



ENCATC

The European network on cultural
management and policy

Policy Statement

**Supporting Culture and Education's
Contributions to Sustainable Futures**



Co-funded by
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A Way Forward: From Managing Culture to Cultivating Learning Ecosystems

Culture and education stand at the heart of sustainable development. Together, they shape how societies imagine the future, address diversity, and build the capabilities needed to navigate global change. Yet our **institutions are struggling to adapt to the pace and scale of transformation** driven by ecological, technological, and social disruption.

Traditional policy cycles—analyse, decide, implement, evaluate—**no longer suffice** in fast-changing contexts marked by climate transition, digital disruption, and social inequality. Instead of prescribing fixed solutions, **cultural policy must foster learning ecosystems that connect education, research, and practice.**

ENCATC's Vision: Developing Learning Capability for Cultural Responsibility

In parallel with the investment of resources and development of skills in the cultural and creative sectors, we need to build our collective ability to learn, coordinate and act responsibly across policy sectors. To face accelerating change, our sector must develop its learning capability — and orient that learning toward cultural responsibility.

Learning capability goes beyond sharing information and transmitting knowledge — it is about understanding change together, reflecting and learning from experience, and taking purposeful coordinated action across boundaries. It draws on both individual expertise and shared inquiry to help cultural actors navigate complexity together.

Cultural responsibility expresses the ethical and creative orientation of that learning: it recognises that every actor in culture — from educators and researchers to policymakers and practitioners — not only has rights to participate, but also a responsibility to shape the cultural conditions that sustain life, justice, and imagination.

Recommendations for Policymakers and Funders

Policymakers and funders can create conditions where such capability thrives: enabling research-informed decision-making, cross-sector collaboration, and responsible innovation.

Five Enabling Directions for Policy and Funding

1: Integrate governance across sectors

Establish or strengthen inter-ministerial and inter-agency mechanisms linking culture, education, environment, digital, and labour portfolios. Fragmented governance blocks progress. Cross-sector councils or task forces can align goals, pool data, and coordinate funding more effectively.

2: Invest in organisational transformation, not only projects

Shift funding logic from short-term calls toward multi-year transformation support. Culture's green transition, digital ethics, and fair work objectives require not only institutional change but coordinated action across the wider cultural ecosystem. Public, private, and civil society actors all play a role in enabling this transition through shared investment in training, infrastructure renewal, and evaluation capacity. Dedicated "transformation funds" and professional development lines can build long-term resilience across the system.

3: Support evidence, indicators, and ethical data

There is a need for shared indicators and research collaboration. Governments can back pilot initiatives that co-design cultural responsibility and learning indicators—for example, measures of agency, participation, climate adaptation, or fair work—tested through networks such as ENCATC. Data frameworks should follow UNESCO's ethics principles and respect privacy and diversity.

4: Recognise culture's workforce as a policy priority

Cultural professionals must be recognised as workers with fair remuneration, mobility safeguards, and social protection. Funding programmes can link cultural investment to fair work standards and skills upgrading schemes, including those promoting lifelong learning in digital and environmental transitions.

5: Value knowledge networks as policy partners

Networks such as ENCATC act as social learning infrastructures—connecting research, education, and practice across borders. Recognising these networks as partners (not just stakeholders) can accelerate knowledge transfer and peer-to-peer evaluation. Small, flexible support lines for networked learning activities—peer labs, data sharing, and case clinics—yield high impact relative to cost.

Practical Levers for Immediate Action

- Embed culture in national climate and SDG strategies, ensuring cultural indicators also appear in sustainability reporting.
- Co-develop AI and digital-ethics guidelines with cultural actors, referencing UNESCO's 2021 Recommendation on the Ethics of AI.
- Earmark transformation and skills lines in cultural funding to support organisational change.
- Open crisis funding to civil society, heritage, and community cultural actors.
- Fund research and innovation partnerships¹ between universities, cultural agencies, and ministries to co-produce evidence for policy. ENCATC is committed to the success of the future European co-funded partnership on Resilient Cultural Heritage (RCH) as a key initiative in Horizon Europe at the nexus between culture, heritage research and climate change. This interplay should be further reinforced in the next EU Framework Programme for R&I (FP10).

How can ENCATC help Policymakers and Funders?

ENCATC supports this policy agenda by:

- **Aggregating insights from member experiments** in education, management, and governance to identify transferable practices.
- **Facilitating social learning processes** connecting local practice to regional and global frameworks.
- **Linking European and international agendas**, ensuring alignment between the EU framework priorities and the broader MONDIACULT commitments on rights, sustainability, digital ethics, and fair work.

About ENCATC and the process leading to this Policy Statement

ENCATC — the European network on cultural management and policy education — brings together educators, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers who explore how culture and education contribute to sustainable and regenerative futures. In 2025, the ENCATC community reflected deeply on the importance of culture being embedded in policy, contributing to the shaping of the EU Culture Compass and to MONDIACULT 2025.

From this collective effort emerged a unifying insight: to face accelerating change, our sector must develop its learning capability — and orient that learning toward cultural responsibility. This idea stands at the core of ENCATC's mission and defines the purpose of this policy statement.

A broader Insight Report prepared by ENCATC in the context of MONDIACULT 2025 will soon be available online on <https://encatc.org/en/about-us2/influence/policy-papers/>.

¹ As stressed in the recent EU Culture Compass and as called for by the two Open Method of Coordination (OMC) groups of experts' reports published in 2022, on strengthening cultural heritage resilience against climate change and on the cultural dimension of sustainable development – Stormy Times: Cultural Courage for Change.