



ENCATC

The European network on cultural
management and policy

ENCATC Input Towards A New Cultural Compass for Europe



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ENCATC is the European network dedicated to cultural management and policy education. Established in 1992, it brings together over 100 member institutions—including universities, training centres, cultural organisations, and public authorities—from more than 40 countries across Europe and beyond. The network represents all disciplines in the arts and culture sector.

As an NGO officially partnered with UNESCO, in consultative status with the United Nations / ECOSOC Committee, and holding observer status to the Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Culture, ENCATC plays a pivotal role in professionalising the cultural sector to ensure its sustainability. The organisation fosters networking and dialogue among stakeholders, advocates for evidence-informed policies, and contributes to the development of a sustainable, inclusive, and democratic cultural management and policy education landscape.

Through its diverse activities—including the ENCATC Congress, Academy, publications, and various projects—ENCATC facilitates the exchange of knowledge, methodologies, and experiences, thereby enhancing the capacity of cultural professionals and institutions across Europe.

Introduction: A Pragmatic Vision for the Culture Compass

The Culture Compass for Europe presents a significant opportunity to integrate culture at the heart of EU policymaking. However, to succeed, this initiative must be

grounded in a realistic understanding of how the EU operates and the structural challenges it faces. ENCATC welcomes this step and urges a strategic approach that aligns ambition with feasibility.

Drawing on decades of engagement with European cultural policy, ENCATC echoes the call for policy coherence, joined-up governance, and a greater recognition of culture's transversal role across fields such as education, youth development, economy and tourism, employment, health, and the environment. We acknowledge that while positioning culture more centrally within the EU framework is necessary, it also requires a paradigm shift and a long-term commitment from all levels of governance.

ENCATC is a network of practitioners and education and research institutions advancing cultural management and policy through training, knowledge exchange, and evidence-based insight to inform decision-making. As such, we are well positioned to contribute deliverable, evidence-informed recommendations, and to make a commitment to support the delivery, implementation, and impact evaluation of such a framework. We call for a strengthened cultural strategy that avoids fragmentation, supports inclusive collaboration, and fully leverages the EU's added value in enhancing culture's social, economic and global relevance.

Represented by its Secretary-General, Gianna Lia Cogliandro Beyens, ENCATC participated in the first consultation event that took place on the 20th March 2025, convened by Commissioner Glenn Micallef. In response to the Commission's Call for Evidence, a consultation was launched to gather diverse views from across our network, including through a member survey and contributions from long-term and distinguished community members – among them recipients of the ENCATC Award for Outstanding Contribution. This document is the outcome of that process.

ENCATC members will continue engaging in this important dialogue and contributing reflections, recommendations and practical examples of what a successful Culture Compass for Europe might look like. Further discussions will take place during our online Members Talk on the 30th of May at the ENCATC Congress in Barcelona, 15-17 September. We also plan to reach out to the wide ENCATC student body to further enable their views to be taken into account as part of this process.

We reiterate our support for the Culture Compass for Europe as a key initiative to ensure that culture, and the cultural and creative sectors, becomes central to EU policies and programmes, and that these sectors have their contributions spotlighted in what concerns tackling the complex problems facing Europe and the world. The work done by ENCATC and its members - and of those operating in the arts, heritage, cultural and creative landscape - is key to reinforcing core European values such as democracy and inclusion, while mainstreaming approaches including sustainability, regenerative design, and innovation - essential elements for Europe's future, as a political, socio-cultural and economic project.

The following represents ENCATC's current positioning in relation to the Culture Compass. It is articulated in three sections. First, we respond to the questions posed in the closed consultation with the cultural and creative sectors, held in March 2025. Second, we present a series of ideas and recommendations that we believe potentially deliverable. Third, we reaffirm our commitment to this ongoing process and to contributing to the success of the Culture Compass through future dialogue and collaboration.

Question 1: What core principles should guide cultural cooperation at the EU level? Which ones are more at risk or susceptible to be challenged? How can the future Compass help to future-proof and protect them?

ENCATC Proposal: Foundational principles to be embedded in the Culture Compass framework

- *Sustainability & Regenerative Thinking*

Sustainability - economic, socio-cultural and environmental – must serve as a foundational principle. The Compass should draw on frameworks such as the Fair Culture Charter, which offers recommendations in eight areas: decent working conditions and fair remuneration; access to diverse cultural expression and resources; non-discrimination and gender equality; local

development; market access; digital equity and ethics; respect for the environment; public and consumer awareness). Regenerative approaches go beyond sustaining the present to actively improving future conditions.

• *Cultural Rights, Diversity, and Inclusion*

Europe's strength lies in its cultural diversity. Valuing all cultural expressions fosters unity and mutual respect. Inclusion, belonging, care ethics, and wellbeing must be prioritized to ensure all communities are represented and engaged. By endorsing both the cultural heritage and contemporary creativity of cultural minorities, their rights can be secured and their communities empowered to participate equally and confidently in socio-political life at both national and European levels.

• *Justice and Fairness*

In cultural policy, justice and fairness are foundational principles that underpin the entire cultural ecosystem. Justice involves recognizing and addressing structural inequalities in decision-making and access to cultural resources and opportunities, regardless of individuals' or social groups' geographic, ethnic, or socio-economic backgrounds. Fairness emphasizes the impartial distribution of public funding, services, and cultural content, ensuring no one is favored or excluded. Together, these principles support the development of a more inclusive, democratic, and equitable cultural sector.

• *Freedom of Expression*

Protecting the rights of artists and cultural practitioners to express themselves without censorship is fundamental to a vibrant cultural landscape. As a core European value, freedom of expression is inseparable from democracy. The Culture Compass should affirm the role of culture in upholding democratic principles, fostering open dialogue, civic participation, and critical reflection across society. Ensuring these freedoms are protected

across all Member States is essential for a resilient and inclusive European cultural space.

• *Cross-Border Collaboration and Working Together across Boundaries*

The EU must support cross-border and transdisciplinary cooperation, particularly among underrepresented or marginalized groups. This includes addressing dissonant or conflictual heritage and fostering collaboration among communities that transcend national borders, such as the Sami and Roma Peoples.

• *Digital Transformation and Inclusive Accessibility*

Digital transformation remains a key driver for innovation and expanded cultural participation. However, it must be pursued with an inclusive approach to accessibility that goes beyond technology alone. Accessibility should be ensured in physical, sensory, cognitive, and linguistic terms, so that everyone—regardless of ability, context, or background—can fully engage with cultural life. As digital tools reshape how culture is produced and experienced, care must be taken to avoid deepening existing inequalities.

The first three principles – sustainability, cultural rights and diversity, and justice and fairness – are particularly at risk due to geopolitical tensions, populist politics, socio-economic inequality, and bureaucratic challenges across the EU.

The Culture Compass can be a strategic tool to address these challenges. It should offer clear guidelines, allocating adequate resources, promoting policy coherence across EU institutions and Members States, and, crucially, fostering stakeholder engagement – especially at the local level, where much of the practical implementation will take place.

As a diverse network spanning Europe and beyond, ENCATC is deeply engaged in strengthening these essential principles for a thriving cultural ecosystem. We emphasise that Europe's cultural dynamics cannot be considered in isolation from global contexts and interdependencies.

ENCATC's commitment to transformative education is reflected in the daily work of our members, who already integrate critical thinking, global citizenship, and creative leadership into their teaching, research, and practice. Rooted in cultural and artistic methodologies, this approach positions ENCATC as a natural partner in advancing the objectives of the Culture Compass.

Question 2: How can Europe's cultural force and potential be further unlocked, considering current challenges? What do the cultural and creative sectors need to thrive, be more competitive and innovative? How to widen access to and increase participation in culture?

ENCATC Proposal: In response to this question, ENCATC focuses on shaping a future-oriented EU strategy for the cultural sector—one that ensures cultural and creative sectors (CCS) are thriving, innovative, and accessible to all. Education, training, and management expertise—ENCATC's core strengths—are fundamental drivers of this transformation. We also stress the need for sustained EU support, including through Creative Europe and complementary instruments.

1. A Paradigm Shift: From Competitiveness to Care

Before discussing competitiveness and innovation, the Culture Compass must first acknowledge a shift in orientation: from a purely economic focus toward one rooted in care, solidarity, and wellbeing.

Key objectives should include:

- Culture must be recognized and supported as a public and common good—accessible to all, sustained collectively, and valued for its intrinsic, social, and transformative roles in society. Cultural policy should protect culture from market-driven exclusion and affirm its essential role in democratic life and human development.
- Valuing culture not only for its contribution to GDP, but for its roles in:
 - Strengthening social cohesion
 - Facilitating healing, mutual recognition and well-being of people
 - Cultivating collective imagination and contributing to meaningfulness of life
- Supporting the status of artists, including care for mental health of artists and cultural workers
- Promoting decent working conditions and fair pay

Achieving this requires working within existing systems while also seeking to transform them. The Compass should enable a long-term transition, guided by these more human-centred values.

2. Strengthening the Cultural and Creative Sectors

2.1 Bridging Skills Gaps through Education and Lifelong Learning

To unlock the full social and economic potential of the CCS, urgent investment in skills development is essential. The cultural workforce must be equipped with future-proof competencies, including:

- Digital transformation
- Environmental sustainability
- Cultural entrepreneurship
- Audience participation and engagement
- Research-based self-development (analytical and critical skills development)

ENCATC recommends the following:

- Expand Creative Europe funding to support targeted skills development programmes, in partnership with networks such as ENCATC that specialise in cultural management education.
- Develop new funding streams to support business incubation initiatives for CCS professionals and entrepreneurs.
- Ensure that culture as a public and common good provides more opportunities for grassroots and community-led initiatives—particularly for marginalised groups supporting public cultural institutions to take their responsibility and lead in supporting artists and citizens cultural initiatives.

2.2 Reforming Funding Models and Access to Finance

Many cultural and creative sector professionals—especially those in small-scale, independent, or community-based contexts—face persistent difficulties in accessing finance. The current funding landscape is often overly bureaucratic, competitive, and short-term in nature, limiting the ability of CCS actors to plan, innovate, and grow.

To address these challenges, ENCATC proposes the following actions:

- **Shift from competitive, project-based grants to trust-based, long-term investment models**, particularly for small organisations, independent practitioners, and grassroots initiatives.
- **Simplify funding mechanisms** by reducing administrative burdens, enabling automatic renewals for successful initiatives, and focusing reporting on learning and impact rather than compliance.
- **Promote public-philanthropic partnerships** and establish a pooled funding instrument at EU level, in collaboration with the philanthropic sector, to expand access to flexible and sustainable funding.
- **Increase overall investment in culture**, particularly in rural, peripheral, and underserved regions, ensuring equitable access to opportunities and resources.

- Pay specific attention to **cultural entrepreneurs and operators in rural areas and smaller cities or towns**, where infrastructure and opportunities are often lacking despite rich cultural potential.

Reimagining cultural funding in this way will allow the EU to support not only innovation and competitiveness but also resilience, equity, and social value within the cultural ecosystem.

2.3 Boosting Digital Innovation and Cultural-Tech R&D

Digital technologies are reshaping the cultural and creative sectors, creating new opportunities for creation, dissemination, audience engagement, and business development. However, the rapid pace of change has left many cultural actors without the resources or skills to fully benefit from these shifts. Strategic investment is needed to ensure the CCS remain competitive, inclusive, and future-facing.

ENCATC proposes that the Culture Compass includes a dedicated framework to:

- **Support digital business models and experimentation** in the CCS, with funding earmarked for cultural-tech research and development.
- **Foster cross-sector collaboration** between cultural actors, technology providers, and higher education institutions to bridge knowledge gaps and promote co-creation of tools, platforms, and content.
- **Invest in digital infrastructure and capacity-building**, especially for small and mid-sized organisations that lack in-house technological expertise.
- **Build on successful models of collaboration**—such as ENCATC's research, training, and policy initiatives that explore intersections between culture, technology, and innovation.

Strategic digital innovation must go hand in hand with inclusive and ethical design, ensuring that technological advances expand access and opportunity, rather than reinforcing existing inequalities.

3. Widening Access to Culture

For culture to serve as a true driver of social cohesion and democratic renewal, it must be made accessible to all—not only in terms of physical and digital infrastructure, but also in terms of voice, agency, and participation. ENCATC emphasises that equitable access requires systemic change, long-term commitment, and the inclusion of marginalised perspectives in cultural policymaking and practice.

3.1 Agency, Voice, and Participation

Ensuring that all individuals and communities have the opportunity to shape, access, and benefit from cultural life is essential for democratic cultural governance. ENCATC calls for the Culture Compass to embed participatory and just approaches to cultural policy through the following actions:

- **Encourage participatory democracy** through cultural policymaking that reflects diverse community needs and values.
- **Introduce mandatory quotas** for EU funding allocated to grassroots, minority-led, migrant-led, and youth-led cultural initiatives.
- **Institutionalise co-creation mechanisms**, such as citizens' assemblies, participatory budgeting, and co-decision platforms at national and EU levels.
- **Ensure the representation of independent cultural workers and underrepresented groups**—including informal networks, displaced artists, and transnational minorities—in strategic planning and evaluation processes.
- **Establish a Culture Justice Observatory** to monitor equity, fairness, and the distribution of power in cultural funding, access, and participation across the EU and beyond.

These measures will help create a more inclusive cultural landscape in which all voices are heard, valued, and empowered.

3.2 Integrating Culture into Education Systems

Embedding cultural education across all levels of learning is essential to nurturing future cultural participants, practitioners, and leaders. However, in several Member States, cultural subjects are increasingly marginalised in formal education systems.

This trend risks not only diminishing future audiences, but also weakening the pipeline of talent entering the cultural and creative sectors.

ENCATC recommends the following actions:

- **Ensure the systematic integration of cultural and art education into school curricula** from early years to secondary level, while also supporting non-formal and informal learning environments.
- **Promote lifelong access to cultural learning**, particularly for adult learners, by expanding opportunities for continued engagement with the arts and heritage.
- **Support the training and professional development of art and cultural educators**, in partnership with networks like ENCATC that specialise in education for cultural management and policy.
- **Encourage collaboration between cultural institutions and schools** to enable experiential learning and foster meaningful cultural participation from an early age.

Strengthening the connection between culture and education is not only about skills and knowledge—it is also about nurturing empathy, critical thinking, civic engagement and solidarity, and a sense of belonging.

3.3 Enhancing Digital and Physical Accessibility

Access to culture must be guaranteed for all—across digital, physical, sensory, linguistic, and cognitive dimensions. As cultural institutions increasingly adopt digital tools, it is essential to ensure that these innovations do not exacerbate existing inequalities. At the same time, many people continue to face physical, economic, or systemic barriers to cultural participation.

ENCATC recommends that the Culture Compass prioritise the following:

- **Invest in the digitalisation of cultural content** to expand access for remote, marginalised, and under-resourced communities.

- **Ensure digital strategies are inclusive**, addressing the needs of persons with disabilities (both visible and invisible), older adults, non-dominant language speakers, and those with limited digital literacy.
- **Support physical accessibility in cultural venues**, including for people with mobility impairments and neurodiverse audiences, in line with universal design principles.
- **Promote inclusive audience engagement strategies**, through capacity-building for cultural organisations in accessible communication, design, and outreach, including sensitive and responsible programming.

By taking a holistic approach to accessibility, the Culture Compass can help ensure that everyone—regardless of ability, background, or geography—can participate in and benefit from Europe's cultural life.

3.4 Expanding Mobility and Cultural Exchange

Mobility remains a cornerstone of cultural cooperation and professional development in Europe. Yet significant barriers persist, particularly for artists-at-risk, displaced professionals, early-career practitioners, and those from non-EU countries. These barriers undermine the diversity, sustainability, and global reach of the European cultural space.

ENCATC recommends the following measures to promote inclusive mobility:

- **Remove systemic and administrative obstacles to cultural mobility (i.e. visa for participation in cultural programmes)**, especially for emerging artists, freelancers, and cultural workers from the Global South and EU neighbourhood countries.
- **Strengthen support for mobility schemes that prioritise equity**, including dedicated opportunities for artists in exile, underrepresented communities, and young professionals.
- **Ensure that mobility programmes are environmentally responsible and socially inclusive**, integrating sustainable travel principles and fair remuneration.
- **Build on successful ENCATC initiatives**—such as the ASEF LinkUp Asia-Europe Cultural Diplomacy Lab and Arts Journalism Matters—to develop new

cross-border exchange models grounded in intercultural dialogue, solidarity, and mutual learning.

Mobility should be seen not only as physical movement, but as the meaningful circulation of ideas, values, and practices. A truly inclusive European cultural space depends on it.

Unlocking the full potential of Europe's cultural and creative sectors requires more than targeted funding and technical solutions—it demands a values-driven approach that centres care, justice, participation, and long-term investment. ENCATC and its members are ready to co-create and implement strategic actions that not only strengthen the CCS, but also ensure that culture becomes truly accessible, inclusive, and transformative for all.

Question 3: How can the Compass further harness the power of culture for broader societal and global goals? How can the Compass ensure that culture can play its role as a strategic asset in EU policies and initiatives more effectively?

ENCATC Proposal: Culture as a Catalyst for Societal and Global Transformation

Culture is more than a sector—it is a catalyst for systemic change. It shapes identities, fosters resilience, strengthens democracy, offers meaningfulness and well-being, and fuels innovation. Despite this, culture remains underutilised and underfunded in both European and global strategies. The Culture Compass presents a timely opportunity to reverse this trend by embedding culture as a strategic pillar of EU policymaking—internally and externally.

To do so, ENCATC recommends the following:

- **Establish strong horizontal governance mechanisms** across EU institutions to mainstream culture's role in areas such as health, climate action, social inclusion, and foreign policy.

- **Embed culture in cross-sectoral policy instruments**, ensuring consistent reference to cultural contributions in EU frameworks and funding programmes.
- **Develop accountability structures** that enable regular progress tracking, policy coherence, and the exchange of good practices between EU bodies and Member States.
- **Invest in digital inclusion strategies** that address the needs of older adults, digitally excluded groups, and regions with limited infrastructure, ensuring that technological transformation is equitable and accessible.

Strategic Investment for Global Impact

To position culture as a force for global transformation, the EU must:

- **Equip cultural and creative sectors with the tools to engage internationally**, including support for sustainable business models, digital capacity, and cultural diplomacy training.
- **Shift from extractive to regenerative cultural approaches**, supporting communities in co-creating their futures rather than merely preserving their pasts, and allowing their traditional arts to be extracted and used on a global market, without enhancing its contemporary development.
- **Secure long-term investment in cultural international cooperation**, through Creative Europe, Horizon Europe, and instruments such as COST, to sustain cross-border partnerships and innovation ecosystems.

Culture also plays a vital role in promoting democratic values, peace, and intercultural understanding. It strengthens the EU's credibility and influence in international relations and aligns directly with key Sustainable Development Goals.

ENCATC's Role

ENCATC stands ready to support this strategic shift. As the only European network for cultural management and policy education, we:

- Train the next generation of cultural leaders, and support the creation of new training centers at Europe's margins that are responsive to local contexts, prioritising locally rooted expertise over externally imposed models;
- Bridge grassroots cultural work with policy at national and EU levels;
- Translate research into practice and foster peer learning across borders.

Culture is not a "nice-to-have"—it is a geopolitical necessity. Through the Culture Compass, Europe can assert a coherent, values-driven cultural voice on the global stage and help shape more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient futures.

Recommendations

The following recommendations reflect the collective insights of ENCATC's expert network, including long-standing members and award recipients, in response to the European Commission's Call for Evidence for a new Culture Compass for Europe. Grounded in practice, research, and cross-sector collaboration, they aim to support the development of a coherent and impactful framework that positions culture as a key driver of Europe's future.

1. Institutionalise Joined-Up Cultural Governance

ENCATC urges the European Commission to establish strong mechanisms for horizontal cooperation across EU institutions and policy domains. Transversal cultural governance is essential to address complex challenges—from climate change to social fragmentation—and to ensure alignment between EU cultural and non-cultural strategies.

2. Safeguard Artistic Freedom and Institutional Autonomy

In light of increasing pressures on freedom of expression, the Culture Compass should formally recognise and support artistic freedom and the autonomy of cultural institutions. A dedicated EU funding strand could support projects that defend and advance these fundamental rights.

3. Recognise Culture's Role in Health and Wellbeing

Culture must be integrated into EU health and social policy as a recognised contributor to individual and collective wellbeing (e.g. <https://artis-h2020.eu/> and <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/870827/results>). ENCATC and its members can support this effort with research evidence and practical models developed across higher education and cultural sectors.

4. Launch an EU Foresight Study on Culture and Artificial Intelligence

ENCATC recommends that the European Commission initiate a cross-sectoral study to explore the opportunities and risks posed by AI for cultural and educational ecosystems—including ethical, creative, and intellectual property implications—as well as its impact on employment in the cultural and creative sectors, for example among translators, designers, and film critics.

5. Strengthen Higher Education's Role in Cultural Cooperation and Exchanges

Higher education institutions are key facilitators of intercultural dialogue, international partnerships, and cultural knowledge exchange. The EU should capitalise on this potential by supporting strategic cooperation across borders, disciplines, and generations.

6. Promote Inclusive Cultural Education and Social Participation

ENCATC calls for sustained EU action to embed art and culture within education systems at all levels and to promote inclusive participation in cultural life. This includes curricula integration, lifelong learning, and outreach to underserved and marginalised communities.

7. Address the Full Spectrum of Accessibility

Accessibility must be understood holistically. EU cultural policies should ensure access in digital, physical, sensory, cognitive, and linguistic terms. ENCATC stands ready to contribute to capacity-building programmes that advance inclusive design and audience engagement.

8. Expand Mobility Through Equity-Centred Cultural Exchange

To strengthen European and global cultural ecosystems, mobility opportunities must be widened for displaced artists (especially artists in exile and artists at-risk), emerging professionals, and cultural workers from non-EU contexts. Public policies should support mobility schemes that are environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive.

9. Reform Cultural Funding Models for Long-Term Impact

The EU should reduce administrative burden, simplify reporting, and prioritise trust-based and long-term funding—especially for small-scale, grassroots, and community-driven initiatives. A new public-philanthropic funding pool could further support innovation and diversity in the sector.

10. Leverage ENCATC's Expertise to Support Implementation

ENCATC reaffirms its commitment to supporting the Culture Compass's implementation. With extensive experience in cultural policy and management education, policy research, and international cooperation, ENCATC is ready to partner in co-designing, delivering, and evaluating future EU actions in this domain.

ENCATC's Commitment

ENCATC, as a network of education and research institutions and cultural practitioners, is committed to advancing regenerative policy and practice that enables People and Planet to thrive and co-evolve. We recognise that the future has its roots in the present, so our mission is to grow them to foster sustainable, inclusive and just societies.

The polycrisis we face compels us to rethink how power operates, who decides, who benefits, and whose knowledge is valued. Without a shift in mindset, we will never achieve the transformative change that the Culture Compass envisions.

ENCATC aligns its mission with regenerative paradigms, seeking to shift mindsets:

- *From separation to interdependence:* Recognising that our actions are part of a wider system, while staying locally grounded.

- *From scarcity to abundance:* Create symbiotic relationships, identify affordances and potential, spotlight what is good and how it can be replicated and developed, considering a diversity of contexts;
- *From control to emergence:* Working with existing systems, trying to create opportunities for change. Being a network focused on learning and education, our researchers and teachers, our students, our practitioners are already generating some of the solutions we need.

To achieve this, we are guided by the collective wisdom of our members and broader community. Our work is incremental, collaborative, and focused on enabling deep change over time.

ENCATC is committed to co-creating the future envisioned by the Culture Compass. We will continue to:

- Listening actively and inclusively
- Sharing best knowledge and co-generate new ideas
- Collaborating with partners across sectors and regions
- Maintaining collective momentum and shared ambition.

We look forward to continuing this journey with the European Commission, and all other stakeholders, serving the cultural and creative sectors and translating vision into action.

Brussels, 13.05.2025