



Come
2ART

Come2Art Policy Recommendations:

**Life skills development through
arts and the emerging role of
artists in community resilience**

July 2023

Introduction

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed and enhanced the vulnerability of the cultural and creative sector, particularly of artists who were unable to continue their practice due to pandemic restrictions. During the post-COVID recovery period, it has been imperative to rethink the role of artists and leverage new opportunities, including digital platforms and collaborations with citizens for content creation.

At the same time, COVID-19 restrictions had an impact on socioeconomic life, affecting citizen's everyday life and well-being. Thus, creative resilience, the ability to generate and act upon positive and innovative solutions, has become a crucial resource during these uncertain times. Research has demonstrated that arts contribute to creative resilience by enhancing self-esteem, well-being, social cohesion, and a sense of belonging within communities (Roth, 2014, Shand M., 2014, British Council 2018). It has been a critical moment to foster creative resilience at the community level across Europe.

In this framework, the Come2Art project put artists at the centre of collective planning and implementation of creative placemaking projects, addressed the need for alternative modes of cultural production and participation as well as fulfilled citizens' desire for alternative forms of expression and social connection. Through this collaboration, local communities developed and applied essential life skills, such as self-regulation of emotions, flexibility, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, and critical and creative thinking while utilising creative placemaking as a platform to test and showcase these acquired skills. This inclusive approach simultaneously promoted active citizenship and empowered both artists and citizens.

The two-year [Come2Art](#) project developed an [interventional framework](#) for promoting life skills development and application through creative placemaking, a life skills curriculum (including a trainer's and trainee's toolkit) through arts in the context of creative placemaking, [co-creativity hubs](#) connecting community members and artists for life skills application, and creativity placemaking projects at the local level inspired by COVID-19 experiences. In the final stages of the project, Come2Art partners held multiple National Policy Rundables to share the findings and success of their work between artists and community members and together developed key advocacy points to bring to a larger audience at the European Policy Roundtable event held in Brussels, Belgium in June 2023.

Over 70 artists, community members, civil society organisations and policymakers from across Europe took part in the bottom-up, participatory workshop which resulted in the elaboration of the following collective set of six recommendations. This document advocates for policy support for developing the skills of artists to take a social role in building community resilience through artistic practices at

the local, regional, national and European levels. These recommendations will inform European, national, regional and local policymakers, as well as civil society organisations that focus on advocacy for artists and the development of inclusive practices in educational spaces.

The following recommendations are imagined as a set of accessible reference points to supplement ongoing conversation and decision-making around policy processes that focus on the development of artists' and cultural workers' skills.

Recommendations

#1: Finding Spaces

In both the National Policy Roundtables and the European Roundtable, when discussing issues that keep artists from being able to better develop their skills as social leaders, is the topic of limited space that many artists have access to for both their artistic practice and production. The discussion not only focused on needing increased availability to practise, research, production and gathering spaces but also on the need for improved mobile and financial accessibility to these spaces. The conversation also touched on the importance of democratising public spaces, highlighting the importance of prioritising public spaces and outdoor areas, making bureaucratic processes more simplified and accessible, and ensuring accessibility for the community.

Key recommendations:

- Develop political guidelines that prioritise the inclusion of artistic process and production, considering its impact on urban planning and sustainability.
- Improve policies for temporary occupation of places such as studios, stages, practice space, venues, etc., by actively listening to artists' needs and advocating for transparent mapping of available spaces.
- Facilitate more accessible bureaucratic processes for obtaining permits for public spaces, giving priority to artists and reducing unnecessary red tape.

#2: Creative Networks

Throughout the Come2Art project, artists, cultural workers and community members developed a deeper understanding of the importance of cultural and creative networks in not only supporting the development and dissemination of their own work, but also in addressing the challenges of connecting networks, fostering cross-sectoral collaboration, and building open-minded networks based on mutual trust.

Key recommendations:

- Support and promote local networks through stronger funding and resources, with a focus on fostering cross-border collaboration and information-sharing
- Incorporate peer-to-peer learning into arts educational curricula by, for instance, providing training and support for artists to navigate networks effectively
- Create a centralised platform for artists to share their work and experiences in order to improve the visibility and accessibility of existing platforms

#3: Developing Life Skills

In line with the target goal of the Come2Art project, developing life skills was identified as a priority topic for the strengthening of the social role that artists and cultural workers can have in their communities. A key point of discussion was that of “safe space,” regarding not only the support of self-expression and collaboration, but also as sites for developing life skills through residencies and learning from others, and better defining the concept of life skills in public discourse. The topic focuses on the need to teach and nurture life skills for artists, as well as integrate them into educational programs for young people, parents, and teachers. The section also discusses the challenges of framing and discussing life skills and advocates for their presence in the public discourse.

Key recommendations:

- Define and build safe spaces for self-expression and collaboration in educational environments as a tool to foster the development of life skills among young people
- Provide more (or make existing ones more visible) training programs for artists to enhance their own life skills, focusing on areas such as trust, self-confidence, care for their own artistic practice, and the effective promotion of their work.
- Better define and encourage public discourse around life skills, especially as it relates to their importance in personal and professional growth.
- Support co-learning programs through mentorship and coaching.
- Integrate life skills focused on promoting creativity, communication, and well-being into educational programs for parents, teachers, and artists.

#4: Designing Learning Experiences

As the topic of life skills cannot be discussed without also discussing the frameworks in which they can be implemented, the discussion around how these learning experiences should be developed was of great interest. Participants emphasised the importance of sharing and recreating best practices and developing more widely-shared foundational principles for community-based learning. Designing learning experiences also requires baseline factors, such as the need for added implementation time and practical learning methods.

Key recommendations:

- Collate best practices for learning design across Europe and share tangible results, hands-on and practical approaches, and connections to how and in what way they develop learners' life skills.
- Make a connection between the benefit of cultural approaches in addressing the challenges in educational programs, such as the relevance to real-life situations, the promotion of critical thinking, dialogue between educators and learners, and the avoidance of passive learning (such as only memorisation and test-based learning)

- Establish a cross-sector set of principles for community-based learning, which include factors such as transparency, guidance, collaboration, and flexibility in problem-solving.
- Dedicate funding that focuses on designing learning experiences through practical, sustainable and interdisciplinary approaches.
- Support the value of diversity as a key factor for effective learning experiences.

#5: Artists Training

As many of the participants at the European Policy Roundtable had completed the Come2Art training during the past two years, the discussion reflected upon their experience and how what they've experienced and some of their successes could be codified into replicable and sustainable training methods for more artists and cultural workers in the future. Much of the discussion focused on shaping public discourse around the role of artists as researchers and thought-provokers, shifting wide perceptions around the arts, and promoting diversity of educational backgrounds. The section also discusses the potential benefits for artists' employability, personal growth, and community engagement through art training.

Key recommendations:

- Embrace and incorporate the idea of artists as researchers and thought provokers in artist training programs as a way of fostering critical and socially-engaged art practices
- Focus on youth participation in the development of art as an accessible, visual research language which fosters critical, social, and creative skills through inquiry-based practice
- Make educational space and skills-development programs more open to diverse educational backgrounds (i.e. equality of intelligence) to better empower trainees to direct their own learning, collaborate, and engage in meaningful art and creative production
- Incorporate training material that focuses on transferable skills in order to address the issue of employability for artists and cultural workers
- Find ways to integrate arts and artists in policy-making processes in order to diversify unique perspectives and expertise in shaping cultural and creative policies

#6: Diverse/Diversifying Audiences Experiences

The topic of diversity was a throughline between many of the discussions during the European Policy Roundtable. However, one larger topic of discussion centred on the call for a more inclusive and diverse approach to the cultural rights of community members. This included ideas from diversifying what is showcased on stages to making cultural experiences more accessible for people with disabilities. In terms of how this empowers artists to take a more social role, it was discussed

that involving artists in the process of developing change policies within institutions is a critical way of developing more inclusive practices.

Key recommendations:

- Actively involve diverse communities in decision-making processes.
- For cultural producers, diversify the programmes of artistic presentations to reflect a broad range of perspectives and experiences.
- Provide opportunities for dialogue, reflection, and engagement with challenging and thought-provoking art as a means of developing and honing audiences' critical-thinking skills.
- Collaborate with and invest in organisations and networks which are already established in their work around engaging diverse audiences and communities through collaborative programming and outreach initiatives.
- Centre community needs as a basis for creating inclusive and accessible spaces for artistic experiences, e.g. taking into account different languages, accessibility needs for audiences with disabilities, developing programmes that represent the communities in which they take place, etc.
- Allocate funds specifically for training cultural professionals in areas such as diversity measures, communication with policymakers, and inclusive practices.

Background

COME2ART Partnership comprises 7 key players from 4 EU countries namely: [ActionAid Hellas](#), with strong experience in community resilience building; the [Faculty of Fine Arts of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki](#); [Culture Action Europe](#), a major European network of cultural organisations; [MeltingPro](#), an Italian VET provider in the field of arts; [Clube Intercultural Europeu](#), an active organisation in creative placemaking; [IoDeposito](#), an active CSO working with local communities in enhancing cultural well-being; and [CreativityPlatform](#), a grassroots creativity platform.

Methods:

The National and European Policy Roundtables have facilitated discussions in a group setting with the goal of equitable participation and exchange amongst participants on a given topic. These roundtables are designed as an inclusive and intentional way for participants to speak openly about their knowledge, ideas and sometimes to answer questions on a specific topic. The overarching goal is to engage directly with participants in order to identify opportunities and challenges from their perspective.

These Policy Roundtables were used to:

- Explore local issues and learn about a community's thoughts, perceptions, and desires
- Learn what does and doesn't work
- Develop resources
- Introduce the broad goals for a community project and get feedback for action steps to meet those goals
- Hold space for respectful open debate
- Develop policy recommendations

The overarching goal of the Roundtables is to result in recommendations that:

- Place arts in the centre of life skills development while fostering belonging and arts-based social inclusion at the community level
- Advocate for new roles to be undertaken by artists and cultural workers as community educators and creativity ambassadors, democratising arts and exploring new audiences and opportunities for them to promote their work as well as to
- Coordinate community's involvement in cultural planning and re-imagination of public spaces through arts

Acknowledgements

The Come2Art project would like to thank all of the artists and community members that have participated in the project since its beginning in 2021.

The project partners would also like to thank [Brussels2030](#) for their support in hosting the Come2Art European Policy Roundtable conference in June 2023.



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