

Culture Action Europe

Activity Report 2024



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Highlights of 2024

ACT: CAE New networks grant

Launched in September 2024, ACT (Act for Culture) is a four-year project led by Culture Action Europe and funded through the Networks strand of the Creative Europe programme. It aims to support the Cultural and Creative Sectors (CCS) across Europe and beyond in building long-term crisis resilience and unlocking the transformative potential of culture for social and political change.

ACT advocates for forward-looking and inclusive cultural policies, as well as appropriate political and financial frameworks that recognise culture both as a strong sector in itself and as a key driver across other policy domains. Rooted in CAE's long-standing role as a connector between the cultural ecosystem and EU institutions, ACT serves as a space for structured exchange: it *encodes* the needs and contributions of the cultural sector into policy conversations, while *decoding* institutional developments to make them more accessible and actionable for cultural actors. The project enhances the advocacy and coordination capacity of the CCS through a newly established Networks Coordination format and the co-creation of Policy Briefs.

As a dynamic platform for collaboration, ACT will also host a biennial Central BEYOND Conference, alternating with six decentralised BEYOND Satellites held in the intervening years. In addition, the project will feature annual Mentoring Visits, Policy Events, and Action Groups. These formats foster capacity building, cross-sector dialogue, and strategic alliances at both European and local levels. Finally, ACT contributes to evidence-based policymaking by collecting, analysing, and disseminating policy-relevant research on culture through a range of publications. Through all these efforts, ACT reinforces the sector's voice, connects ongoing initiatives, and helps place culture firmly at the heart of public debate and decision-making processes.

The State of Culture report

In 2024, Culture Action Europe launched the *State of Culture* report – a policy research initiative that reflects our effort to better understand and reframe how culture is valued and positioned in national and European policies. This report is the result of a non-academic research process, enriched by conversations with key actors across the cultural and creative sectors. Our aim has been to identify not only the major challenges the sector faces today, but also the opportunities to shape a more resilient, inclusive, and forward-looking cultural ecosystem. The report serves both as a mirror and a roadmap: first, to reflect on how we, our members, and the cultural sector perceives itself and its perceived by others – and then, to address some of the critical questions that will shape the direction of our collective advocacy in the years ahead. Key questions include: How is culture framed within current politics and public debate? What role can it play in societal transformation? How can we advocate for it more effectively?

Wanting to take the conversation beyond the pages of the report, we launched a series of monthly webinars, each dedicated to one of its core themes:

- November 2024 – [‘Instrumentalising culture?’](#)
- December 2024 – [‘Culture, Digital & Artificial Intelligence’](#)
- January 2025 – [‘Autonomy and freedom of artistic expression’](#)
- February 2025 – [‘Cultural Heritage: bridging past, present and future’](#)
- March 2025 – [‘Cultural Democracy’](#)
- April 2025 – [‘Culture & Sustainability’](#)
- May 2025 – [‘Intrinsic value of culture’](#)

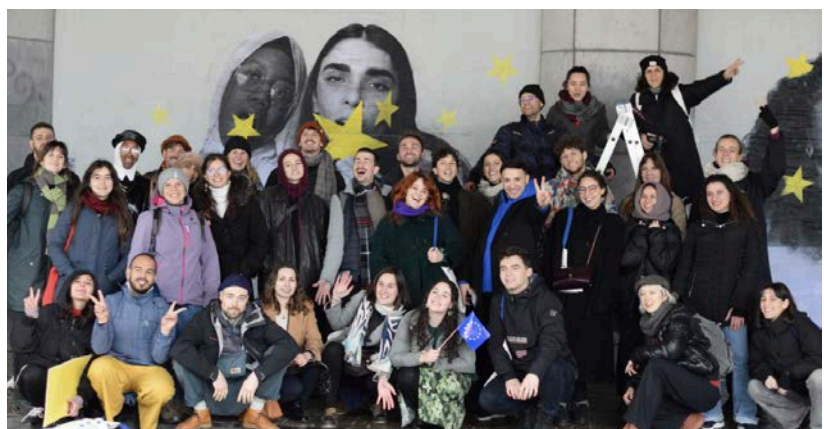
state of culture



Pop the Vote! Culture on Ballot was a cultural initiative aimed at mobilising young and underrepresented citizens ahead of the 2024 European Parliamentary Elections. Co-funded by the European Parliament, it used art and creativity as powerful tools to foster civic participation across 14 EU countries.

The project began in 2023 with an open call for young artists and cultural professionals from Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden. A total of 52 *Changemakers* were selected and brought together in Brussels for the *Changemakers' Playground Camp*—a one-week immersive training. There, they explored the workings of EU institutions, the 2024 elections, and how to use artistic strategies such as activism to drive civic engagement. By the end of the camp, each Changemaker had developed a prototype for a local voter engagement event. From performances and film screenings to zine launches and public art, they organised more than 100 cultural events, engaging over 5,200 people.

A highlight of the project was the creation of a large-scale public artwork installed on the facade of Brussels' Gare du Midi train station; the mural combined four striking portraits of the artists with bold imagery of yellow stars and ballot boxes — a powerful and creative call to vote in the upcoming elections.



Beyond the Obvious conference 2024|United by Future Places

Our annual gathering, *Beyond the Obvious*, took place in Malmö, Sweden– a city known for its youthful population, cultural diversity and forward-thinking approach to sustainability. With 189 nationalities and half of its population under 35, Malmö offered the ideal setting to reflect on the intersections between culture, citizenship and urban transformation. On this edition of *Beyond the Obvious* we explored how culture can shape the future of cities as inclusive, sustainable and democratic spaces. The programme revolved around one key question: how can culture reimagine urban life and guide collective futures?



Over four days, participants engaged in keynote lectures, open circle discussions, study visits with local actors, future labs, and dynamic debates on cultural democracy, public space and ecological transition. The gathering also hosted Culture Action Europe's Members' Forum and included a public reception at Malmö's historic town hall, strengthening the link between cultural practices and local governance.

Co-produced by the City of Malmö together with Malmö University, Region Skåne, the European Cultural Foundation and the French Ministry of Culture, United by Future Places became a vibrant space to share practices, explore bold ideas and shape new cultural futures. Over the course of the conference, members chose Torino as the next host city for Beyond the Obvious 2025. The gathering was a strong reminder of the cultural sector's role in driving democratic renewal and just, sustainable transitions across Europe.

Coimbra Conference: Cultural Networks and the Future of Europe

In 2024, to mark the 10th anniversary of the Creative Europe programme, we co-organised an international conference in Coimbra in collaboration with the Municipality of Coimbra and the Creative Europe Desk Portugal. The event gathered European cultural networks, EU-funded projects, and Portuguese professionals to reflect on the role of collaboration and cultural ecosystems in shaping the future of Europe.

The event consisted of a dynamic program that included panel discussions on the significance of cultural networks for Europe, as well as conversations around cultural diversity, cultural activism, public spaces, and environmental sustainability. We explored the ways in which European cultural projects and initiatives can foster creativity across borders and discussed how they contribute to a more inclusive, accessible, and sustainable cultural landscape.

The sessions were insightful, offering opportunities to engage with key cultural professionals and organizations that have successfully participated in European initiatives. Through networking, we exchanged ideas and explored new collaborations, reinforcing our commitment to promoting cultural exchange and shared growth.



Advocacy

Cultural Deal for Europe 2024

In 2024, Culture Action Europe, in close collaboration with the European Cultural Foundation and Europa Nostra (on behalf of the European Heritage Alliance), continued to champion the *Cultural Deal for Europe* – an overarching advocacy framework that seeks to place culture at the core of the European Union’s strategic vision and policy agenda.

Throughout the year, the campaign aimed to ensure culture remained high on the political agenda, particularly in the context of the 2024 European Parliament elections. Ahead of the vote, the Cultural Deal partners published an open letter calling on political parties and candidates to integrate culture into their programmes and to commit to a long-term vision where culture is mainstreamed across all policy fields – from the green and digital transitions to Europe’s external relations and democratic renewal.

The letter, titled “*2024 European Parliament Elections: Call for a Cultural Deal for Europe as a Pillar of Democracy*”, articulated the sector’s collective demand for a new political narrative – one that fully recognises culture’s power to foster belonging, defend fundamental rights, and generate sustainable and inclusive growth. The message was further reinforced by the 2023 statement “*Our Vision for a Cultural Deal: 2024 and Beyond*”, which laid out key principles and priorities for embedding culture in the next institutional cycle.

As part of this broader mobilisation, Culture Action Europe engaged with policymakers, civil society actors and the wider public across Europe. Activities included participation in policy fora, dissemination of advocacy materials, and alignment with other campaigns promoting democratic values and civic engagement. In parallel, CAE launched the Culture Voting Pack, a tool designed to

analyse how national and European political parties addressed culture in their manifestos. The Pack was shared widely through dedicated presentations and translated into several languages to maximise accessibility and impact.

The *Cultural Deal for Europe* remained a cornerstone of CAE's advocacy in 2024, serving both as a symbolic call and a concrete roadmap. By the end of 2024, the Cultural Deal for Europe had succeeded in re-engaging political stakeholders, catalysing new cross-sectoral alliances, and reinforcing the message that culture must be understood as a strategic investment in Europe's long-term resilience and cohesion. <https://culturaldeal.eu/>



[Culture Salon: Friends of Culture MEPs reception](#)

In the aftermath of the 2024 European Elections, CAE hosted the *Culture Salon* at Bozar in Brussels; a gathering that brought together newly elected and returning Members of the European Parliament, representatives of the European Commission, parliamentary staff, and key civil society voices from the culture and education sectors. Taking place at the start of a new institutional cycle, the event offered a space for open dialogue,

shared reflection, and forward-looking conversations about the role of culture in Europe's political future. The Salon marked a key moment in CAE's broader mobilisation campaign around the elections, anchored in the ongoing call for a *Cultural Deal for Europe*.

Throughout 2024, CAE worked to keep culture firmly on the political agenda. For example we created the *Culture Voting Pack* and shared it across the continent through events in Denmark, Switzerland and France. In parallel, with our partners we released a public letter urging political groups to put culture at the heart of their programmes, and published two op-eds in different media channels to further strengthen culture's visibility in mainstream discourse.

The Culture Salon brought all of this momentum into the room. And a strategic previewing of CAE's *State of Culture* report, serving as both a starting point for discussion and an invitation to shape the future of EU cultural policy together in which MEPs joined the conversation, alongside parliamentary assistants, policy advisers, and Commission representatives. By fostering exchange, the Culture Salon laid a fertile groundwork for deeper cooperation with decision-makers in the years to come.



Culture 2030 Goal Campaign: No future without culture



Throughout 2024, Culture Action Europe continued its active involvement in the Culture 2030 Goal campaign, a global civil society initiative that advocates for the full integration of culture at the heart of the UN 2030 Agenda and to secure its recognition as a distinct goal in the post-2030 development landscape.

The year was marked by a critical opportunity: the UN Summit of the Future. As the campaign prepared for this milestone moment in global governance, it responded to early drafts of the Pact for the Future—intended as the Summit’s main outcome document—which initially failed to meaningfully include culture. In coordination with other campaign members, Culture Action Europe helped shape a strong collective response. As a major achievement, the revised draft of the Pact included Action 7, a dedicated paragraph acknowledging culture as an integral component of sustainable development. Thus, bringing international recognition to culture’s unique role in fostering identity, social cohesion, and inclusive development policies.

In parallel, the campaign launched its new strategy document, available in English, French, and Spanish. Looking ahead, CAE remains committed to working alongside fellow campaign partners to secure a strong cultural dimension in the final version of the Pact and to continue advocating for culture as a pillar of global sustainable development.

Digital and AI Action Group

In 2024, Culture Action Europe, in collaboration with Michael Culture Association, launched the Digital and AI Action Group. This joint initiative responds to the growing relevance of artificial intelligence in the cultural and creative sectors and aims to ensure that cultural professionals are actively involved in shaping Europe's digital transition. The group's mission is threefold: To inform policymakers on how to best support the integration of AI in the cultural field, to identify areas where policy intervention is needed, to articulate the ethical concerns of the cultural sector regarding AI and digital technologies.



This work is particularly relevant in the context of the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act, adopted in 2024. The group advocates for an implementation of the AI Act that safeguards cultural rights and takes into account the specific needs and values of the cultural and creative sectors. It also contributes to the upcoming Code of Practice for Generative AI, to be drafted by the AI Office of the European Commission. CAE and Michael Culture Association have been invited to join the Plenary group of stakeholders that will shape this Code, positioning both organisations—and by extension, the Action Group—as active voices in this critical policy process.

Throughout the year, the Action Group held three working sessions (on April 8, April 30, and October 24) and conducted a sector-wide survey to gather insights and reflections on AI from cultural professionals. One of the main outputs of this work was the publication of the position paper [“Considerations regarding the implementation of the European Union’s Artificial Intelligence Act.”](#) This work marks an important step in ensuring that the cultural sector is not only represented but meaningfully engaged in the digital transformation of Europe.

Culture and Health Platform Launch

In 2024, Culture Action Europe launched the [CultureAndHealth Platform](#), a new EU-supported initiative designed to support artists working at the intersection of culture, health, and social care. The project officially kicked off with a meeting in Vienna, bringing together 16 partner organisations from across Europe for the start of a four-year, cross-sectoral collaboration. The Platform builds on the recommendations of the CultureForHealth Report (2022), and responds to a growing recognition of culture’s role in supporting well-being.

The initiative was developed to address key challenges in the European landscape: the limited integration of culture into health systems, the lack of professional networks and training for artists working in interdisciplinary environments, and the urgent need for sustainable funding and fair working conditions. It also directly engages with the mental health crisis affecting millions across Europe, drawing on the well-documented benefits of cultural participation for prevention, care, and resilience.

Over the next four years, the CultureAndHealth Platform will offer more than 170 grants and international residencies for emerging artists, alongside over 2,300 training opportunities. It will also host four international conferences in Finland, Austria, Romania, and Belgium.

Network

Culture Action Europe Geographical Hubs

The Culture Action Europe Geographical Hubs (CAE GH) provide a dedicated space where CAE members, affiliates, and invited external participants from a specific geographic area come together. These hubs can operate at national or regional levels.

Their effectiveness is often supported by factors such as shared language, similar legal frameworks, and geographic proximity, which also help manage costs. In some cases—especially in smaller, multilingual countries or closely connected regions—cross-border hubs prove particularly beneficial. These allow access to cross-border funding, strengthen inter-regional networks, and encourage peer-to-peer collaboration.

The main purpose of CAE GHs is to create stronger local impact by engaging communities and influencing regional cultural policies. Additionally, they serve as important platforms for exchanging knowledge, building capacities, collaborating on joint projects and productions, and sharing best practices.

Currently, CAE supports several geographical hubs, including:

- [CAE Hub Italy](#)
- [CAE Hub in the Netherlands](#)
- [CAE Hub France](#)
- [CAE Hub Spain](#)
- [CAE Hub Poland](#)
- [CAE Nordic Hub](#)
- [CAE Hub Greece](#)
- [CAE Hub UK](#)
- [CAE Hub Germany](#)

New members in 2024

In 2024, CAE a total of 49 new members joined the Culture Action Europe network. Out of this group, we have new:

- 23 individual members,
- 20 non-membership organisations,
- 3 national associations or networks
- 3 transnational cultural networks

This rich mix shows how we continue to be a dynamic platform where individuals and organisations from different backgrounds come together to share ideas, collaborate, and shape the future of culture in Europe. By amplifying these diverse perspectives, we want to continue strengthening our community and deepening our impact, creating more opportunities for collaboration and innovation across Europe's cultural landscape.

Knowledge Sharing with Our Members: Brussels Decoder and More

At Culture Action Europe, we are committed to keeping our members well-informed and connected by sharing timely and relevant insights into the evolving landscape of European cultural policy. One of our key communication tools is the Brussels Decoder, a members-only monthly publication that "decodes" the latest developments in EU cultural policy directly from Brussels. In 2024, we published a total of 10 issues, providing in-depth analysis and updates to help our members navigate the complex policy environment. Complementing this, Culture Action Europe Headlines offers a carefully curated monthly update. Our team selects news related to cultural policies, research, cultural management, and artistic practices across Europe. This digest includes briefs from Brussels, updates from CAE members, as well as opportunities and research relevant to the cultural sector. Together, these channels foster an engaged, informed community, empowering members to connect, collaborate, and influence the future of culture in Europe.

Other Ongoing Projects

CARE: Culture for Mental Health

Culture Action Europe launched the CARE (Culture for Mental Health) project, a pioneering initiative aimed at addressing the mental health crisis in Europe through the power of culture. Led by the Cluj Cultural Centre (Romania) and supported by seven partners across Europe: European Festivals Association (Belgium), Društvo Asociacija (Slovenia), Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture (Latvia), Arts for Health Austria (Austria), and Centre for Fine Arts | Bozar Brussels (Belgium).

The CARE project focuses on three main action pillars:

- Learn: Capacity-building initiatives for arts and health professionals, including workshops and expert panels.
- Innovate: Social innovation labs focused on youth mental health, workplace well-being, and accessibility.
- Share: The establishment of CultureForHealth Mobile Hubs in six European cities to promote engagement and cross-sector collaboration.

Funded by the Creative Europe Programme, the project will run from November 2024 to December 2027, with a budget of 1.4 million euros. CARE will engage with over 1,500 individuals in cultural activities, train 600 professionals, and raise awareness among an estimated one million people. Through policy recommendations and advocacy, the project aims to leave a lasting impact on health and cultural policies across Europe.



Training for the Contact Zone (TCZ) project:

In 2024, Culture Action Europe joined the “Training for the Contact Zone” (TCZ) project, an Erasmus+ funded initiative that brings together partners from across Europe to rethink how heritage and museums engage with complex historical narratives.

TCZ is rooted in the recognition that Europe’s heritage is diverse and sometimes divisive. What is celebrated in one context may be a source of pain or exclusion in another. Therefore TCZ is designed to respond to the need for cultural institutions to better reflect Europe’s plural histories. The focus is twofold: to develop practical skills for participatory and intercultural practice, and to support institutions in becoming more open, reflective spaces that contribute to social inclusion.

The TCZ consortium includes:

- Conexiones Improbables (Spain)
- Etz Hayyim Synagogue (Greece)
- Goethe-Institut Bucharest (Romania), lead on communication and dissemination
- Humán Platform (Hungary)
- PELE (Portugal)
- Stichting Herengracht 401 (Netherlands)

The Training for the Contact Zone (TCZ)



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conexiones improbables



pele



Shift Culture-ECO Certification

In 2024, Culture Action Europe was proud to be among the first fifteen European cultural networks to receive the SHIFT Eco-Certification. This recognition marks the culmination of a collaborative pilot programme launched by Creative Carbon Scotland (CCS), in partnership with auditing experts Green Leisure Group (GLG).

As part of the certification process, CAE implemented the SHIFT Eco-Guidelines for Networks—tailored sustainability practices specifically designed for cultural networks. These guidelines were developed during the SHIFT project to address the environmental impact of networks, particularly in areas such as travel and organisational operations. To do so CAE has been taking part in peer audits, collaborative workshops in Brussels, and a formal external audit carried out by GLG to ensure transparency.

The pilot certification programme, which will continue into 2025, also served as a space for collective learning and exchange. Despite the limited capacity many networks face, the eco-guidelines have proven to be a useful framework for climate action. For this reason, CAE and other participating organisations continue to explore the intersection between environmental responsibility and cultural work and are now moving towards the implementation of optional guidelines and further refinement of the certification process. These include: business travel, accommodation, events, organisational carbon footprint budgeting, etc.



New Voices (FABULAMUNDI)

In 2024, Culture Action Europe continued its collaboration with *NEW VOICES*, a groundbreaking initiative led by *Fabulamundi – Playwriting Europe (FAB)*, dedicated to fostering the next generation of European playwrights. As part of a three-year initiative promoting cultural exchange and artistic development rooted in European values, *NEW VOICES* brings together 15 organisations from 10 countries—including the Western Balkans. The project aims to develop new methodologies that open access to the field, integrate digital tools into the creative process, and highlight the importance of playwriting as an art form.

NEW VOICES unfolds through a programme of 66 Creative Workshops led by 19 established playwrights from across Europe. These artists, part of the FAB Community, travel across the continent through a twinned mobility scheme (*Cross the Map*), engaging with emerging writers, exchanging practices, and contributing to a shared video series, *In a New Light*, which offers rare insights into the playwriting process.

Culture Action Europe is proud to contribute to this growing network, supporting a new generation of voices in theatre and reinforcing the role of culture in shaping inclusive, transnational dialogue.

**FABULAMUNDI
PLAYWRITING
EUROPE
NEW VOICES**

Closed projects

Pro-CCS: Microfunding Cultural and Creative Sectors

From April 2022 to April 2024, Culture Action Europe was a partner in *Pro-CCS: Microfunding Cultural and Creative Sectors*, a transnational Erasmus+ project aimed at improving access to microfinance for professionals and micro-enterprises in the cultural and creative sectors (CCS).

As part of a diverse consortium, our role focused on representing the voice of the CCS at the European level, ensuring that the project tools and outcomes reflected the realities and needs of the sector. We contributed to the design, development, and dissemination of resources such as:

- A training course for financial tutors and business support providers;
- An online course tailored to CCS professionals;
- A toolkit for financial intermediaries to better assess and support creative business models.

We also mobilised our network to test and promote these tools, facilitated dialogue between cultural professionals and financial actors, and supported the policy dimension of the project through targeted communication and stakeholder engagement. Pro-CCS was coordinated by Ente Nazionale per il Microcredito (Italy), with additional partners including InnoGrowth (Bulgaria), ImpactHub Leipzig (Germany), and Euradia Italia (Italy). The project leaves behind a legacy of open-access tools to continue building bridges between culture and finance, helping to unlock new opportunities for entrepreneurship in the sector.

We take care of the cultural ecosystem



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