Empowering Creative
& Cultural Industries
to Boost
Systemic Innovation
for Sustainable
Climate Transition

Community of Practice
for
Culture & Climate

Takeaways from the Launch on Culture & Climate

Launching the Community of Practice for Culture & Climate
1. Context & Purpose of the Session
   - Launch of a cross-European network connecting artists, cultural workers, researchers, and policymakers.
   - Exploration of how cultural and creative sectors can strengthen their role in Europe's sustainable
   transition.
   - Included a Sharespace from practitioners and a participatory discussion.

2. Key Themes Emerging Across Speakers
   - Reimagining cultural purpose and impact.
   - Systems-level thinking & structural change.
   - Role of culture in shaping public imagination.
   - Collective action & cross-sector collaboration.

3. Speaker-Specific Insights

   Jorge Gallardo – BeTime SCA / Párpado
   - Emphasised that culture must be understood beyond a human-centered framework. Cultural work is embedded in ecosystems — in soil, trees, bees, seeds, and water.
   - Highlighted the value of small, hyper-local cultural practices, which operate daily and create impact through relationships, attention, and care rather than large-scale events.
   - Spoke about the emotional tension between hope and fear in climate-related work, especially when local efforts succeed while global inaction continues.
   - Stressed the importance of reclaiming precise ecological language, particularly the word "ecosystem," which has been co-opted by corporate narratives.
   - Argued that cultural impact should include shifts in thinking, feeling, and imagination, not just measurable outputs or social indicators.
   - Called for meaningful conversations about working beyond the purely human world and recognising culture as part of a more-than-human continuum.

   Solweig Barbier – ARVIVA (Arts Vivants, Arts Durables)

   - Reflected critically on the value and purpose of touring, questioning whether it genuinely serves artistic or ecological goals in its current form.
   - Observed that the cultural sector often lacks time for deep reflection about why certain practices persist, and what values they are meant to uphold.

   - Noted that although performing arts organisations often focus on "green practices," these efforts are insufficient to meaningfully reduce emissions, especially when 80% of impacts are systemic rather than operational.
   - Highlighted the need to consider biodiversity, resources, and material use, not just carbon measurements, when evaluating sustainability.
   - Called for redefining what success looks like in the performing arts, emphasising that artistic excellence does not require long-distance touring or high mobility.
   - Encouraged thinking across the entire value chain, beyond artists and cultural workers, and building cross-sector conversations, especially as the cultural sector is vulnerable and competing for limited resources.
   - Pointed out the importance of addressing longstanding social justice issues, which are inseparable from ecological transition.

   Jordi Pascual – UCLG Culture Committee

- Warned that modern cultural policies have often been used to consolidate political and economic power, and the Culture Goal will not automatically prevent such instrumentalisation.
- Emphasised that without culture represented in frameworks like the SDGs, cultural actors become more vulnerable to being used instrumentally, rather than recognised for their full societal contribution.
- Explained that the Culture Goal is intended to make culture's capabilities visible and explicit, positioning cultural actors at the heart of local and urban transitions.
- Stressed that the challenge is not conceptual — the Culture Goal is clear and well-defined — but political, requiring decision-makers to embrace it.
- Advocated for a more organised and mobilised cultural sector, calling for large-scale collective action, including the idea of coordinated strikes in 2026 and 2027.
- Highlighted the need for capillarity in the campaign, ensuring the message and actions reach deeply into networks and local communities.

Lewis Coenen-Rowe – Culture for Climate Scotland / Culture/SHIFT

- Asked the central evaluative question: "How do we know if we're making a difference?"
- Warned that focusing too narrowly on carbon emissions leads to a limited understanding of impact, as culture's strengths are not only operational but relational and imaginative.
- Noted that many organisations rely on a simple "graph going down" as success, but this ignores the broader cultural context and the sector's unique capacities.
- Spoke to the need for cultural organisations to plan for climate adaptation, as changing weather patterns and climate impacts already affect day-to-day cultural work.
- Emphasised that the cultural sector's greatest contribution is its ability to shift how people relate to climate change, changing attitudes, values, and collective behaviour.
- Pointed out that many individuals within the sector — particularly those with privilege, wealth, and influence — hold responsibility to reduce their own emissions.
- Argued that arts and cultural methods are essential tools for bringing people into climate processes, helping them navigate the emotional, social, and political dimensions of transition.

4. Shared Challenges
   - Lack of meaningful metrics.
   - Time and capacity constraints.
   - Fragmentation and political vulnerability.
   - Resource conflicts and justice concerns.

5. Open Questions
   - What does sustainable cultural success look like?
   - How to measure influence beyond emissions?
   - What new vocabulary is needed?
   - How to integrate adaptation planning?

6. Emerging Directions & Practical Next Steps
   - Develop new narratives and terms.
   - Rethink touring and mobility.
   - Strengthen biodiversity + justice tools.
   - Support the Culture Goal campaign.
   - Expand arts-based public engagement.
   - Build climate-adaptation strategies.

How do you want to participate in this network, and what role do you see yourself playing in shaping culture's contribution to Europe's sustainable transition?