potential sources than their peers in other regions, except for specialist service providers (30%, a similar figure to that of Northern Europe and higher than those of Western and Eastern Europe), something which may point to more limited availability of information in general, a smaller range of sources, or difficulties in identifying useful sources of information.

ORGANISATIONS ARE ONLY PARTLY CONFIDENT THAT THEIR PROGRAMMES ARE ACCESSIBLE

The survey asked how confident respondents were on the accessibility of their artistic programmes for disabled artists. A similar question had been included in the 2020 survey but addressed only to venues and festivals and with a slightly different range of response options. While this makes comparisons complicated, similar trends may be observed now. As **Figure 8** shows, the most frequent reply is now 'somewhat confident' (33%), which shows a lesser degree of confidence than both 'very confident' (17%) and 'confident' (28%). Meanwhile, 15% of respondents were not confident about the accessibility of their programmes – the lowest rung in the ladder.

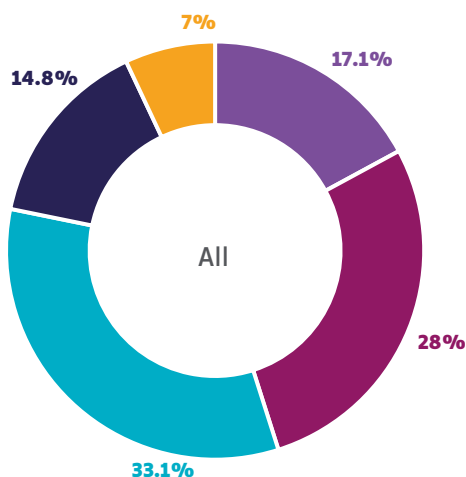
Data is relatively similar in all regions, with 'somewhat confident' being the most frequent answer everywhere. When the options of 'very confident' and 'confident' are aggregated, the total percentage lies between 44% and 47% in all regions (the aggregated European average is 45%).

Figure 8: Confidence in the accessibility of artistic programmes

In percentage

How confident are you that the artistic programmes of your organisation are accessible to disabled artists?

Very confident Confident Somewhat confident Not confident Don't know



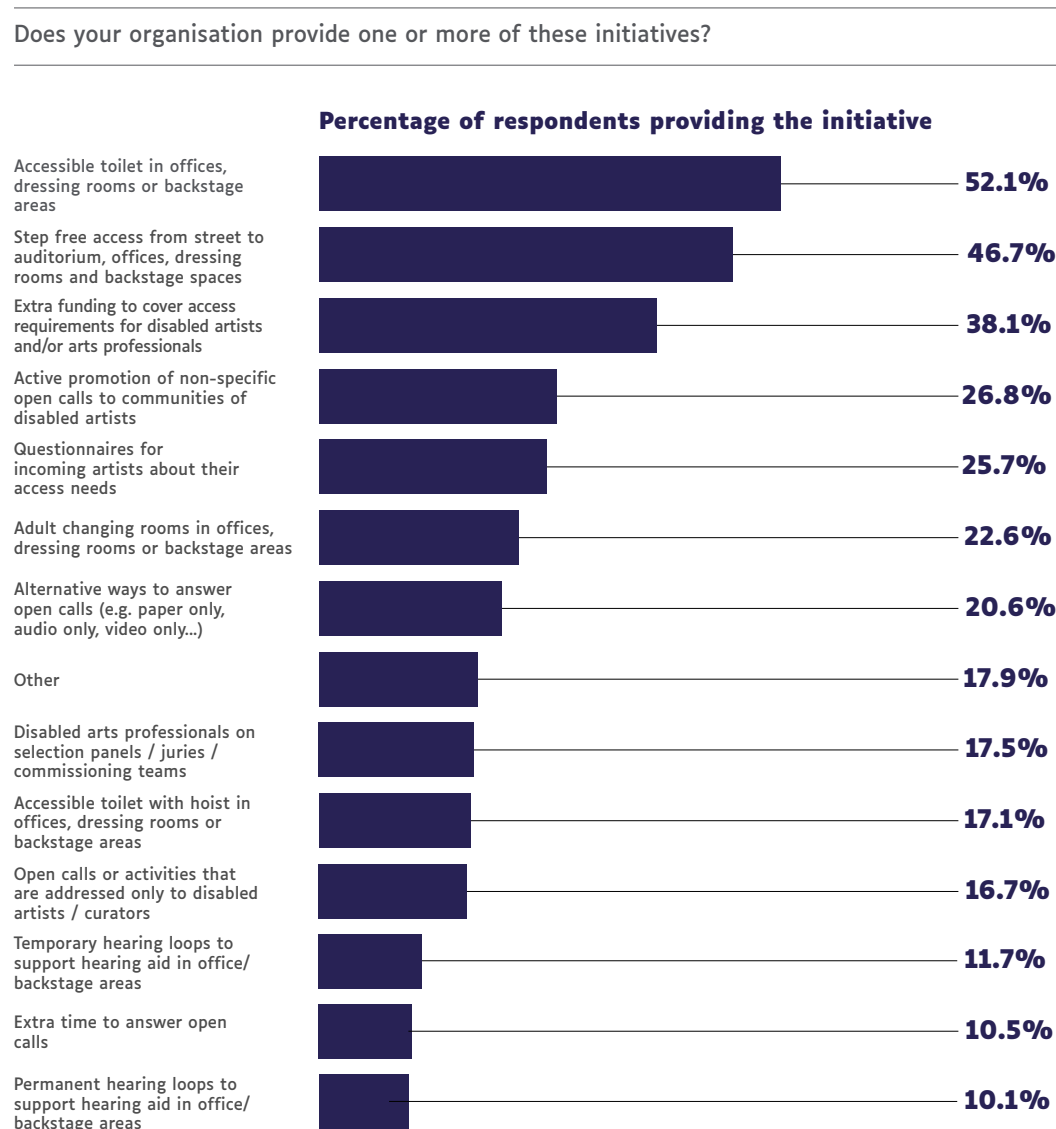
Source: On the Move’s elaboration, on the basis of survey results.

ACCESSIBILITY AND PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPATION OF DISABLED ARTISTS: MANY MEASURES TAKEN, MANY YET TO TAKE

The survey enquired on whether arts organisations provide a range of initiatives for the accessibility of disabled artists, with a detailed list of options being presented to respondents. Multiple answers were possible. As **Figure 9** shows, the most frequent response is the availability of accessible toilets in offices (52%), followed by step-free access from street to auditorium (47%). Extra funding to cover access requirements for disabled artists (38%), active promotion of non-specific open calls to communities of disabled artists in order to encourage participation (27%), and questionnaires for incoming artists about their access needs (26%) were also frequently chosen. Comparisons with the previous survey are difficult, since the question had then been addressed to venues and festivals only.

Figure 9: Provision of initiatives for the accessibility and professional participation of disabled artists

In percentage. Multiple responses allowed



Source: On the Move’s elaboration, on the basis of survey results.

Regional comparisons show relatively similar trends, but also some visible differences, as shown in **Table 3**. The percentage of respondents that provide accessible toilets in offices, dressing rooms or backstage areas ranges from 43% in Southern Europe to 67% in Northern Europe. Extra funding to cover access requirements for disabled artists and arts professionals is provided by 50% of respondents in Western Europe and 48% in Northern Europe, but only 27% and 28% in Southern and Eastern Europe respectively, and a parallel trend is visible as per the availability of questionnaires for incoming artists about their access needs.

The same table also demonstrates that, as could be expected, responses to this question are clearly connected to the availability of dedicated budgets: that is, in all response options, respondents whose organisations have a dedicated budget for accessibility are more likely to offer accessibility initiatives than those who do not. In some cases, and particularly in the type of measures that require more financial resources, the difference between organisations with and without a dedicated budget is very large: whereas 60% of organisations with a dedicated budget provide extra funding to cover access requirements, only 16% of those without a dedicated budget do so. There is, therefore, a +44% gap between organisations with a dedicated budget and those that do not have one. The gap between organisations with and without a dedicated budget is smaller, though still significant, in several other measures that require less financial resources: when asked about the availability of questionnaires for incoming artists about access needs; accessible toilets in offices; disabled arts professionals on selection panels, juries or commissioning teams, the difference ranges between +21% and +25%. The smallest difference between organisations with and without a dedicated budget is found as regards the availability of extra time to answer open calls (a +1% gap between organisations with or without a dedicated budget), which is a type of measure not directly related to the availability of financial resources. In any case, everywhere organisations with a dedicated budget fare better than those which do not have one.

Table 3: Provision of initiatives for the accessibility and professional participation of disabled artists, per region and availability of dedicated budget

In percentage, total and regional breakdown (multiple responses allowed)

Does your organisation provide one or more of these initiatives?

	Northern Europe	Southern Europe	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Has budget dedicated to accessibility	No dedicated budget or don't know
Accessible toilet in offices, dressing rooms or backstage areas	67.1%	43%	52.4%	46.9%	64.1%	40.3%
Step free access from street to auditorium, offices, dressing rooms and backstage spaces	59.5%	42%	45.2%	34.4%	56.2%	37.2%
Extra funding to cover access requirements for disabled artists and/or arts professionals	48.1%	27%	50%	28.1%	60.2%	16.3%
Active promotion of non-specific open calls to communities of disabled artists	29.1%	26%	23.8%	25%	33.6%	20.2%
Questionnaires for incoming artists about their access needs	35.4%	15%	35.7%	21.9%	38.3%	13.2%
Adult changing rooms in offices, dressing rooms or backstage areas	35.4%	18%	16.7%	15.6%	32%	13.2%
Alternative ways to answer open calls (e.g. paper only, audio only, video only...)	31.6%	15%	16.7%	18.8%	25.8%	15.5%
Other	17.7%	18%	19%	18.8%	14.1%	21.7%
Disabled arts professionals on selection panels / juries /commissioning teams	25.3%	11%	28.6%	3.1%	28.1%	7%
Accessible toilet with hoist in offices, dressing rooms or backstage areas	10.1%	22%	23.8%	6.2%	19.5%	14.7%
Open calls or activities that are addressed only to disabled artists / curators	22.8%	14%	19%	9.4%	26.6%	7%
Temporary hearing loops to support hearing aid in office/ backstage areas	12.7%	13%	4.8%	15.6%	20.3%	3.1%
Extra time to answer open calls	11.4%	8%	11.9%	15.6%	10.9%	10.1%
Permanent hearing loops to support hearing aid in office/ backstage areas	11.4%	12%	2.4%	12.5%	16.4%	3.9%

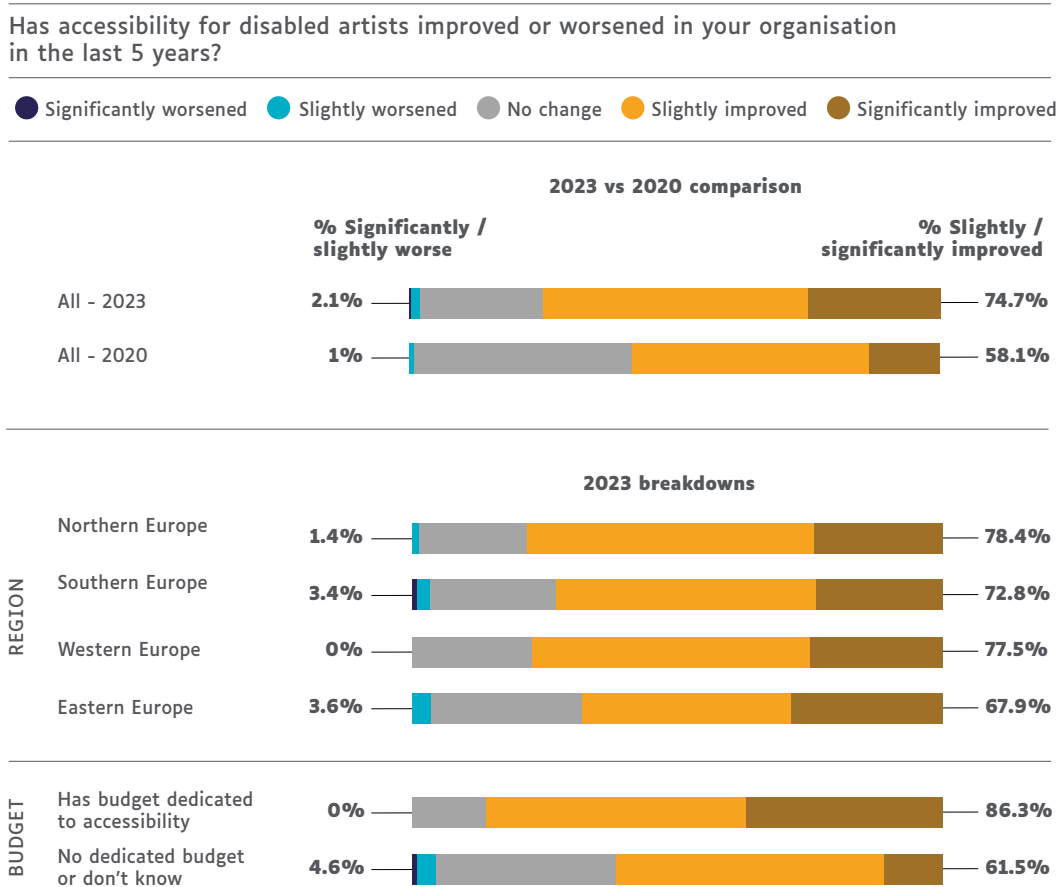
POSITIVE PERCEPTION OF PROGRESS MADE

The original *Time to Act* report found that a majority of respondents thought that accessibility for disabled artists in their organisations had improved in recent years – despite an apparent lack of evidence to sustain the claim. The new report *Time To Act: Two Years On* shows similar trends (**Figure 10**), with an increase in the perceived progress made. Indeed, 75% of respondents observe either a significant or slight improvement (the figure was 58% in the previous report). While in 2020, 41% thought the situation remained the same, the figure now is 23%. Overall, this seems to point to a relative improvement, although the previous observations on the risk of overconfidence (i.e. arguing that conditions have improved without evidence to demonstrate it) need to be borne in mind.

The regional breakdown in this question does not show very significant differences, although the perception of improvement seems to be more evident in Northern and Western Europe than in other sub-regions. On the other hand, there are very clear differences depending on whether organisations have a dedicated budget or not: in 86% of organisations with a dedicated budget, there has been a perceived improvement, and in none of them has the situation worsened. Meanwhile, only 62% of organisations without a dedicated budget report an improvement (a figure which, nevertheless seems still high) and 5% report worsening conditions. Overall, this seems to confirm one of the findings of *Time to Act*, regarding the critical role of dedicated budgets (as well as dedicated staff) to drive change.

Figure 10: Change in accessibility for disabled artists in the last 5 years

In percentage, with comparison with 2020 data: total results, regional breakdown and breakdown as per availability of dedicated budgets



Source: On the Move's elaboration, on the basis of survey results. Percentages exclude respondents who answered 'Don't know'.

The next two sections will complement the analysis of survey results, with deeper insights on the progress made and the challenges pending.

3.

IN-DEPTH: PROGRESS MADE WITH A FOCUS ON ITALY, POLAND AND SWEDEN

This section examines the progress observed in recent years as regards the accessibility and professional participation of disabled artists in the European performing arts. Particular attention is paid to developments at national and local level, especially in the three countries where research has focused (Italy, Poland and Sweden), but the section covers the European dimension, including mobility and networking, as well. The evidence presented here addresses the impact made by Europe Beyond Access, as well as parallel developments that have contributed to improvements in this field.

Since the report covers developments in several countries and across Europe at large, some of the trends depicted here may be visible in some countries or regions but not everywhere – whenever possible, the report specifies where progress is visible. For a more comprehensive picture, it is advisable to read this section alongside the survey highlights presented in section 2, as well as the remaining challenges which will be addressed in section 4. Whenever possible, evidence and arguments presented in each section have been connected to evidence described in others, thus introducing more nuanced, balanced arguments.

MORE AGENCY FOR DISABLED ARTISTS

Activities conducted in the context of Europe Beyond Access, as well as other initiatives in this field, are contributing to progressively moving approaches to disability in the arts from a social assistance perspective to one that recognises the agency of disabled artists. Closely related to the rights-based approach embodied by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

(CRPD), this implies involving disabled artists at all stages of project planning, implementation and evaluation, and addressing accessibility and participation initiatives not only to disabled audiences, but to disabled artists as well. It can also be seen to call for integrating the work of disabled artists in mainstream arts programmes, recognising them on the basis of artistic quality, rather than as a separate category of artists.

This transition, which was already visible in some European countries such as the UK earlier, has been accelerated in other countries through Europe Beyond Access and other activities. Because departure points are frequently different in each country, as are the contexts in which measures are implemented, relevant achievements also differ widely: from the employment of a disabled dancer and choreographer in mainstream dance company Skånes Dansteater,¹⁰ through the support to the work by disabled artists provided by standard arts funders (e.g. the Ministry of Culture in Italy), to the engagement of disabled artists, such as the members of Italian association Al.Di.Qua Artists,¹¹ as consultants to improve accessibility in venues and festivals. One respondent to the survey explained how '[in] recent years, mainly thanks to the bottom-up activities of [its] employees, the institution has gone from the model of providing ready-made "products" for the needs of disabled people to including them (as consultants or creators) at the initial stages of project work.'¹² (event manager, Poland, non-disabled)

This remains a work in progress, where small-scale achievements coexist with substantial gaps, as evidence presented in the survey has already shown. Yet the improvements observed are encouraging and are informing developments in other organisations. As explained further below, there is a 'ripple effect', by which introducing change in an organisation (by showing a more diverse representation onstage, or by involving disabled artists as agents of change) can help transform its structures more broadly, and provide inspiration elsewhere in the sector. Recognising the agency of disabled artists and adopting a rights-based approach in this field can be seen as a structural aspect, which can provide the basis for subsequent transformation in many other areas – thus warranting its placing as first element in the set of achievements observed.

RECOGNITION OF ARTISTIC VALUE

One of the distinctive results of Europe Beyond Access has been the support for a set of creative labs, workshops, pitching sessions, new productions and large-scale events involving disabled artists, which have contributed to presenting their work in mainstream venues and festivals and to the general

¹⁰ For more information: <https://www.disabilityartsinternational.org/partners/skanes-dansteater/>

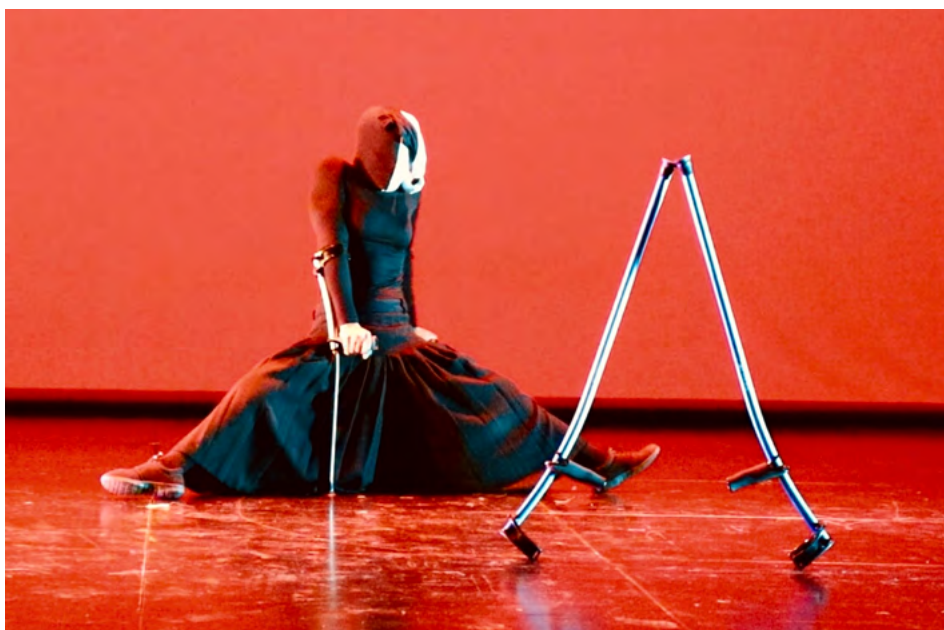
¹¹ For more information: <https://www.disabilityartsinternational.org/resources/al-di-qua-video-manifesto/>

¹² This and other quotes from questionnaire replies provided in languages other than English have been translated by the research team or, as in this case, with an automatic translator.

public.¹³ Through these and other initiatives, individual disabled artists and the companies and collectives of which they are part have gained visibility and recognition in the mainstream performing arts. The artistic value of their work has been increasingly acknowledged, particularly in their respective countries and those where cross-border activities have taken place.

Positive changes in this respect have also resulted from other programmes and initiatives, generating a context of more recognition, at least in some countries. In the words of one respondent to the survey: 'I am experiencing a great change. Awareness and curiosity have grown. Many people now know about our work. All of a sudden we're trendy. There is also a greater interest in networking, relaxed performances, etc. In the past, we had to initiate things ourselves. Finally, institutions have woken up and are open to collaborations.' (artistic director, Sweden, non-disabled)

This increased recognition does not occur in a vacuum but can rather be connected to a set of other factors. To start with, the activism of artists and culture professionals engaged in this field, both disabled and non-disabled, and the commitment of a few pioneering organisations which have, in their respective countries and at European level, actively engaged in supporting the work of disabled artists and calling for its fair recognition. This continued engagement means that these professionals and organisations are very often now called to provide advice on issues related to the arts and disability. As the survey has shown, they are the trusted organisations to whom others turn when needing to identify emerging disabled artists or to ensure that events and venues become more accessible. This comes at a price – as some interviewees have observed, it may divert disabled artists from their main creative focus, leading them to become advisors or consultants for a significant part of their working time.



Credit: Encuentro a Medianoche by Laila White.
Photo: Adrian.

¹³ For more information: <https://www.disabilityartsinternational.org/europe-beyond-access/eba-resources/>

Furthermore, as *Time to Act* already observed, change has also been helped by the engagement of some European networks and EU-funded projects, including Europe Beyond Access. Several interviewees noted how this and other projects have enabled them to access knowledge and experience, as well as high-quality works and professionals, that were scarce or not available in their countries. In some countries, support for the accessibility and professional participation of disabled artists has also been facilitated by policy agendas increasingly concerned with access, inclusion and diversity of all kinds (e.g. ethnic minorities, gender equality, etc.) – indeed, as *Time to Act* had already noted, policy frameworks and support are key enabling factors for accessibility, inclusion and participation. Closely connected to this change in priorities and mindsets is the increased openness of mainstream arts organisations to programming disabled artists and caring for disabled artists. This remains, however, an asymmetric trend – as is well known, access, diversity, inclusion and participation are not a priority for several European governments and funding bodies.

Finally, at local and national level the increased visibility of work by disabled artists has been enabled by some communication campaigns, including *I am an artist*, the huge outdoor billboard campaign and digital campaign conducted by the British Council in Poland, in the context of Europe Beyond Access. Billboards were seen by 5.4 million people in Warsaw, and the online campaign reached 1.4 million people in Poland and across Europe.¹⁴ As observed by some interviewees, high-quality communication materials targeted at the mainstream media and online audiences, ensuring the visibility of disabled artists, have been critical factors in Europe Beyond Access's impact.

STRONGER NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION

Recent years have witnessed an increasing number of collaborations and partnerships between disabled artists and organisations working with them, as well as between these and mainstream arts organisations. This is contributing to broadening opportunities for work by disabled artists: 'Through collaboration with other companies/organisations, we have been able to show performing arts works that were fully or partially produced by an ensemble with norm-breaking functionality and thus reached an audience we did not have before.' (producer, non-disabled, Sweden). While some trends in this respect were visible earlier, initiatives like Europe Beyond Access have contributed to accelerating them. In Italy, the Al.Di.Qua Artists association of disabled artists was established in the context of Europe Beyond Access and somehow facilitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which provided its members with an opportunity to reflect together in online meetings.

¹⁴ For more information: <https://www.britishcouncil.pl/en/programmes/arts/i-am-an-artist>

At a more institutional level, discussions between Europe Beyond Access partner Oriente Occidente, the Ministry of Culture, Regione Lombardia, and the British Council led to the signing of a protocol for collaboration on the arts and disability, the Italian Network 'Europe Beyond Access', which currently involves 60 members, ranging from high-profile arts venues and festivals to grassroots initiatives. Incidentally, the protocol refers to the findings of *Time to Act* regarding how lack of knowledge creates barriers for disabled artists and audiences.¹⁵ Some interviewees stressed that such real networking is rare at national level, where competition frequently prevails, as opposed to more generous approaches existing in cross-border European collaboration, thus highlighting the uniqueness of this new networking initiative in Italy.

In this respect, Europe Beyond Access and other EU-funded projects have also contributed to strengthening cross-border collaborations. In the context of Europe Beyond Access, artist laboratories, co-productions such as *Mixed Doubles*,¹⁶ and conferences involving speakers from several countries have provided opportunities for peer-learning and the emergence of some collaborations. More broadly, Europe Beyond Access provided the setting for the first meeting of the European Arts & Disability Cluster, held in The Hague in November 2019. Involving representatives from 12 EU-funded projects and 4 transnational projects for disabled artists, the meeting led to the adoption of recommendations for future EU policies and funding programmes.¹⁷

TRANSFORMING THE SECTOR AND ITS AESTHETICS, STEP BY STEP

By supporting the professional development of disabled artists and their engagement with specialised and mainstream arts organisations, projects like Europe Beyond Access, and the drive of the organisations involved in them, contribute to opening up the aesthetics and diversity of the performing arts. In Sweden, the recruitment of a disabled dancer and choreographer by Skånes Dansteater contributes to a more diverse representation on stage. The 'ripple effect' is also visible behind the stage, as involving a disabled artist in a mainstream dance company implies revising the scheduling of daily training practices, the notion of 'warming up', and the guidance provided to guest trainers. In this respect, Skånes Dansteater has developed an information sheet on working with disabled artists and diverse bodies, meant for guest trainers, who are then able to take this knowledge to other organisations with which they work, thus multiplying its effect.

¹⁵ For more information: <https://www.orienteooccidente.it/en/people/projects/eba-europe-beyond-access#7228123>

¹⁶ For more information: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJodmXagJb0>

¹⁷ For more information: <https://www.disabilityartsinternational.org/resources/report-launch-disabled-artists-in-the-mainstream-a-new-cultural-agenda-for-europe/>

Small steps then contribute to slowly changing mindsets and practices. In some countries, public funding now contemplates costs related to accessibility and makes it easier for organisations to cover this in their budgets: 'Time and budget [were] originally challenging when wanting to make projects accessible, but [are] now built into our funding applications so that we can manage the teams' needs.' (artistic director, UK, non-disabled). Also at the policy level, increased support for work by disabled artists in countries such as Italy or Portugal provides more opportunities for on-stage presentations: in Italy, a funding call in this field was launched by the Ministry of Culture in late 2022 for the first time, quoting Europe Beyond Access as one of its inspirations, and will lead to 120 events involving disabled artists across the country throughout 2023 and 2024.¹⁸



Credit: Jelena Stefanoska, Giselle.
Photo: Marija Erdelji.

Artists interviewed for this survey have also observed that a change in mindsets has led to their ability to submit applications by video for some events or venues, or to provide them with interpretation when attending events – even if, as the survey presented in the previous section has shown, this is far from a universal trend. Positive change is also visible among audiences, who are now, at least in some countries, more open to attending shows involving disabled artists.

STRENGTHENING CROSS-BORDER KNOWLEDGE AND COLLABORATION

EU-funded projects like Europe Beyond Access and other similar cross-border initiatives provide a setting for inspiration, collaboration and peer-learning at European and international level. One disabled interviewee from Sweden

¹⁸ For more information: <https://www.orienteoecidente.it/news/un-bando-ministeriale-su-arte-performative-e-disabilita>

explained that she would probably not have pursued her career in the arts were it not for her participation in Europe Beyond Access and other EU-funded projects. These projects had enabled her to meet her peers, something that was unusual at home, and provided her with role models and inspiration.

Such exchanges have taken a variety of forms, including residencies and European workshops allowing artists to learn and develop their practice in other Europe Beyond Access countries, as well as through the touring of productions created in the context of Europe Beyond Access.¹⁹ In addition to artists, the participation of cultural managers and policymakers in some Europe Beyond Access events abroad has provided inspiration and good-practice models which have subsequently been adapted for policy developments or inspired other initiatives at home.

The high number of cross-border activities conducted in the context of Europe Beyond Access has contributed to mutual knowledge and the emergence of a sort of informal network that could have continuity in a range of different ways. Synergies have also been found with other European projects and initiatives, as the aforementioned European Arts & Disability Cluster demonstrates.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Time to Act shed light on the limited availability of knowledge as a major hurdle to accessibility and inclusion for disabled audiences and artists. Several interviewees have stated that the report helped them to confirming intuitions, raising awareness, strengthening advocacy and leading to new initiatives focusing on knowledge dissemination and capacity-building. A good example of this is Region Skåne's planning of workshops and other training activities to strengthen knowledge around accessibility, inclusion and participation. Interviewees in other countries also noted how they felt that information on how to make the arts more accessible to everyone has been more easily available in recent years, partly because of the awareness that more action in this field was needed.

The strengthening of specialised information and knowledge in this field takes place at several levels. Inside organisations, it can be illustrated by the establishment of working groups on accessibility involving different departments (e.g. communication, audience development, technicians, etc.), as in the case of Skånes Dansteater, as well as by providing training opportunities for staff to increase sensitivity towards the needs of disabled artists and audiences. Looking outside, it can lead to developing toolkits for artists, producers, promoters, and funders, describing good practices to support disabled artists and audiences, with

¹⁹ For more information: <https://www.disabilityartsinternational.org/europe-beyond-access/project-activities/>

insights provided by disabled artists, as the British Council is currently doing. And, as described in the previous section, contributions to knowledge are also made through cross-border exchange, including workshops, labs, conferences and other opportunities to get inspiration from developments abroad.

IMPROVEMENTS FOR DISABLED AUDIENCES

Even though this report focuses primarily on disabled artists, the information obtained shows that progress for disabled artists and disabled audiences can frequently advance in parallel and be mutually reinforcing. Indeed, increased awareness on accessibility and inclusion and, in some cases, the availability of budgets for accessibility, can lead to simultaneous improvements in the front of the house and in stage and backstage areas. In Poland, Europe Beyond Access supported the presence of international disabled artists in a festival and at the same time contributed to making the event more accessible for disabled audiences, by working with a Polish Deaf ambassador and making SubPacs (a technology that increases access for Deaf and hard-of-hearing people) available.

An indirect effect of strengthening work with disabled artists is that it frequently leads to developing new or better relationships with disabled audiences as well, showing them that an organisation cares and aims to represent images of disability. Some disabled artists, such as Claire Cunningham, have also embedded accessibility tools in their performances, which facilitates attendance by disabled audiences. Attracting them can be a driver for making facilities and events more accessible to everyone and assuming that work in this field should be permanent and structural rather than occasional.

POLICY IMPACT

Increased awareness, more visibility of disabled artists and the strengthening of organisations and networks active in this field have contributed to generating a momentum for policy change, something which is particularly visible in some of the countries where Europe Beyond Access has operated.

In Italy, Europe Beyond Access and the partnerships and events organised around it, including Presenti Accessibili, a large-scale event held in Milan in April 2022 involving Oriente Occidente, the Ministry of Culture, Regione Lombardia, and Al.Di.Qua Artists, alongside many international partners,²⁰ illustrated progress in this direction, and preceded the launch of the Ministry of Culture's first-ever call to support national tours of disabled performing

²⁰ For more information: <https://presentiaccessibili.orienteoceidente.it/en/landing/presenti-accessibili-en>

artists. In the view of Oriente Occidente, participation in Europe Beyond Access and in other EU-funded projects was critical to get the Ministry's attention and introducing the accessibility and professional participation of disabled artists into the agenda. In Poland, some survey respondents observed how some local authorities and the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage were now providing some funding for accessibility, while noting that resources in this area remained limited. In Sweden, Region Skåne's Regional Cultural Plan 2021-2024, which was informed by work undertaken in the context of Europe Beyond Access, including the *Time to Act* report, contains provisions to enhance the participation of disabled people in cultural life, in accordance with the CRPD, to guarantee equal opportunities for disabled artists, and to stimulate digital solutions that facilitate accessibility for, among others, disabled audiences.²¹



Credit: Tatiana Cholewa.
Photo: Renata Dąbrowska.

Following the publication of *Time to Act's* preliminary findings in April 2021 and the full report in December 2021, presentations were held at events involving several public bodies, including the Ministries of Culture in Portugal, Romania and Italy, the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Arts Councils of Norway, Sweden and England, the German Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations, and Wales Arts International. *Time to Act* was also presented to the European Commission in a dedicated, closed event in May 2022, which provided an opportunity to discuss the relevance of its findings at EU level. European Commission officials have attended other presentations of the report and Europe Beyond Access activities, and have expressed their interest in the issues raised by the project. The report has also been presented to several European and international networks and programmes (EUNIC, IETM, ISPA, Perform Europe) and national and local organisations (e.g. Creative Europe Desk Germany, Interfaces Greece, National Institute of Music and Dance Poland, Catalonia's Institute for Cultural Companies).

²¹ For more information: <https://utveckling.skane.se/publikationer/kulturutveckling/regional-kultur-plan-for-skane-2021-2024/>

4.

IN-DEPTH: CHALLENGES REMAINING

Whereas the previous section has described the progress observed at several levels, findings from the survey and other observations presented throughout the report have already shown that further progress is still necessary. Complementing evidence presented earlier, this section will identify the main challenges remaining as regards the accessibility and inclusion of disabled artists in the European performing arts.

MAKING ACCESSIBILITY AND PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPATION CENTRAL

Accessibility is, alongside funding, the most frequent response to the survey question on the challenges encountered by arts organisations in relation to increasing access. Physical accessibility is rendered particularly difficult in the case of old or listed buildings, something which, as responses to the survey coming from Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Malta, Poland and Spain among others show, arises as an important problem in many European countries.

Significant challenges are also encountered by touring organisations and often shows that the focus of accessibility measures is on audiences rather than artists: 'It is VERY difficult to visit the municipalities we would like to, due to lack of accessibility in the premises. Accessibility is intended only for the audience – not for the actors. Right now we have a wheelchair-bound actor – she can't possibly get up to a village hall association. We're currently working on trying to persuade municipalities and associations to seek money to make their stages more accessible. They are mainly in rural areas.' (artistic director, non-disabled, Sweden).

The prevailing focus of accessibility measures on audiences rather than artists was also noted with regret by some interviewees. Others emphasised that lack of attention to accessibility by venues and events may leave disabled artists feeling like they are the problem, rather than recalling that it is institutions'

responsibility to ensure that such opportunities are fully accessible. Further to physical accessibility, challenges regarding accessibility were also identified in other areas, including sensory accessibility and accessibility of communications.

In some cases, accessibility measures may be adopted for one-off events, or specific projects, rather than making them structural. As evidence presented earlier has shown, progress is also hampered, in some organisations, by the lack of specific knowledge and available expertise on how to increase accessibility: 'We don't have an own venue, so increasing access is harder to implement, but we also lack information on how we could do better.' (general manager and artistic director, non-disabled, Finland). Related factors include the limited awareness existing in some organisations, the low understanding of the specific and diverse needs of disabled people, and the perception that access requirements are becoming broader: 'Access definition seems to expand regularly, with more artists identifying as neuro divergent or disabled.' (creative producer, non-disabled, UK).

These observations suggest that addressing accessibility, in all its dimensions, remains critical in order to make the performing arts more inclusive of disabled artists and audiences, to become more representative of society, on stage, behind the stage and in the stalls, and to enable everyone involved to be able to exercise their rights as outlined in international human rights standards such as CRPD.

FUNDING

As noted above, survey respondents frequently refer to funding as a major obstacle to making further progress towards the accessibility of disabled artists: 'As an organisation we have continuously invested into inclusion, however our funding continues to decrease and so do our resources.' (artistic director, non-disabled, Croatia); 'The local funding we get from the Ministry is so low that it is not enough to pay and provide professional audiodescription for performances/theatre pieces. The same goes for subtitles and on stage sign language translation. Additionally we can't pay the costs that apply for an accessible marketing.' (curator, non-disabled, Cyprus).

Some interviewees observed that they had recently received additional funding to invest into making their facilities more accessible and being able to provide interpretation – however, the latter was supported through short-term grants, which raised doubts about the long-term availability of funding in this area. Related to this is the fear, raised by some interviewees, that accessibility issues may be only a temporary trend in policy priorities, connected to the availability of EU-funded projects which have turned national authorities' attention to this area, but which may run out in the mid to long term.

The centrality of funding can be related to the critical role of policies concerned with accessibility, inclusion and participation, which, as *Time to Act* argued, operate as a key enabling factor to drive change in cultural organisations. Given the magnitude of progress still to be made, policies and related funding in this area should not be short-term, but rather guarantee long-term continuity. Funds should of course be adapted to specific contexts, thus determining, for instance, whether specific programmes need to be established for the accessibility and professional participation of disabled artists or support in this area should be mainstreamed into standard programmes supporting creation, production or distribution.

CHANGING MINDSETS

Time to Act suggested that a 'cultural change' was necessary, which should place universal inclusion and accessibility at the centre of work for all arts organisations and venues, and celebrate diversity in all its dimensions, including that related to (dis)ability. While, as explained earlier, Europe Beyond Access and other initiatives have contributed to making access to work by disabled artists more widespread and recognising its artistic value, much remains to be done in this field. Both interviewees and survey respondents have regretted that audiences in many countries still need convincing about the artistic value of work by disabled artists. Some respondents also thought that presenting the work of disabled artists could in some cases be a form of box-ticking, done because of external expectations or to fit funding priorities, but without a true belief that audiences may be attracted in the long term.



Credit: Aristide Rontini, Studio Lamyrus Noctiluca.
Photo: Francesco Mazzola.

Furthermore, and as already noted, there is a perception that, among arts organisations and funders, the focus tends to be on accessibility for disabled audiences rather than artists – something which also points to the need to revise prevailing perceptions of disability: 'There have been more organisations making spaces accessible, but not so many providing specific programmes. So it is rather about audience development than about involving the disabled people in the programme.' (artistic director, non-disabled, Romania). 'There are some initiatives for better accessibility of theatre to blind and deaf audiences, but there is still a complete lack of including disabled artists in professional productions.' (curator and educator, non-disabled, Slovenia).

Ultimately, the required cultural change or mindset shift needs to operate at multiple levels: revising the canons or narratives which determine which bodies are allowed on 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, challenging 'ableism' (i.e. prejudice and/or discrimination against disabled people), etc. While, as evidence presented earlier shows that some countries, regions and organisations have made substantial progress in this respect, much remains to be done in many corners. Questions about artistic quality are frequently raised in debates on the professional participation of disabled artists, as several interviewees have warned – it is there, for instance, when performing arts educators fail to accept that normative and non-normative bodies may share a stage normally, on equal terms, or when questions are raised about the inclusion of works by disabled artists in mainstream arts programmes.

Yet some have observed that the struggle for the recognition of disabled artists has similarities with that being waged by other sectors, including women and minorities that experience different forms of oppression. Several demands of disabled artists and audiences, including more time to create, more consideration of audiences, less pressure to produce, and making the mechanisms of exclusion and oppression visible, are shared by others (and gain centrality when issues like care, sustainability and social regeneration are considered), and provide a common ground on which to foster change in the performing arts together. Organisations such as Al.Di.Qua Artists in Italy, Teatr21 in Poland,²² and others are working in this direction, aiming to challenge normativity and the social order. An area in which significant challenges remain is education and, more broadly, representations in public space – several interviewees highlighted the importance of presenting work by disabled artists in public space (something which Europe Beyond Access has addressed²³), and of playing to young audiences (including young disabled people, to show them that diverse bodies exist and can be represented on stage) and being active in education.

²² For more information: <https://teatr21.pl/>

²³ Watch the film resulting from the Europe Beyond Access laboratory 'Unexpected Bodies in Unexpected Places', hosted by Skånes Dansteater in Malmö (2019): <https://www.disabilityartsinternational.org/resources/eba-laboratory-film-unexpected-bodies-in-unexpected-places/>

Even in organisations that have made substantial progress in the involvement of disabled artists, challenges remain. Some Europe Beyond Access partner organisations and associated artists argued that future steps should involve ensuring that disabled artists are fully represented in decision-making processes that affect them, recognising them as experts. This could include involving them in selection panels, curation, and as artistic directors or choreographers. Regretting that artistic direction frequently remains in the hands of non-disabled professionals, some disabled artists interviewed explained how their work experience was very different when working with a non-disabled or a disabled choreographer or director – in the former case, some things always need to be discussed and explained, while in the latter, there is more mutual understanding and the main focus can be on artistic work.

This remains a complex area, addressing which lies at the heart of the struggle for accessibility, inclusion and professional participation. As suggested by one survey respondent when asked about the challenges encountered in relation to increasing access, 'even before the issue of resources..., the most complex point was, and is, the work needed to change the point of view on this topic. Learning to deconstruct the welfare-based, do-goodist approach, and addressing the complexity and intersectionality of this topic. Making this clear to staff and partners. This remains the biggest challenge. The key to solve it is the direct involvement of disabled artists, shifting the discourse from the third person to the first person.' (artistic director and producer, non-disabled, Italy). Despite these difficulties, the pathways outlined above, and the work done by Europe Beyond Access partners and other organisations engaged in this field, shows that the necessary change in mindsets can occur over time.

BETTER STRUCTURING THE SECTOR

Changes required to guarantee inclusion and accessibility require transforming performing arts organisations and distributing roles and responsibilities across the sector at large, structuring it better. At present, the relative emergency of work in this area in several countries means that a huge burden frequently lies on the shoulders of a small set of stakeholders, including, in particular, disabled artists and culture professionals or organisations which have been active in this field for long, as both the recent survey and research conducted for *Time to Act* have already shown.

This context generates concern for a number of reasons, including some disabled artists' perception that they need to devote more time to providing expertise than to artistic work, which is their original motivation, the fact that in many cases such advice is provided for free, and the acknowledgement that structural, long-lasting change can only happen if capacities are built across many organisations and embedded internally, rather than relying on external expertise. In this respect, some interviewees referred to the need to conduct

capacity-building workshops and other forms of knowledge-sharing activities – something which Europe Beyond Access and other projects have done in the countries where they have intervened, but which should happen in more places and more frequently given the scale of the challenge ahead. In addition to training activities, progress in this area could involve establishing knowledge platforms or networks that collect good practices and provide access to other learning tools. As *Time to Act* suggested, there is an extensive collection of very useful toolkits, guides and similar publications that could be further disseminated and translated.

Similar changes are also required within individual organisations. Very often, responsibilities for advancing work around accessibility and inclusion are held by one or a few very motivated individuals – it is not rare to refer to their work as ‘activism’, something that serves to recognise their dedication and the positive results that have been achieved by many in this field. Ideally, however, knowledge should be spread across the organisation and assumed as a permanent feature, since accessibility, inclusion and participation need to be integrated in the long term and everywhere – in programming, but also in communication, education, outreach, staffing, etc. This also involves going beyond one-off projects and integrating change at the strategic level: ‘Access is increasingly in vogue and an effort is being made to make the need for transversal change visible. You can also see more and more disabled performers both on stage and behind it. However, I do not see a clear strategy, nor a common commitment to eliminating all barriers – they rather seem to be isolated actions that are not enough.’ (producer, non-disabled, Spain).

Several survey respondents regretted that the lack of disabled staff in arts organisations was an obstacle to progress, something which suggests either a clear commitment to equality in the workplace and to the agency of disabled people, or a misjudged expectation that the relevant knowledge and expertise, as well as the drive for change, could only be held by them. Whatever the reason, another concern regards the low priority accorded to accessibility and inclusion in regular work, and the fact that this frequently lies at the hands of staff members with many other obligations: ‘I think there is a growing awareness about an inclusive cultural sector but the trouble is that there is no extra funding for this. That means no extra time and focus, so it has to come on top of the enormous workload of people in the cultural sector. We want to change but we don’t have enough time and space to do this properly.’ (artistic director, non-disabled, the Netherlands).

EDUCATION

As research conducted in the context of the original *Time to Act* report had already shown, ‘gatekeepers’, including curators, producers, programmers and educational institutions, hold very significant power in order to make the

performing arts more accessible and diverse. Interviews for *Time to Act: Two Years On* have particularly emphasised the critical place of higher education institutions in theatre and dance, from where young disabled people have frequently felt excluded in the past. Several disabled artists interviewed have described how they had felt 'not invited' to them in the past, or how, in their view, educational institutions do not recognise the diversity that exists in society.

How access to education remains a major impediment despite increasing openness at other levels was also echoed in the survey: 'There has been better consideration of disabled artists and culture professionals by mainstream cultural organisations, as proven by inclusion in public-funded venues and festivals, but opening up to training (conservatories and later) still remains very difficult.' (association manager, non-disabled, France). It should also be noted, however, that some interviewees in the countries participating in Europe Beyond Access have observed an increasing openness in some higher education institutions, which could lead to effective change in the coming years.

Underlying access to education is the potential to develop a new generation of disabled artists, to replace or complement the current generation of mainly 'self-made' artists, as well as the need to develop quality criteria that are more accessible and open to everyone. These steps are also critical to contribute to a more representative and diverse artistic landscape.

AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR DEVELOPING THE SECTOR

Several of the challenges presented throughout this section are interconnected, calling for comprehensive approaches to be effectively addressed. This emphasises the need for public policies, strategies and legislation, which should be based on detailed analyses of the challenges existing, as well as consultations with the relevant sectors affected, and aim to tackle such challenges through short, mid and long-term action. Ultimately, an 'enabling environment' which allows accessibility and professional participation requires collaboration between many stakeholders and the adoption of a combined set of measures.

One clear example of this, as mentioned by interviewees and survey respondents in several countries, concerns how remuneration of disabled people for engaging in artistic work heightens the risk of making them ineligible for a disability pension or other social benefits. 'Government policies in this country continue to challenge those disabled people who wish to work in the arts with inflexible and punishing approaches to access support and subsidies.' (retired director, non-disabled, UK). This seems to stem from the presumed

incompatibility of disability and the arts, but could be resolved with suitable transversal policies connecting both fields. Recognising this complexity, some organisations prefer not to engage in providing short-term or one-off solutions, but rather advocate for more substantial, long-term change.



Madeleine Månsson, Vinterresa.
Photo: Thomas Zamolo’.

Other complex issues identified during the research process and which have repercussions at different levels include the lack of interpretation services for disabled artists and audiences in some countries (e.g. Poland), particularly away from the major urban centres; the prevalence of short-term, project funding as a form of support for disabled artists in many countries; and the aforementioned concentration of knowledge in a relatively small number of organisations. What these issues have in common is that addressing them operates as a necessary precondition for building an enabling environment and achieving more structural change towards accessibility, inclusion and participation, enabling disabled audiences and artists to feel fully welcome in the performing arts.

REGIONAL IMBALANCES

Both in the three countries on which this report has particularly focused and elsewhere, positive developments are frequently concentrated in a few organisations, cities and regions but may not be visible at national level. Interviewees in Italy and Poland highlighted that there were significant regional imbalances as per audiences’ ability to attend events involving disabled artists, and in accessible venues. Frequently, events are concentrated in major cities or those where very active organisations are based, as in the case of Oriente Occidente in Rovereto. Strengthening national networking and developing national, regional and local policies which contribute to levelling out imbalances and facilitating knowledge-sharing seems critical in this respect.

Imbalances are of course also visible at European level: as *Time to Act* had already shown, progress towards accessibility and inclusion in the performing arts has advanced particularly in a few countries, while many others lag behind. This is to a large extent corroborated by this report, through the positive, but diverse, impacts observed in the target countries and the different experiences and views collected in the survey: 'While there are countries within the European Union with a tangible improvement when it comes to the promotion and engagement of disabled artists and curators, there are still quite a lot of countries with very few consistent policies, applicable at a national level, when it comes to funding and organizing projects and programmes in order to increase the visibility of these categories of cultural workers and artists.' (project coordinator, non-disabled, Romania).

The survey takeaways have also shown how, in several questions, visible differences exist between Eastern, Northern, Southern, and Western Europe. In particular, organisations in Southern and Eastern Europe are much less likely to have dedicated budgets for accessibility and, as a result, they tend to provide fewer initiatives to support disabled artists. Similarly, professionals in these regions are much less familiar with the works of disabled artists than their peers in Northern and Western Europe and, accordingly, they support or present work by disabled artists much less often.

However, the survey also shows that, in almost every country, there is a number of respondents who say they have witnessed some positive change, along with others who object they have not. Activities supported by Europe Beyond Access have also shown that expertise and knowledge can be transferred across borders and that progress can be made everywhere, insofar as local circumstances and needs are properly acknowledged and resources are invested into new policies, programmes and projects.

DATA

This report, as *Time to Act* had previously done, has aimed to fill a gap as regards the availability of data on the accessibility and professional participation of disabled artists. This is, however, a minor step, with a specific geographic scope and some methodological limitations, which cannot fully analyse the progress made by Europe Beyond Access and other initiatives, nor appraise the nature of needs and challenges remaining.

Interviews conducted during the research process have pointed to the lack of sufficient information in areas such as the participation of disabled artists in national performing arts scenes, obstacles to accessibility, or the knowledge gaps that continue to exist. This remains, indeed, a gap to be filled through quantitative and qualitative research at local, national and EU level.

5.

CONCLUSIONS

This report has examined evidence on the inclusion and accessibility of disabled artists in Europe's performing arts sector, with particular attention to activities implemented in the context of Europe Beyond Access and in three focus countries. Complementing and updating the analysis presented in *Time to Act* in 2021, it provides a picture of where and how progress in this area is being achieved, as well as the areas in which further improvement is still needed. This closing section summarises some of the findings of the report, placing emphasis on what this suggests for future work towards accessibility, inclusion and professional participation.

- 1. There is evidence of progress towards the accessibility and professional participation of disabled artists.** Activities supported by Europe Beyond Access in Italy, Poland and Sweden, and similar developments in the context of other policies and programmes, demonstrate that the performing arts can become more accessible to everyone when organisations and professionals are engaged and resources are available. Progress is slow and complex, but it can happen – enabling disabled artists to develop professional careers, making stages and representations more diverse, providing role models for the younger generations. This is one of the main lessons learned of this report, and should inspire policymakers, public and private funders, and arts organisations to turn their attention to the challenges remaining, and take measures accordingly.
- 2. There is more awareness about accessibility, in a context where equality, diversity and inclusion gain relevance.** The research leading to this report shows that, across Europe, there is more awareness about the issue of accessibility, inclusion and participation of disabled artists and audiences, whether or not this results in effective policies and actions. Indeed, survey respondents have frequently found it easier to identify the challenges remaining than the progress observed, potentially because there is an awareness of the magnitude of the task, and how much of it is still pending. In some countries, though not everywhere, these developments may be related to a broader turn towards equality, diversity and inclusion in the cultural sector and in some public policies. In this respect, there is a potential to connect work in the field of disability with campaigns and initiatives led by other groups, contributing to stronger advocacy, policy design and peer-learning.

- 3. There are very significant regional differences across the EU, which need to be addressed.** The principles guiding this document, including the recognition of the rights of disabled people as set out in the CRPD, an interest in enabling disabled artists to pursue professional careers, and an acknowledgement of how diverse bodies and stories contribute to enriching cultural life, are valid everywhere. However, evidence shows that opportunities for disabled artists differ significantly across different societies as a result, primarily, of resources available (e.g. whether dedicated budgets for accessibility exist), political will (e.g. whether specific policies in this field are adopted), a mindset shift towards more diversity and equality, and the availability of knowledge. Survey results appear to show that, in general, countries in Northern and Western Europe are doing better than others in these areas. There is a need to address this, which has implications for both national stakeholders in the countries where more difficulties continue to exist, and for international agents, including the EU and European networks and platforms, which can contribute to enabling networking, collaboration, and knowledge transfer.
- 4. EU-funded projects and initiatives have made significant contributions.** Complementing the previous point, and as *Time to Act* had already shown, it is important to note that EU-funded projects such as Europe Beyond Access and others have played a very important role in raising awareness about accessibility and participation, presenting the work of disabled artists across borders (thus enriching their professional careers and inspiring foreign audiences and artists), helping to build capacities, and contributing to the emergence of a coalition of dedicated professionals and organisations. EU support needs to be acknowledged for its key role in this field and, while support also needs to come from domestic authorities and organisations, it continues to be necessary, particularly in areas like knowledge-transfer, capacity-building, mobility and networking.
- 5. The availability of dedicated policies and budgets makes an important difference.** As the paragraphs above have emphasised, and as evidence in both *Time to Act* and *Time To Act: Two Years On* shows, change towards accessibility and professional participation can be driven by the goodwill and activism of individuals and organisations, but it gathers speed and depth when it is facilitated by policy priorities, organisational strategies, and adequate resources. The survey demonstrates that it is generally organisations with a dedicated budget (or, in some cases, organisations that are wholly committed to accessibility, inclusion and participation) that will be more accessible for disabled artists (and audiences). The literature review conducted for *Time to Act* and interviews and surveys for that report and this one also show that progress has been achieved particularly in those countries where access is a policy priority, informing the allocation of funds, the availability of research and knowledge, capacity-building, etc. Steps in this direction need to be encouraged at all levels.

- 6. Information and knowledge remain central and need to be more widespread.** Both this and the previous report have highlighted how knowledge on how to make the performing arts more accessible is not yet sufficiently widespread. At national level, frequently a narrow group of organisations and disabled experts is identified as key information holders. At European level, research, practical guidance and networks seem to be more easily available in some countries than others. In addition to the availability of information and knowledge, this field is important because of how it can trigger effective change when available, and how much the absence of knowledge leads to misconceptions and prejudices. Therefore, future initiatives need to continue addressing the collection and dissemination of data, the facilitation of capacity-building and peer-learning, the transfer of good practices, etc.

- 7. Progress continues to be necessary even where positive change has been achieved.** Europe Beyond Access and other parallel initiatives have achieved significant progress in several countries and organisations, making the European performing arts landscape more diverse and accessible. However, even in those positive stories, interviewees and survey respondents frequently highlight that more progress is still necessary – whether by further engaging disabled artists and audiences in decision-making, addressing education, scaling up good practices, distributing responsibilities more sustainably among active professionals and organisations, or ensuring that change reaches rural areas and smaller towns. Just as it is necessary to celebrate the progress made, attention to the challenges remaining continues to be necessary.

ANNEX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Katee Woods, Europe Beyond Access Project Marketing Manager, connected to work done by the British Council in Poland, 20 January 2023

Donatella Ferrante, Advisor to Ministry of Culture, Italy; and Sabrina Canzoniere, Project Manager, International Promotion and Theatre Touring, Ministry of Culture, Italy, 27 January 2023

Diana Anselmo, Performer and Activist, President of Al.Di.Qua. Artists, 1 February 2023

Aristide Rontini, Dancer and Choreographer, 1 February 2023

Daniel Kotowski, Artist and Activist, 2 February 2023 [with interpretation provided by Bernard Kinov]

Liselotte Lindahl, Project Manager, Skånes Dansteater, 2 February 2023

Anna Consolati, General Manager, Oriente Occidente, 3 February 2023

Tanja Mangalanayagam, Development Officer, Dance & Circus, Culture Department Region Skåne, and former Project Manager, Skånes Dansteater, 8 February 2023

Justyna Wielgus, Head, Education Department, and Choreographer, Teatr21, 17 February 2023

Sophia Alexandersson, Chief Executive and Artistic Director, ShareMusic & Performing Arts, 27 February 2023

Madeleine Månsson, Dancer, Skånes Dansteater, 27 February 2023

Olga Drygas, Curator, Head of the International Cooperation Department, Nowy Teatr, 27 February 2023

Raffaele Filace, Communications Manager; and Irene Sartorelli, Assistant to General and Artistic Direction, National Foundation for Dance – Aterballetto, Italy, 2 March 2023

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